

Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee

Wednesday, 26 April 2006

Present: Councillor Christopher Snow (Chair) and Councillor Mary Wilson, M Allam, Ms K Banati, Mr Mohammed Sajid and Ms H Khan

Officers: Jamie Carson (Director of Leisure and Cultural Services), Keith Allen (Head of Public Space Services), Tim Rignall (Head of Corporate and Policy Services), Moira Rigby (Human Resources Advisor) and Tony Uren (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: Mr D Herne (Chorley & South Ribble Primary Care Trust) and Mr J Cannon (Chorley and South Ribble Citizens Advice Bureau)

06.EM.16 WELCOME BY CHAIR (COUNCILLOR C SNOW)

The Chair of the Committee (Councillor Snow) welcomed everyone present to the meeting of the Consultative Committee.

06.EM.17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor P Malpas, Councillor J Walker, Mr N Raza (Chorley Muslim Welfare Society), Ms D Hall (Chorley Council's Chief Executive), Ms G Viragh (Senior Human Resources Advisor, Chorley Borough Council) and Ms J Hodge (Chorley and South Ribble Primary Care Trust).

06.EM.18 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

06.EM.19 MINUTES - CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee held on 25 January 2006 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the correction of the spelling of Mr Allam's name in Minute 12 (New Mosque – Progress Report).

06.EM.20 THE ROLE OF THE CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU

The Chair welcomed Mr J Cannon, Ethnic Minorities Project Worker with the Chorley and South Ribble Citizens' Advice Bureau, who had been invited to make a short address to the Committee on the Bureau's role within the ethnic minority communities within the Borough.

Mr Cannon explained that the Citizens' Advice Bureau was currently delivering the fourth and final year of a project funded by the Chorley and South Ribble Primary Care Trust aimed at enhancing the presence of the Citizens' Advice Bureau within the community and encouraging greater synergy with the ethnic minority communities. Advisors trained in Asian and a range of European languages were able to communicate with the vast majority of the black and minority ethnic sectors of the community.

Mr Cannon produced and circulated at the meeting statistical graphs showing the number of consultations held with members of the identified black and minority ethnic groups within the Borough during three separate periods between October 2005 and

April 2006, together with an indication of the range of topics raised at the consultations. The Consultative Committee members were advised of the steadily increasing numbers of enquiries from recent immigrants from East European countries, particularly on immigration and employment related issues.

During the debate that followed Mr Cannon's address, the Chair hoped that the project and facility available to each of the minority ethnic communities in the Borough would be afforded as much publicity as possible.

Mr Cannon expressed the Bureau's gratitude to the Primary Care Trust and the Asian Women's Forum for their support and assistance in the delivery of the project. With effect from 8 May 2006, the Bureau intended to station a male outreach officer, adept in the three basic Asian languages, at the Council's Union Street offices, who would, hopefully, complement the services provided by the Asian Women's Forum. It was envisaged that the trained advisors would provide generalist advice within the Bureau when the PCT funded project was concluded.

In response to Members' queries, Mr Cannon intimated that trial sessions at the Tatton Community Centre in an endeavour to take the service out into the community had not proved to be particularly successful.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Chair thanked Mr Cannon for his address.

06.EM.21 COMMUNITY HEALTH DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

(a) Chorley and South Ribble Primary Care Trust

Mr Herne expressed the Primary Care Trust's (PCT) gratitude to Ms Khan, Mr Allan and Mr Sagid for their assistance in securing responses from members of the Asian community to the PCT's recent survey on a range of issues concerning the black and minority ethnic communities' access to health services.

Mr Herne indicated that over 200 responses to the PCT questionnaire had been received and gave a snapshot of some of the principal facts that had so far emerged from the survey. In summary, these included:

- There was an even division of male and female responses.
- A significant proportion of respondents were unemployed.
- The priority issues generating most enquiries concerned Council Tax; health matters; and available benefits.
- Information on available services was gained principally through family contacts, the Community Centre and the Mosque.
- The main means of accessing services was through either telephone calls or visits to appropriate offices/centres.
- In excess of one third of respondents rated the current services as only adequate or poor.
- A lack of service information and poor communications were cited as the main barriers to the accessing of health services.
- The respondents considered that the present services could be enhanced by the provision of additional translation facilities and a greater emphasis on the services and information available for male members of the communities.

Mr Herne intimated that, while the survey results required more detailed analysis and evaluation, the tentative results had highlighted a range of important issues and deficiencies that would need to be addressed by the Primary Care Trust in its efforts to improve the black and minority ethnic communities' accessing of primary and secondary health care services.

(b) 'Access to Services' project

Ms Khan and Ms Banati updated the Committee on a number of projects in which the Asian Women's Forum was involved as part of the Community Health Development project commissioned by the PCT.

Courses in English language; spoken Arabic; self-defence; ICT and self-esteem, together with classes aimed at assisting Asian mothers to help their children with school homework, in addition to courses on other sensitive community issues (eg mental health problems) were being arranged. Additionally, drop-in sessions were organised by the Forum on a regular basis.

Mr Herne accepted Ms Bonati's argument that there was a need for the community development work to continue beyond the expiry of the current project and stated that the PCT would be supporting the appointment of an officer to work within the minority ethnic communities on mental health issues. Mr Herne also reminded the Committee of a similar project being delivered by the Njubo Saba Centre (based in Preston) to the African heritage community and, in response, to an enquiry from Mr Cannon, accepted the need for the PCT to address the specific health problems facing the Eastern European immigrant population.

Mr Carson referred to project funding sources available from the Home Office and confirmed that his Directorate would be pleased to assist appropriate organisations' applications for funding.

06.EM.22 NEW MOSQUE - FEEDBACK FROM THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY

Mr Allam reported that in excess of 1,000 people had visited the new Mosque on Brooke Street as part of the Official Opening celebrations. The occasion had proved to be a resounding success and the Muslim Welfare Society planned to organise regular Open Days in future years as an opportunity for other faiths to increase their knowledge and understanding of Islam.

Mr Rajid added that local schools would be welcome to visit the Mosque and reported that a number of schools had already arranged dates for visits.

The Chair commended the Muslim Welfare Society members on the excellent organisation of the opening event and said that he had been impressed with the quality of the Mosque's structure.

06.EM.23 PROPOSED MULTI-FAITH EVENT

Mr Rignall reminded the meeting that the 2005 Eid Festival had been postponed in the wake of the Asian earthquake.

A small sub-group (comprising Mr Raza and representatives of Lancashire Churches Together, Chorley Churches Together and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) had been formed to examine the feasibility of a multi-faith event being organised in 2006. It was envisaged that the Borough Council's role would be to facilitate and support the event. The sub-group was due to meet shortly and Mr Rignall undertook to keep the Consultative Committee advised of developments.

In response to comments raised at the meeting, Mr Rignall confirmed that he would facilitate a meeting between Mr Allam and the Borough Council's Chief Executive to clarify the situation in respect of the proposed event and, in particular, the planned nature of the event and the parties to be responsible for its organisation. The outcome of the meeting would be reported back to the next meeting of the Consultative Committee.

06.EM.24 QUESTIONS

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

06.EM.25 MULTI-AGENCY DIVERSITY INCIDENTS PANEL

The Committee received and considered a confidential report of the Head of Corporate and Policy Services on a meeting of the Multi-Agency Diversity Incidents Panel held on 17 April 2006. The report was accompanied by a schedule listing the racist incidents reported during the period 1 January to 31 March 2006 that had been presented to the Diversity Incidents Panel meeting. The summary report contained details of the date, time, location and nature of the incidents, the ethnicity of both the perpetrators and the victims and an indication of the subsequent action taken.

The Members were reminded of the confidentiality of the majority of the information imparted and, in response to Mr Allam's query, Mr Rignall clarified the sources of the statistical data.

The Committee noted that there had been a 17% increase in the number of reported racist incidents when compared to the previous quarter's statistics, which might be attributable to an increasing confidence in the reporting arrangements, particularly in local schools. The location of the incidents appeared to be spread generally across the Borough, with no particular 'hot spots' being readily identifiable.

Mr Rignall intimated that the Diversity Incidents Panel did instigate appropriate courses of action and/or campaigns aimed at addressing specifically identified problems, with the ultimate objective of reducing the number of racist incidents. The Panel would, however, be happy to consider any suggestions of the Consultative Committee regarding any other means by which particular problems could be alleviated.

06.EM.26 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Members noted that the next meeting of the Consultative Committee was scheduled to be held in the Town Hall, Chorley on Wednesday, 26 July 2006 at 7.00pm.

Chair