

Womens forum

Apologies – Rachel Duncan, Cllr Duffy, Morcea Walker.

SC, RP, NAS, SM, AV, FO, KS, AR, PC, HJ, EM, DM, MM, PW.

Mins and Matters Arising.

Letter from May – Support to Ruba – Cllr Stone.

Also a letter to Ruba – Response to the postcards.

MM to follow up.

Item 3 – Food Poverty and Holiday Hunger Update.

DM – Overview and scrutiny panel on this, in the meantime, Vicki Rockall has had a meeting with people who are already involved with these projects. Looking to see what's already out there. There's FISH in blackthorn which is every Tuesday. Looking to see how these can be advanced and what support is needed. St David's Church also do something similar.

NAS – There is also one near the train station, URC, Liz Adams and Jenny Crane run, they said they serve lunches or do the packs for families. They help to feed homeless on Tuesdays and also do the food parcels. These would be good to also support.

DM – I will make sure that we mention them.

AR – Cllr Russell is looking to use her empowerment fund, was still floating around, a shame there's not been more time to promote. Co-op group are looking to sign.

MM – The form has been processed.

AR – Do we know when the scrutiny is meeting?

DB – First meeting has happened – 17th July.

PW – I may be incorrect but the scrutiny panels look at the networks are already out there to see how they could be improved etc. It seems as though even those around the table do not even fully know what services are in place. Would be good to get these papers circulated, so we can have more of an understanding before we try and feed into the panel.

Also need information about projects and what time they are open etc.

NAS – Now the Borough Council have 4/5 community safety officers, it should be easy to make a map which points those in the right direction about services that are out there.

NAS – I had a meeting about homeless and there were nothing about the non-Christian groups, when the Sikh group do serve food twice a week and some people didn't even know about it. There isn't enough communication.

Does this link into what community foundation are doing, they have a food poverty network?

PC – Most people do attend that.

NAS – Yes we need to look at that and get them involved.

I have got involved with a group in Tooting, this is to feed them all year round as well as a social group. I think something in this town like that would be very beneficial.

PW – We run a group in Bellinge and a lot of them (8-11 year olds) are very hungry when they turn up.

AR – We're in an excellent position to build on this and the work that the Food Poverty Network have done. There are great things happening in the country, like community fridges but this is not happening there. A lot of the burden falls on the voluntary sector, there needs to be some more support.

PW – We need to make the information available about the work and create a link to fill the gaps that are currently there.

Action – Would be good to get an update at the end of the scrutiny panel.

NAS – The community fridge would be a great idea and there must be a place where this can happen. If only there was a community fridge and people can make an extra portion which they can have access to.

I know the health and safety issues around food may hinder it.

PW – Well they could be shop bought items.

HJ – There are also apps which link people with shops who want to reduce their waste.

SM – The Ronald McDonald foundation help feed families who are at hospitals etc.

PC – We have been awarded a rating of 5 and around 6 months later we are being told we need to be inspected again.

ACTION – MM/DM – to as someone from statutory and community based sector surrounding food and issues surrounding hygiene/waste etc.

NAS – I suggest we get them on the same day, otherwise we may have two different things, at least if they are both there together, it'll all be joined up.

Item 4 – Domestic Violence and Migrant Women Support Services Discussion.

PC – Asked for this as I've had a really bad time trying to help someone.

Migrant, abused, 2 year old son, no one is there for her.

Police didn't immediately put her in accommodation as she is supposed to have family/friends and somewhere to stay, she doesn't really, they aren't supportive.

MK was recommended, not Northampton.

Needs help getting access to nursery.

There's a language barrier, there are translators but people do not seem to want to get involved.

There's paperwork that needs to be signed etc and no one wants to do it.

NAS – Best thing to do would be to let the solicitors deal with it, I'm sad to say that this was exactly the same treatment as I had 3 years ago.

There is so much money being put into these support services, but I believe they are just there for lip service as they do not tend to help or signpost us to the right places.

PW – We have members from support services here so I am aware of that.

We picked something very similar with this up many years ago and linked in with a lot of different organisations.

PC - Womens aid couldn't do anything as she doesn't have access to benefits. Contacted Sunflower and they told me the same thing. They've all pointed me in the direction of the CAB.

PW – April, tell us about Eve?

AV – We are a refuge, we look to support women who have been victims of domestic abuse, get their life together. We house them and support them with their children etc. We are a charity and fundraise for our funds, we are not granted by any organisations.

We put forward papers to say that these migrant and BME women should be supported, it was rejected as we were told that all the larger organisations are doing it and that there is no need specifically to target BME and migrant women.

PW – Is this something you may be able to help with as you are a charitable organisation?

AV – It may be, we would need to look at the issue and approach it holistically.

PC – Do you have a translator as that is a huge barrier to her getting any help?

AV – I do the training at Eve, I'm not a frontline worker, but when there's a situation like this, it's more than a cultural issue, it's about the life of a person.

There should have been a massive presence at the meeting earlier in the year surrounding support services from BME and migrant women.

If you come from another country, you're often not allowed to speak to others or speak out about your situation, by doing this then these women cannot learn about the help that they can seek.

PW - Would you be able to take the women at Eve.

AV – Yes, there would need to be a report and if she scores over 14 then she would need to go to the Sunflower Centre.

PW – I think you can link in with the Eve team, also link in with Sunflower if it is high risk. Contact the police to see the reports and all necessary forms can be scored. We should now aim to help this one individual first of all, then use this as a starting point which we can use to build on in the future.

FO – We can send you the referral form, this would then help us to understand the situation and we can take action based on the results.

SC – She should have been able to contact organisations such as voice which are free services.

NAS – They should, but I've had a referral 4 years ago, I am a volunteer and I am still currently helping her and I contacted everyone, not a single agency helped.

PW – There is a link there for you Pindy, we need to see what links can be made but we also need to make notes about why these specialist services are necessary and why the larger organisations are not delivering what the Borough Council think they are.

AV – There are cultural differences and domestic abuse is definitely included in cultural differences.

FO – Is there a directory for all these services?

PW – NADASA should provide that.

SC – There has been this support for women with migration issues for example, these take a lot more time and there is definitely a need for specific services and help.

PW – There has been project funded 6 years ago and a report produces.

PC – There isn't finger printing at post offices which used to take 5 minutes.

AV – This is a home office issue, and many have stopped doing it.

PW – It seems as though no one has all the answers but the woman in question has all the needs, so although this is a huge issue. It's good that we are having this discussion again.

PC – It seems as though with some people I call, they see the victim as the problem whilst the male gets to stay within the house.

Even from the policing side, if she's being abused but the male has family in the town, why is she the one being moved out of the house and out of the town?

NAS – Yes there is often brainwashing involved too, the women are made out to be wrong/lying etc.

DM – I think what we should be doing is looking through the paper, finding all the gaps, talking about them and what can be done and work from there.

NAS – This is only the start too as there are things like divorce to go through. These legal issues can total up to around £50,000 which isn't affordable for any of these women.

PW – I agree but these family law firms are so inundated that unfortunately it does end up coming down to money.

FO – I usually advise these women who I coach, to not pursue divorce straight away, I support them until the point where they can represent themselves in court, this helps them save a lot of money. We try and teach them how to deal with false accusations and the intimidation etc.

NAS – I think this will work for women who have not been completely broken down mentally, this may not be useful for all women as they can get nervous and overwhelmed, especially when English is not their first language.

FO – Do we have pro bono services apart from Citizens Advice?

NAS – They will often point you in the direction of firms, but mostly they only really give you a free 30 minute session. After that they will charge.

FO – It is about empowering the women, helping them understand that it is not their fault and for them to be supported by someone who really does understand what they are going through.

AV – The next step is for us to break down the barriers as some groups in society simply do not talk about these issues or admit that things like this are happening.

PC – Yes people in these communities often say they will support but as time goes on they stop.

PW – But we know what type of pressure can be put on these people in the community, this often breaks those support links.

NAS – I've been trying to negotiate pro bono for years but they never agree. I've only recently just got it down from £250 an hour to £150 plus VAT.

PW – There was a woman who came down a long time ago from Coventry, who worked with many different services and some on pro bono.

Everyone was sent the report 5/6 years ago, we need to look at that first, if we can find the paperwork, everything has been discussed today, everything surrounding these issues and how they planned to move forward is in the report.

PW – NAS, you were involved in that group weren't you?

NAS – Yes it was about what services the agencies are offering, how we could connect them and the issues surrounding BME groups.

SC – This is also a national issue, anything we do here needs to be forwarded above.

AV – We've been told before that the funds are going to the mainstream agencies but the services are not being provided properly.

NAS – We know we need separate services because funding the mainstream organisations to do this has never worked and it is still not working now.

PW – The services are not meeting the needs, that's understood, is it about a separate service or creating a service in the environment that we already have? We don't want to start segregating groups as that may not work.

FO – Obviously there is a need, while we're investigating, I suggest we focus on creating something which can then lead us to referring people to the right groups. We can then see the evidence of what we have done.

I think that we should be more solution focused and see what we can do in the immediate future for PC's person.

Community Information Exchange

16th Oct – Conference – Eve – conference surrounding mental health, homelessness, domestic abuse and the criminal justice system.

Cost is £95pp, that's for a day's training and food is included. Early bird is £95 and after that is £125.

PC – This is something we would need funding for as that is a lot of money for community groups.

NAS – Yes, if we wanted to send 3 or 4 people, this just isn't possible.

AV – There are stands available too and they're about £50.

Action – AV to send MM info to distribute.

PC – I also think we should consider having inspirational women talk, like at April's event instead of just performances.

AV – I agree it would be good to try something different.

PW – I understand that but as a forum we are also here to promote other events and spread the word, it's about understanding different groups. We can't here as a women's forum be everything, so IWD is about having fun and bringing families in, and we can point people in the direction of the other events.

DM – we did have some speakers a few years ago, but the feedback was that they couldn't be heard and it would be better with more performances.

NAS – Diwali is 19th October, team on facebook helping book stalls.

Statutory bodies and food is £100 and small business are £50, charities are free but a donation is welcome.

RP – There will be lots of events that week. There will be the annual chief constables community supper, this is great for access.

SC – 1st October – Sunflower will no longer be hosted by the Police, will be hosted at Warwick House instead (same place as rape crisis).

PW – Bellinge community House – Community safety day 6th August, Com Saf day, on a Tuesday, 12pm-4pm.

Another event, Cynthia Spencer, we are supporting them, there's a new project where they're doing garden tours and we've offered to open up our garden to them, any donation goes to them. 24th August, it's a Saturday, refreshments can be purchased.

One room in St James will become a youth room – we want this to become a hub for youngsters from other communities to use.

New project which will help the community, will do litter picking. This will be good as people around my age are becoming more passionate about environmental issues, we want to build a good image for young people too. We will also be doing elderly visits, as they often do not have many visits, we are a community which hold a lot of respect older people and we would like to visit those who do not have too much interaction. This is just planning.

Action – Jamie Wells to link in with HJ.