

Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee

Thursday, 24 April 2008

Present: Councillor Hasina Khan (Chair), Ayyub Patel (Vice-Chair), Glynn Bretherton (C.A.D.N.W.A.), Councillors Terry Brown, Kinga Grzeczynska (Polish Catholic Community), Alison Hansford (Chorley Wildcats/Chorley RUFC), Zafar Khan, Aneesa Malek (Asian Women's Forum), Councillor Peter Malpas (Chorley Borough Council), Aarifa Patel (Asian Women's Forum), Abdul Patel. Keith Warren (Chorley & District Neighbourhood Watch Association) and Tom Watson (Chorley Play Partnership).

Officers: Donna Hall (Chief Executive), Sarah Dobson (Performance Advisor - Corporate and Customer), Liz Morey (Neighbourhoods Co-Ordinator) and Tony Uren (Democratic Services Officer).

Partner Organisation Representatives: Naveed Sharif (Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service).

08.EM.14 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

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

08.EM.15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Pat Cuerden (Chorley and District Neighbourhood Watch Association), Mr W Donalds (African/Caribbean Community), Gary Finlayson (African/Caribbean Community), Councillor Marie Gray (Chorley Borough Council) and Bhikhu Patel (Preston and Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council).

08.EM.16 PAT CUERDEN

Tony Uren informed the Consultative Committee that Pat Cuerden, who had represented the Chorley and District Neighbourhood Watch Association at past meetings of the Consultative Committee, had had to resign from the Committee for health reasons.

The Chair asked for the Committee's thanks and best wishes to be conveyed to Pat.

08.EM.17 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.18 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING - CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the last meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee held on the 26 February 2008 were confirmed as a correct record.

08.EM.19 PLAY STRATEGY FOR CHORLEY

The Chair welcomed Tom Watson (from Chorley Play Partnership) and Liz Morey (Chorley Council's Neighbourhoods Co-ordinator) who had been invited to attend the meeting to discuss proposals for inclusive play provision in the Borough through the Play Strategy.

Mr Watson circulated copies of the adopted Play Strategy which aimed to encourage and assist the provision of a wide range of play opportunities for children and young people aged between 2 and 18 years.

Mr Watson had requested an opportunity to address the Consultative Committee to gain members' views on ways in which the play providers could collaborate and interact with local ethnic minority and community groups to ensure that their specific needs and preferences were taken into account.

Liz Morey referred to the difficulties that the Play Partnership had experienced in its past attempts for dialogue with the ethnic minority groups and indicated that the currently available funding had been allocated. However, the Partnership still wished to pursue its discussions and consultations with the representatives of all sectors of the Borough.

The Consultative Committee accepted the vital role play provision could make in the achievement of the Council's community cohesion and integration objectives and the Chair urged the Play Partnership to make contact initially with the Asian Women's Forum to discuss the potential for future play projects aimed specifically at encouraging integration within communities. A few potential play projects could be examined by the Play Partnership for future implementation whenever further funding was secured.

In response to Councillor Terry Brown's request for the development of play schemes for children with disabilities, Mr Watson intimated that play sessions were currently available for disabled children at the Tatton Community Centre.

Sarah Dobson pointed out the need for the Play Partnership and the Authority to publicise all the available play facilities and activities as effectively as possible.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chair thanked Mr Watson and Ms Morey for their attendance and contribution.

08.EM.20 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEMES

The Chair welcomed Keith Warren, the Chair of both the North West Region and the Chorley and District Branches of the Neighbourhood Watch Association, who had been invited to attend the meeting to make a short presentation to the Committee to highlight the benefits of Neighbourhood Watch schemes for all communities.

Mr Warren indicated that over 1900 neighbourhood watch schemes were currently in operation throughout Lancashire. The first scheme was established in Chorley in 1994, since when 290 schemes, covering 205 households, have been introduced in Chorley which were acknowledged as some of the most efficient and effective schemes in the North West.

27% of households in the North West currently participate in neighbourhood watch schemes, with the majority of residents perceiving the schemes as an effective deterrent to crime and as a tool by which to encourage greater cohesion. Statistics also reveal that households not covered by neighbourhood watch schemes are more vulnerable to potential burglaries.

Mr Warren explained the role of Neighbourhood Watch Associations in encouraging and assisting communities to set up neighbourhood watch schemes and providing training and development opportunities for Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators. Good practice guidance and support were also provided by the Home Office and the Local Government Association.

Mr Warren also referred to the Neighbourhood Watch Association's collaborative partnership with the Primary Care Trust, the Police and the Trading Standards Office, with whom presentations and displays were arranged and leaflets distributed to draw attention to the benefits of neighbourhood watch schemes and the need to be vigilant against the perpetrators of crime. Recent campaigns had been mounted to warn elderly persons against burglaries and fraudsters. Practical advice was also offered on the Association's website.

The Consultative Committee requested Mr Warren to arrange a safety exhibition at a suitable venue (eg Tatton Community Centre) in Chorley East Ward.

08.EM.21 CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE SURVEY

The Consultative Committee was reminded that, following discussions at recent meetings, a small number of questionnaires had been sent to each member for completion by five or six community residents. The survey sought the views of Chorley's minority ethnic communities on the level of services currently provided in the Borough, the accessibility of services and suggested priority improvements.

Sarah Dobson reported that, whilst only 13 responses to the survey had been received, the information extracted would be used to inform plans and programmes to be completed for future actions aimed at delivering the measures and priorities to meet local communities' aspirations and expectations. The recent questionnaire formed only part of a broader community survey. Sarah informed the Committee members that the questionnaire was available on the Council's website and further copies could be provided to the Consultative Committee members upon request.

08.EM.22 FRIDAY STREET HEALTH CENTRE

In response to a query from Councillor Terry Brown, Donna Hall updated the members on the current position in relation to the Primary Care Trust's plans to establish a new Health Centre on Friday Street. Donna confirmed that the PCT had reiterated its firm commitment to the venture, but recent staff changes had contributed to the lengthy delays in the realisation of the project. However, the District Valuer's report and valuation of the site had now been received, which should now enable the early negotiation of a sale price for the land.

08.EM.23 PLANS FOR NEW COMMUNITY FIRE STATION IN CHORLEY

Naveed Sharif advised the Consultative Committee of the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's plans to construct four new Stations in Blackburn, Burnley, Chorley and Fleetwood under a Private Finance Initiative arrangement. The Chorley Station was to be built at Euxton, close to the Washington Hall Training Centre facility, with an anticipated 2013 completion date.

The layout plans the new Fire Station at Chorley was to include provision for a community room and Mr Sharif hoped that as many community groups as possible would be able to make use of the facility.

08.EM.24 CHORLEY KHUKA WELFARE ASSOCIATION

The Consultative Committee noted that Mr Yakoob Illahi had not attended the meeting. Mr Illahi had been invited to attend the meeting to update the Committee on the Chorley Khuka Welfare Association's promotion of the sports facilities available for children and young people.

The Committee's attention was drawn, however, to a multi-faith football tournament being held on 10 and 11 May 2008 with assistance from the Interfaith Forum. The

tournament was open for the participation of 9 – 14 year olds and the Chair hoped that as many groups as possible would be able to take part in the competition.

08.EM.25 DOSTI MEN'S FORUM

Ayyub Patel expressed his gratitude to the Asian Women's Forum for their advice and assistance in the launch of the Dosti Men's Forum.

Mr Patel advised the Committee of a Health Forum for Men to be held in the Moonlight Restaurant, Brooke Street, Chorley on Sunday, 27 April 2008 between 1pm and 3pm. The one-day session would be available to all males across the Borough, regardless of age, ethnicity or culture.

Mr Patel hoped that members of as many community groups as possible would support the Dosti Men's Forum, which would be grateful for advice and suggestions for future events and activities and for concerns on any issues or problems that the Forum might address. Mr Patel considered that the new Forum had the potential to be a valuable tool in the encouragement of community cohesion and integration and was planning to contact the leaders of the several community groups throughout the Borough to garner their support of the Forum initiatives.

The Chair requested the Dosti Men's Forum to examine ways in which its members could engage more with young people and suggested the organisation of an Open Day at the Islamic Academy. Tom Watson also recommended an annual Open Day event at the Mosque. In response, Mr Patel undertook to pass on the members' comments and suggestions to Max Allam and Mohammed Sajid, elders at the Mosque.

08.EM.26 QUESTIONS

Tony Uren confirmed that no questions had been raised by any Consultative Committee member in advance of the meeting.

08.EM.27 FUTURE CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Donna Hall explained the Council's proposals to revise the arrangements for the debate and consultation on equality issues, having regard to the national agenda and need to afford greater emphasis on all aspects of equality identified in the Equality Scheme recently endorsed by the Council.

The Council proposed to establish a wider Equalities Forum that would incorporate the current remits of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee and the Disability Forum. The Council had recognised seven strands of diversity (age, gender, disability, ethnicity, faith, rurality and sexuality). The creation of a single equality forum would allow the Council and its partners to place all strands of equality on an equal platform and would provide a stronger voice to tackle the issues which impacted most on those groups.

The plans had been explained and debated at a recent meeting of the Disability Liaison Group and at discussions with the North and Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council and other relevant agencies and organisations (eg the Interfaith Forum).

Naveed Sharif and Councillor Peter Malpas both supported the proposals as an opportunity to afford a stronger voice to the advocacy of equality issues. This view was supported by Councillor Terry Brown who hoped that the meetings of the new Forum would meet more frequently than envisaged.

Alison Hansford expressed a concern that the new group might become too unwieldy and hoped that the group would not lose the interest and contribution of local groups. In response, Donna explained that, whilst the Forum body itself would comprise fewer key members, community representatives and members of special interest groups could become involved through their membership of Task and Finish Groups to be appointed on an occasional basis to examine in depth specific issues and problems.

Liz Morey suggested that the plans could be discussed at the appropriate Theme Group of the Chorley Partnership.

In conclusion, the Chair highlighted the changing role of the Consultative Committee and its shifting emphasis. The function of the Committee was not now solely related to consultation, but now encompassed a more proactive role in the generation of awareness campaigns, events and activities. The new Forum would be a better platform to promote and engender community cohesion and integration through its concentration on measures to champion each identified stand of diversity.

08.EM.28 CHORLEY SMILE CAMPAIGN

Donna Hall advised the Consultative Committee of the Chorley Smile Awards ceremony to be held on the evening of 26 June 2008 as a means of recognising and awarding individuals and groups whose achievements during the past year had contributed to an improvement in the quality of life for residents of the Borough. Donna invited the Consultative Committee members to nominate worthy candidates in each of the respective award categories.

08.EM.29 INTERFAITH CELEBRATIONS

The Consultative Committee members were informed of and invited to attend and participate in the exhibitions and events to be held in the Borough between 30 June and 5 July 2008 with funding from the Lancashire and Chorley Interfaith Forums. The celebrations would include a multi-faith concert to take place at St Laurence's Church.

08.EM.30 TELEPHONE HELPLINE

Notification had been received from the Preston and Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council that a new free telephone helpline (0808 8087398) had been set up to offer free advice to any victim of racism in Preston and Western Lancashire during the hours of 10am to 2pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Chair