

Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee

Wednesday, 25 April 2007

Present: Councillor Peter Malpas (Chair), Mr G Finlayson (African/Caribbean Group), Terry Brown, Miss Margaret Iddon, Hasina Khan, Christopher Snow, Ms K Grzeczynska (Polish Catholic Community), Ms M Iqbal (Asian Womens Forum), Ms A Mala (Asian Women's Forum), Mr A Patel (Dosti Mens Forum), Ms Y Patel (Asian Womens Forum) and Mr Mohammed Sajid (Chorley Muslim Trust)

Officers: Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Policy and Performance), Sarah Dobson (Performance Advisor - Corporate and Customer), Shenaz Matadar (Consultant Advisor - Equality and Diversity) and Tony Uren (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: Mr B Patel (Preston & Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council)

07.EM.15 WELCOME BY CHAIR

The Chair (Councillor P Malpas) welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

07.EM.16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs M Gray, Mr M Allam (Chorley Muslim Trust), Mrs P Cuerden (Neighbourhood Watch Association), Mrs C Finlayson (African/Caribbean Group), Mr S McKibbon (Victim Support), Ms C Kubicki (Nguzo Saba Centre), Ms D Hall (Chief Executive) and Mr J Carson (Director of Leisure and Cultural Services).

07.EM.17 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

07.EM.18 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

(a) Confirmation

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

(b) Proposed Multi-Faith Event (Minute 07.EM.09)

In response to Mr Patel's enquiry, Sarah Dobson intimated that it was hoped to bring details of the plans for a 2007 multi-faith event to an early meeting of the Consultative Committee.

07.EM.19 ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Consultative Committee at its last meeting had appointed a small Sub-Group to meet with appropriate Council Officers to examine ways in which the Committee's role and operating practices might be altered to improve the effectiveness of the body.

Sarah Dobson outlined a number of areas and objectives that the Sub-Group might wish to explore including:

- the means by which the Consultative Committee might contribute to the factors that impact upon and influence the quality of life in the Borough;
- a clear identification of the objectives that the Committee wishes to achieve and how the Committee Members, the Borough Council and other support agencies can help to deliver those targets;
- a greater emphasis and focus on the role that the Committee could play in quality of life; health and well-being; capacity building and community leadership issues.

Sarah also suggested several issues and activities linking into the general objectives that the Sub-Group could address. The Committee members were asked to notify Sarah of any other ideas or matters that they considered the Sub-Group should examine.

Mr Patel said that, while, in his opinion, the Consultative Committee generally operated satisfactorily, it should not be oblivious to its original intention to consult and ascertain the views of the minority ethnic communities.

Mr Patel thought the membership of the Committee should be as wide and representative of the numerous minority ethnic sectors of the Borough as possible and should be flexible in its meeting venues and operating practices. Meetings should be arranged on a less formal basis and present an opportunity for a discussion forum on relevant matters of interest and the Council's prospective plans.

Councillor Brown and Councillor Khan concurred with Mr Patel's comments, adding that the different groups represented on the Committee should be requested to make periodic reports on their activities and raise any specific concerns.

Sarah confirmed that the Sub-Group would aim to meet before the Consultative Committee's next meeting and present its initial recommendations on the way forward for consideration at the next meeting.

07.EM.20 BEST VALUE RESIDENTS' SURVEY, 2006

Lesley-Ann Fenton advised the Committee that it was a statutory duty for each local authority to consult a sample of residents every three years to obtain their views on the Council's delivery of services; their perceptions of the quality of life within their own areas of the Borough; and their opinions on improvements required.

1400 responses had been received to a recent postal survey of 4,000 residents, the replies split between six areas of the Borough being weighted by age, gender and ethnicity to ensure that the analysis was representative of the Borough's population.

Sarah Dobson gave a brief overview of the results of the survey in so far as they related to equality and diversity issues, highlighting, in particular the following findings;

- 3% of the respondents cited Race Relations as an important factor in making an area a good place to live, while 2% considered that Race Relations was an area in need of improvement.
- 61% of the population felt that people failing to respect and consider others was a problem in their area.
- A large proportion of the population considered that people from different backgrounds got on well together in their areas, with a generally 15% disagreement. However, the number of residents dissenting with the view rose significantly to 39% in the south and central areas of the Borough. In addition,

significant percentages of 18-25 year old persons and people living in rented properties disagreed with the statement.

- 90% of residents found it easy to access a Church, Mosque or other place of worship.

The Committee's reactions and views on the survey's findings and subsequent courses of action were sought.

Sarah posed a number of pertinent questions to the Committee members, querying, in particular, whether the findings were representative of the views of the majority of the minority ethnic population and whether the statistics were reflective of the current situation in the Borough. The Committee would also need to determine its response to the survey's findings, identifying any recommended measures that could be taken to address the issues and concerns of respondents and to improve Community cohesion generally throughout the Borough.

Sarah suggested that the Committee might wish to set up a small Sub-Group to consider the implications of the survey results in greater depth.

Following a short debate, it was **AGREED** to refer further consideration of the residents' survey results to a future meeting of the Consultation Committee, but that, in the interim, the Committee Members be requested to notify Sarah Dobson, either by telephone on 01257 515325 or by e-mail to sarah.dobson@chorley.gov.uk if they wish to comment or offer any suggestions in relation to the findings.

07.EM.21 EQUALITY SCHEME

Sarah Dobson advised the Committee of the Officers' actions and activities over the past few months to help delivery of the Equality Scheme published in December 2006. Sarah also introduced Shenaz Matader who was advising the Council on equality and diversity issues and assisting the Authority in its delivery of the Scheme.

The Council had altered its complaints monitoring procedures to identify complainants by ethnicity; networks with neighbouring authorities to share best practice had been developed; a training programme for Officers and Members was being compiled; and Chorley Council's newly improved web-site had been launched.

Councillor Terry Brown informed the Committee that he was currently Chairing an Equality and Diversity Sub-Group appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of its scrutiny inquiry in the issues that need to be addressed during the Authority's quest for an improved Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating. The Sub-Group had examined the Council's current policies and procedures on equality and diversity issues and would be presenting a number of recommendations to improve the Council's practices and opportunities to seek external funding sources. The suggested innovations would include an extension of the Outreach Officer sessions in the One-Stop-Shop, improvement of the work with taxi drivers and a requirement for future Council reports to take account of equality and diversity implications.

07.EM.22 TRAINING PROGRAMME, 2007

Sarah Dobson reported that the Council was revising its approach to training on equality and diversity issues for Members and Officers, with a view to a greater focus on an understanding of the cultures and needs of ethnic minority communities and hard to reach groups. This would involve, initially, close consultation with those communities and groups so that their views could be reflected in the training programmes.

Suggestions so far included the involvement of the Disability Liaison Group on the delivery of training on impairment awareness and visits to different faith groups' places of worship.

Sarah said that she would welcome the Committee's views on the elements that should be reflected in the training programme, together with any volunteers interested in developing or participating in the delivery of the training sessions. In response, Bhikhu Patel confirmed that he would be happy to contribute to the compilation and delivery of the training programme.

07.EM.23 COMMUNITY COHESION MULTI AGENCY DIVERSITY INCIDENTS PANEL

Sarah Dobson advised the Committee of plans to hold the initial meeting of a Focus Group in early May to discuss the manner in which the Multi-Agency Diversity Incidents Panel could evolve and become more effective. The terms of reference could be extended to cover issues of race, disability and gender and its remit and aims altered to focus more closely on the encouragement of community cohesion.

All current and potential partners would be invited to attend the meeting of the Focus Group and members of the Consultative Committee would also be welcome.

07.EM.24 ASIAN WOMEN'S FORUM

Councillor Hasina Khan told the Members that a decision on the Asian Women's Stage 2 bid for Big Lottery funding of a Family Learning Programme project was still awaited. The project aimed to deliver a series of family learning activities for the Asian community in East Chorley. Councillor Khan was also due to address the Chorley Partnership's Local Public Service Board at its meeting the following day to seek its support of the Forum's activities and potential funding bids.

The Consultative Committee also received a report prepared by and circulated at the meeting by the two Part-Time Officers which summarised the principal activities and initiatives being pursued by the Officers.

Councillor Khan, in addition, confirmed that an Officer would be available each Thursday in the One-Stop-Shop to offer advice and assistance to any member of the black and minority ethnic communities.

07.EM.25 DOSTI MEN'S FORUM

Mr A Patel outlined the background and rationale behind the arrangements to establish the Dosti Men's Forum, the membership of which would be open to all sectors of the community. The Forum aimed to provide an opportunity for its male members, particularly young people, to express their views and opinions and to promote and encourage community cohesion by mutual understanding and the integration of all groups and faiths into the local community life.

The Asian Women's Forum was assisting the creation of the Men's Forum and were seeking financial aid from the Community Champions Fund to launch the new Forum.

07.EM.26 EVENTS

Sarah Dobson thanked the members of the Consultative Committee who had supported and participated in the memorial service and civic event that had been held on Saturday, 27 January 2007 to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. Both events had been well attended and had proven successful.

Sarah also drew attention to the Community Charter for Chorley which had been approved and adopted by the Council as a foundation on which to build relationships,

understanding and tolerance between the various faith groups and communities. The members were asked to notify Sarah of any suggestions for the effective launch and promotion of the Charter.

Lesley-Ann and Sarah advised the Committee of plans to arrange a Multi-Faith event in the Lancastrian Suite at the Town Hall on a convenient date in September or October 2007. The Council hoped to consult with Officers from Blackburn with Darwen Council to benefit from their experience on the organisation of such events. A Sub-Group of the Faith Forum was to be set up to consider arrangements for the event and any member interested in serving on the Sub-Group or putting forward ideas for the event were requested to contact Sarah.

Gary Finlayson reminded the Committee that October 2007 had been designated as 'Black History Month' and that 2007 marked the 20th anniversary of the passing of the Parliamentary Bill that abolished the Trans-Atlantic slave trade on British ships. Gary hoped that, taking account of the associations between slavery and the textile and sugar industries and their links with Chorley, the two occasions could be commemorated in the Borough. Lesley-Ann indicated that the Council's External Funding Officer would be happy to offer advice to Gary or any group wishing to undertake community projects based around the two themes, on available funding sources.

07.EM.27 QUESTIONS

There had been no questions notified by the Consultative Committee members in advance of the meeting.

07.EM.28 CHAIR'S THANKS

The Chair (Councillor Peter Malpas) thanked the Vice-Chair (Gary Finlayson) and all members and officers of the Consultative Committee for their support and contributions to the meetings over the past municipal year.

07.EM.29 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee was scheduled to be held in the Town Hall, Chorley on Tuesday, 3 July 2007 at 7.00pm.

Chair