

Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee

Wednesday, 20 February 2008

Present: Councillor Hasina Khan (Chair), Max Allam (Chorley Muslim Welfare Society), Deepanita Biswas (Asian Women's Forum), Mr L Bretherton (Chorley and District Neighbourhood Watch Association), Councillor Terry Brown (Chorley Borough Council), Pat Cuerden (Chorley and District Neighbourhood Watch Association), Mrs C Finlayson (African/Caribbean Group), Gary Finlayson (Dosti Men's Forum), Mr R Finlayson (African/Caribbean Group), Councillor Marie Gray (Chorley Borough Council), George Guye, Alison Handsford (Chorley Wildcats/Chorley RUFC), Miriam Iqbal (Asian Women's Forum), Aneesa Malek (Asian Women's Forum), Councillor Peter Malpas (Chorley Borough Council), A Patel and Mohammed Sajid (Chorley Muslim Welfare Society)

Partner Organisation Representatives: Kiran Banati (Lancashire County Council Adult and Community Services), Sergeant Jeanette Hickey (Lancashire Constabulary), Bhikhu Patel (Preston and Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council) and Steve Van (HM Prison Wymott)

Chorley Borough Council Officers: Donna Hall (Chief Executive), Sarah Dobson (Performance Advisor - Corporate and Customer) and Tony Uren (Democratic Services Officer)

08.EM.01 WELCOME BY CHAIR

The Chair (Councillor Hasina Khan) welcomed everyone present at the meeting.

08.EM.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Ayuub Patel (Vice-Chair), Mr W Donalds (African/Caribbean Group), Mr H Mala (Dosti Men's Forum) and Mr N Sharif (Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service).

08.EM.03 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by any of the Parish Councillors in any of the items on the agenda.

08.EM.04 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING - CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the last meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee held on 24 October 2007 were confirmed as a correct record.

08.EM.05 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN CHORLEY

With the consent of the Chair, Councillor Terry Brown gave a short presentation on the results of a review of the Council's approach to the embodiment of equality and diversity in the culture of the Council that had been undertaken by a Sub-Group of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee under Councillor Brown's chairmanship.

The presentation included a summary of statistical information on the age, residential location and employment status of the various minority ethnic groups throughout the Borough which had been gleaned from the 2001 Census report.

The Committee's scrutiny report had identified a series of recommendations for measures aimed at ensuring that the Council's services were delivered against equality and diversity objectives so that all communities were afforded equality of access, outcome and opportunity. The Council's Executive Cabinet had accepted the

recommendations in principle and had endorsed the implementation of the measures that could be implemented within existing resources.

Councillor Brown confirmed that equality and diversity issues were now a prominent element of the Council's agenda, which was evidenced by its support of the development of a Community Cohesion Strategy for Chorley. The Strategy would set out the Borough's response to the national community cohesion agenda and would address its three priorities to improve life chances for all; develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live, work and play; and build stronger communities with approved access to public services.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Chair thanked Councillor Brown for his address.

08.EM.06 COMMUNITY OPEN DAY

The Chair reported a request from Bhikhu Patel for consideration to be given to the organisation of a Community Open Day as an opportunity, in particular, for the Authority to communicate its services and policies to the Borough's minority ethnic communities.

In response, Donna Hall reminded the Consultative Committee of the Council's Open Day that had been held in the Lancastrian Room on Saturday, 3 November 2007 when each of the Council's Directorates had promoted its respective services and employment opportunities. The event had incorporated colourful displays and interactive fun activities, and had proven to be a resounding success. Bhikhu was pleased to learn of the Open Day and hoped that similar events would be held on other occasions and widely promoted amongst the minority ethnic communities. Future events could, perhaps, be arranged with the participation of the Primary Care Trust, Police, Prison Service and other relevant organisations.

Donna also drew attention to the Council's 'Chorley Smile' civic pride campaign, which was continually gaining momentum. The campaign was to be supported by the presence of the Council's Community Van around the Borough to promote and raise the profile of the Authority's services and work amongst the communities.

In addition, Sarah Dobson also confirmed that the responses to the questionnaires sent to all members of the Consultative Committee would need to be analysed and reported back to the Committee. Respondents had been requested to identify five priority issues of concern to them and the Committee would need to consider and make recommendations as to how the Council's policies and mechanisms might be revised and altered, if necessary, to address the identified concerns.

08.EM.07 WOMEN'S FORUM AND POLISH COMMUNITY JOINT EVENT

The Chair advised the Consultative Committee of the Asian Women's Forum's (comprising female members of all faiths and communities) plans to arrange a future event that would involve the participation of the Polish community in Chorley.

The Women's Forum organisation was available to provide local women with information and guidance on a wide range of health, social services, educational and leisure issues. The organisation offered a drop-in service at its offices from 10.00am to 3.00pm on Mondays to Thursdays and from 1.00pm to 6.00pm on Saturdays. Customers were requested to contact Aneesa or Miriam on 01257 230649.

Deepanita Biswas also reported on her recent work in visiting local Bengali families who were anxious to increase their participation in local community activities, but were being hindered by language barrier difficulties. Officers within the Women's

organisation had attended training courses to enhance their role in Urdu, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali and English language support.

In addition, the Chair confirmed that an Older People's Forum for Chorley's Asian community would shortly be launched with the aid of external funding.

08.EM.08 NEW AND ESTABLISHED ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES - PROVISION OF SERVICES AND SUPPORT

Sarah Dobson referred to the relatively small, but steadily increasing, population of migrant workers in the Borough, especially from Poland and other Eastern European countries. The Police were currently endeavouring to map the settlement of new migrants throughout Lancashire. Sarah intimated the need to co-ordinate efforts to engage with the new communities to ascertain their needs and review the best means of meeting their needs.

Sarah appealed to the Consultative Committee members to notify the Borough Council of any pockets of new migrant workers in the Borough known to them to complement existing intelligence.

The Council were hoping to assist the compilation of a comprehensive 'welcome pack' for all new residents to the Borough. The pack aimed to comprise a raft of useful information on available local services and resources (eg schools, Doctors' Surgeries, leisure facilities, housing and benefit rights, signposting the English language teachers etc). The Consultative Committee expressed its support of the concept and hoped that the packs would be widely available and distributed to libraries, public buildings, Doctors' Surgeries, Estate Agents, etc, in order that they would reach as many new residents as possible.

08.EM.09 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEMES

Following on from the above item, Pat Cuerden queried the number of Neighbourhood Watch schemes currently operative in neighbourhoods populated by minority ethnic communities.

It was **AGREED** that the local Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator be invited to make a presentation to a future meeting to highlight the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch schemes for all communities.

08.EM.10 TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING SERVICES

Sarah Dobson reminded the Committee of the long standing practice of the Council to include a strapline on the bottom of all its communications and publications in Urdu and Gujarati advising readers of the availability of a free translation and interpreting service. However, since its introduction, there had been little demand for use of the service. The Council were currently reviewing the service and Sarah sought the Consultative Committee's views on the current practice and whether a more effective communication service could be provided that would benefit minority ethnic communities more realistically.

Recent national Government guidance had questioned the use of translation and interpreting services which, it was claimed, could be divisive and perpetuate language barriers rather than encouraging integration and cohesion. It had been suggested that such services should be used more sparingly and focused more specifically to the targeted groups. Local Authorities could adopt a more proactive approach by assisting non-English speaking residents to access English language teachers or signposting them to other available sources of assistance (eg the Women's Forum).

Steve Van queried whether a translation and advice service could be offered within outreach offices throughout the Borough. In response, Donna Hall advised the Committee of plans to tour the Community Van around the Borough as part of the Council's introduction of a new Neighbourhood working project. Officers present in the van would be dispensing information and advice to residents, as well as endeavouring to solve local problems. The initiative would be supported by the Police, Primary Care Trust and other relevant agencies.

Donna also highlighted the work currently being pioneered by Chorley Council to design and transform its services around its customer needs and aspirations, which had been nationally recognised and commended.

It was **AGREED** that Kris Boardman, Chorley Council's Customer Access Officer, be invited to address the Consultative Committee at its next or future meeting on the ways in which the Council's new initiatives are expected to benefit local residents.

08.EM.11 PRESTON AND WESTERN LANCASHIRE RACIAL EQUALITY COUNCIL

At the request of the Chair, Bhikhu Patel gave a brief summary of the role and remit of the Preston and Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council (REC).

The REC operated from offices at Preston and had been established as an information and advisory service to anyone living within the REC's boundaries who considered that they had suffered racial harassment or discrimination, had been treated unjustly or denied access to available services because of their ethnicity.

The REC's trained officers could also either offer advice on immigration or passport issues or signpost customers to other relevant agencies for assistance.

The Racial Equality Council could be contacted on 01772 906422 during normal office hours.

Bhikhu also advised the Consultative Committee of plans for the REC to operate a one-day advisory surgery in Chorley's One Stop Shop at Union Street on a monthly basis. It was anticipated that the surgery would be commenced shortly.

At the close of his address, Bhikhu thanked the Chair for the opportunity and commended the enthusiasm, commitment and effectiveness of Chorley's Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee as an exemplary body.

08.EM.12 POLICE REPORT

Sergeant Jeanette Hickey circulated a note at the meeting which summarised the latest crime statistics for the Borough, including the number of recorded race related incidents.

Sergeant Hickey stated that Lancashire Constabulary's crime detection rate had risen to 73%, a level that was well above the national average rate.

08.EM.13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The members noted that the next meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 24 April 2008 at 7.00pm

Chair