

Equality Forum

Thursday, 17 October 2013

Present: Councillor Hasina Khan (Chair), and Councillors Steve Holgate and Rosie Russell

Councillors also in attendance: Councillor Julia Berry

Officers: Chris Sinnott (Head of Policy and Communications), Sarah James (Partnerships Manager), Louise Wingfield (Democratic and Member Services Officer) and Conrad Heald

Partner officers: Jeanette Hickey (Lancashire Constabulary)

Also in attendance: Clare Smith (Young People's Service, Lancashire County Council), Malcolm Allen (Malcolm's Music Land), Donna Hussain (Chorley VCFS Network), Zohaib Sajid (Chorley Muslim Youth), Samir Khan (Chorley Muslim Youth), Zaif Akram, Zafar Khan, Reverend Martin Cox (St Laurence's Church), David Brown (Chorley Pensioners Association), Mr A Patel (Dosti Mens Forum), Terence Reynold (Deaf Forum), Jeannie Stirling (Homestart), Frank Stringfellow (Chorley Deaf Club), Michelle Mayson (CBCH), Linda Walker (Young People's Service / Lancashire MIND), Zed Ali (Project BME Lancashire), Jan Jacob (Watch Home Care Services), Andrew Pratt (Lancashire Forum of Faiths), Neil Rushton (Disability Equality NW), Lilian Njuguna and Patricia Weston

13.EF.79 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked those on the top table to introduce themselves. Attendees were reminded to introduce themselves, state the organisation they represented, if applicable, and to use the microphone when addressing the meeting.

13.EF.80 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Alison Hansford, Councillor Steve Murfitt, Councillor Jean Cronshaw, Marel Urry (Rural Watch and Hoghton Parish Council), Deanna Hartley-Davis (Runshaw College), Suzie

Jones (Disability Equality NW), Estelle Brown (Chorley Pensioners) and Maria Michaels (Stepping Forward).

13.EF.81 MINUTES

The minutes of the Equality Forum held on 18 April 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13.EF.82 CREDIT UNION - INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

Sarah James gave a presentation on Chorley's Credit Union which is now open in Chorley at 28 Market Street.

Credit Unions are community savings and loans co-operatives, owned and run by the members. Credit Unions are authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and Regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in the same way as banks and building societies and savings are protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

The benefits include; an easy and accessible way to save, access to low cost affordable loans, access to free budgeting advice, pre-paid debit cards, no fees or charges, all members get the same profit share, and free life savings and loan insurance.

Members of the forum were asked the following questions, and the feedback is provided below:

1. How do you think having a Credit Union in Chorley will be useful?

- It's a viable alternative to payday lending and doorstep lending.
- Gives people with no credit score a chance to save and build their credit history.
- Anything that brings some honesty and a little less dishonesty and deceitfulness into the financial sector
- Savings with high interest and dividend
- Poorer and young will benefit
- Easier than opening a bank account
- Alternative to loan sharks
- Avoid loan sharks and a good way to save money – low interest

- A credit union is useful
- Can they guarantee it's a safe loan?

Sarah James reiterated that you are protected in the same way as any other banks or building societies.

2. How can you or your group help to promote the Credit Union?

- Promote through the VCFS network
- Promote through Community Centres especially in deprived areas
- Social housing provider
- Come to Chorley Deaf Club to give a presentation
- Group savings for group activities
- Signposting young people from the zones info and advice drop in. Is the Credit Union for advice on finances
- Business loans for start up
- Promotion in the parishes newsletter
- Through different faith organisations ie Mosque, Church etc
- Role models to promote – put your money where your mouth is
- Word of mouth and maybe join yourself

3. What needs to be considered in terms of accessibility?

- More flexible opening hours
- Outreach services for eg Leyland, Clayton Brook. Links through CAB services
- Outreach work to explain to other organisations in Chorley with clients who would struggle to visit shop unless with a support worker
- Student overdraft
- Radio billboards, newspaper, spreading the word
- Telephone, email, website
- People might still be suspicious of being conned still wary of financial establishments
- Need to arrange qualified BSL interpreters for appointments with Deaf people
- Speed of loan processing – instant
- Online banking

Sarah James explained that online banking will hopefully be up and running by Christmas.

13.EF.83

NETWORKING BREAK

13.EF.84 DISABLED PARKING IN THE TOWN CENTRE

Conrad Heald addressed the Forum about blue badge parking in the Town Centre. The current parking provision is 1403 spaces with 55 designated blue badge spaces.

Cllr Russell asked if the designated bays were a uniform size as the width is important when getting a wheelchair out. Conrad explained that spaces are currently 4.8m long, 2.5m wide with a further 1.2m in the cross hatched area.

Malcolm Allen highlighted that on the flat iron the paint has eroded, and would this be refurbished. Conrad explained that work is ongoing to refurbish the car parks.

Ginny Jones explained that there is a free car park in Chorley but it's on a slope and has a gravel path, is there a possibility that this will be tarmacked? Conrad explained that the free car park on the old McDonald's site at Gillibrand Street is part of the redevelopment of the site, work will start in November. Fleet Street short stay car park will be re-tarmacked and re-lined.

Cllr Holgate asked how many prosecutions had been made for parking in disabled only spaces. Conrad said that he did not have the statistics but would find them out.

David Brown highlighted that in Fylde if a blue badge holder parks outside the disabled parking bays that they will be charged. He felt that this was deceitful and has told people not to go to the Fylde. If Chorley did the same then this could stop people coming to Chorley.

Conrad explained that this was the reason why this item had been brought to the Equality Forum. A survey was carried out monitoring the number of blue badge holders not parking in designated spaces, and there were 337 in one week.

Conrad asked, if we do introduce charges do we need to provide more spaces? Would this dissuade people?

Neil Rushton highlighted to the Forum that where no space can be found if you do have a blue badge it is possible to park on double yellow lines (as long as there are no vertical lines on the kerb) for up to 3 hours, and that badge holders need to be made aware of this.

Jan Jacob explained that carers used to be able to get an institutional badge which has now been removed and therefore they are unable to park in disabled bays. She asked how they can take people out and park in spaces to enable them to get the wheelchair out. Conrad said he would look into that.

13.EF.85 EQUALITY MONITORING FORM

Chris Sinnott explained that the Equality Monitoring form is used by all services within the Council. Chorley council is committed to ensuring that all customers have equal opportunities to access services and are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner. By including monitoring questions on surveys and feedback, the Council are able to understand the profile of its customers and analyse any trends and patterns.

Chris asked the Forum to have a look at the current monitoring form that is being used, would the Forum be happy to answer these questions, did they think there was anything that had been missed. The forum was asked to highlight anything on the form that should be changed.

One suggestion was made that the question; what was your age on your last birthday could be changed to include age groups.

13.EF.86 OPEN FORUM TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUES FOR EACH EQUALITY STRAND

- Jan Jacob from Watch Home Care Services raised a concern about home care in Lancashire and asked if there were any updates to commissioning and procurement in Chorley. Jan explained that there are currently 167 providers in Lancashire at the moment and this was to be reduced to four or five and was a dramatic reduction.
- In response to Jan Jacob's concerns Councillor Holgate highlighted that Lancashire County Council are currently

looking at procurement processes and there are proposals to reduce the amount of groups they commission services to. He felt it was important to challenge this presumption as the services provided need to include as many diverse services in all areas as possible. Councillor Berry reiterated the importance that individuals provide feedback about care homes and domiciliary care to Lancashire County Council who has set up a task group and also explained that direct payments were available to give people a choice and had been around for a few years; individuals need to contact LCC to take advantage of this.

- Ginny Jones raised concerns on behalf of Estelle Brown about the state of the footpaths in Chorley, and that Councillors should try using a motorised scooter or wheelchair to see how difficult it is. Councillor Khan explained that she had been round the town centre with Estelle and taken notes on improvements required, however Ginny reiterated that Councillors should take up the challenge and try using a motorised scooter.
- Andrew Pratt offered congratulations to Chorley Council for supporting Chorley Live, and said that under faith and belief he would like to see different sorts of music encouraged to perform. Chris Sinnott advised that the Chorley Live event will be taking place again next year and all comments and requests would be taken into consideration.
- Reverend Cox highlighted that Interfaith week is 18 – 22 November, and the Interfaith Forum will launch on Friday 22 November at 1pm, in the Lancastrian Suite, Chorley Town Hall. Refreshments will be available and all forum members are welcome to attend.
- Councillor Berry highlighted that hate crime awareness week runs from 12 to 19 October, and it would have been useful to have a presentation from Gypsies and Travellers at this meeting. Councillor Khan explained that the group were invited to come and present at the meeting and that the Forum is trying to engage with them.

13.EF.87 NOTICES / FEEDBACK / PUBLICITY

Chorley Women's Centre are looking to set up a Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender group at the Women's Centre on Saturday afternoons. The centre is holding an open door LBT consultation event on Wednesday 13 November 2013 from 6.30 to 8.30pm to hear about what is required from this group and the wider community.

13.EF.88 ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES IS/ARE URGENT

There were no items raised under this agenda item.

13.EF.89 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members of the Forum noted the dates of future meetings, which would take place at 6.30pm, in the Lancastrian Room, Town Hall, Chorley unless otherwise advised:

- 23 January 2014
- 3 April 2014

Chair