

ETHNIC MINORITIES CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Sub-Group meeting held on 21 June 2007

Present: Councillor Hasina Khan (Chair of Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee)
Gary Finlayson (Vice-Chair of Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee)
Councillor Terry Brown
Bhikhu Patel (Preston and Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council)
Sarah Dobson (Performance Advisor – Corporate and Customer)
Tony Uren (Democratic Services Officer)

ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Sub-Group was appointed at a recent meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee to explore areas around the general aims and objectives of the Committee and to examine ways in which the Committee's role and operating procedures might be altered to improve its effectiveness.

A list of suggested topic areas around which the debate could be structured was circulated at the meeting and Bhikhu Patel presented a note outlining his suggestions for the arrangements and procedures to apply to future meetings.

Mr Patel commented that the Chorley Committee was currently operating generally satisfactorily and had the potential to evolve into a successful and effective body. It was the Sub-Group's consensus view that the Consultative Committee should endeavour to widen its membership base to embrace as many minority ethnic groups as possible and to encourage the active participation of its members in the Committee debates.

Following a frank and useful discussion, the Sub-Group **AGREED** to recommend the Consultative Committee to adopt the following procedures and arrangements for future meetings of the Committee:

- Meetings should remain at the Town Hall, but if the Council Chamber is to be used, the Chair and supporting Officers should sit at a table under the dais facing other members.
- The Committee members should be requested, in advance of meetings, to select from a potential list of discussion items, the topics they wish to see included on the meeting's agenda.
- Community representatives should be encouraged to participate in the meetings with, perhaps, an open forum at the beginning of each meeting as an opportunity for representatives to raise issues of concern.
- A 15 minute refreshment break be allowed during Committee meetings as a networking opportunity.
- Officers should aim to produce and circulate short, concise reports to the Committee in advance of meetings.
- The open forum should provide an opportunity for members to express views on the delivery and accessibility of the Council and external services (eg Social Services, PCT and immigration issues).
- Representation should be sought from as many black and minority ethnic groups as possible, including Youth Groups.
- Workshop sessions on differing aspects of the Council's services could be explored.

- The meetings could be used to seek members' opinions on emerging or planned policies of the Council.
- The community groups to be encouraged to seek advice from the Council's External Funding Officer on available sources of grant aid.
- A procedure be adopted whereby each Committee member would be requested to arrange for a questionnaire seeking views on the delivery of Council services or other aspects of community life to be completed by five members of their respective communities for submission to the following meeting. (The Officers have been requested to prepare for submission to the next Consultative Committee a draft questionnaire seeking opinions from the community representatives on the level of services provided, access problems and any suggested revisions or improvements.)
- The Committee could examine ways in which the communities represented could lead on celebrating major relevant events and commemorating significant anniversaries.
- The Committee could examine the feasibility of members organising half-day conferences on relevant issues of interest to the minority ethnic communities (eg Youth activities, Immigration issues, health issues, etc), with specialist speakers invited.
- The various communities/groups represented on the Committee should be requested to make periodic reports on their activities.