

Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee

Tuesday, 3 July 2007

Present: Councillor Hasina Khan (Chair), Mr A Patel (Vice-Chair), Max Allam (Chorley Muslim Welfare Society), Kinga Grzeczynska (Polish Catholic Community), Mohammed Hanif (Chorley Muslim Welfare Society), Wajid Hussain, Yacoub Illahi (Chorley Khukha Welfare Association), Miriam Iqba (Asian Women's Forum), Zafar Khan, Azeema Mala (Asian Women's Forum), Aneesa Malek (Asian Women's Forum), Councillor Peter Malpas (Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration), Michael P Muldowney (Dosti Mens Forum), Ayyub M Patel (Dosti Men's Forum), D Patel and Saira Patel (Asian Women's Forum)

Officers: Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Policy and Performance) and Sarah Dobson (Performance Advisor - Corporate and Customer) and Tony Uren (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: Sergeant J Hickey (Lancashire Constabulary) and Mr B Patel (Preston & Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council)

07.EM.30 WELCOME BY CHAIR (COUNCILLOR HASINA KHAN)

Councillor Hasina Khan, who had been appointed by Chorley Council to the Chairmanship of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee for 2007/08 at its last Annual Meeting, welcomed everyone present to the meeting. Councillor Khan had been a member of the Committee for a number of years and thanked Councillor Peter Malpas for his Chairmanship of the Committee over the past year.

07.EM.31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Terry Brown, Mrs P Cuerden (Neighbourhood Watch Association), Mr J Carson (Director of Leisure and Cultural Services), Ms L Easterbrook (Central Lancashire Primary Care Trust), Councillor Mrs M Gray, Ms D Hall (Chief Executive), Mr M Kazi and Mr M Sajid.

07.EM.32 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.33 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Mr Ayyub Patel was nominated to act as Vice-Chair of the Consultative Committee for 2007/08 by Mr M Muldowney and seconded by Mr B Patel.

The Chair thanked Gary Finlayson in his absence for his services as Vice-Chair of the Committee over the past 12 months.

It was **AGREED** that Mr Ayyub Patel be appointed to act as Vice-Chair of the Consultative Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2007/08.

07.EM.34 CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The Members noted that the following Councillors had been appointed to represent Chorley Council on the Consultative Committee during 2007/08:

Councillor Hasina Khan (Chair);
Councillor Terence Brown;

Councillor Mrs Marie Gray;
Councillor Peter Malpas.

07.EM.35 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING - CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the last meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee held on 25 April 2007 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the correction of Minute 07.EM.26 (Events) to include reference to Kinga Grzeczynska's appreciation to everyone who had supported and participated in the events held on 27 January 2007 to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

07.EM.36 CHAIR'S WELCOME ADDRESS

The Chair (Councillor Hasina Khan), in her welcoming remarks, gave a short address on her vision for the future involvement of the role of the Consultative Committee.

Councillor Khan hoped that the Committee would be positive and action focused, continually scrutinising the Council's and other agencies' policies and actions, in its quest to become a driving force for change and improvement of services for the black and minority ethnic communities of the Borough.

On a practical level, Councillor Khan hoped to introduce the following innovative procedures and modes of operation at future Committee meetings:

- an open forum at the beginning of each Committee meeting;
- a 15 minute networking break within each meeting;
- short, verbal or written, updates from the community and agency representatives on the Committee;
- greater input from the community in setting meeting agendas;
- exploring opportunities for external funding.

Councillor Khan envisaged that the membership of the Committee would be as extensive and representative of the minority ethnic communities as possible and requested the Committee members to notify either herself or the Council's Officers of their ideas and suggestions as to how the Committee might achieve its ambitious objectives and, more specifically, the issues that the Committee should be addressing.

07.EM.37 ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Committee was reminded that a Sub-Group comprising four members and officers had been appointed at an earlier meeting to examine ways in which the role and operating procedures of the Consultative Committee might be altered to improve its effectiveness.

The Sub-Group had met on 21 June 2007 and a note summarising its discussions and setting out the Sub-Group's recommendations had been circulated to the Committee members for consideration.

The Consultative Committee accepted the recommendations as a way forward. The Members considered that the current quarterly cycle of meetings should continue, but that the appointed Sub-Group could meet whenever necessary in the intervening periods to consider urgent matters and report back to the next Consultative Committee meeting.

During the debate, the Committee agreed that the meetings should be open and inclusive to all sectors of the local community and that its members should be as representative of all faiths and minority ethnic groups as possible. Members should be allowed to be accompanied by friends or colleagues and send a substitute to meetings they are unable to attend.

It was **AGREED**:

(1) That the recommendations of the Sub-Group be approved and that the following procedures and arrangements be adopted for future meetings of the Consultative Committee:

- **Meeting shall remain at the Town Hall, but if the Council Chamber is to be used, the Chair and supporting officers shall sit at a table under the dais facing other members.**
- **The Committee members shall 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 shall 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 shall aim to produce and circulate short, concise reports to the Committee in advance of meetings.**
- **The open forum shall 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 will 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 can be explored.**
- **The meetings can be used to seek members' opinions on emerging or planned policies of the Council.**
- **The community groups can 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 will 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 Committee can examine ways in which the communities represented can lead on celebrating major relevant events and commemorating significant anniversaries.**
- **The Committee can 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/ethnic groups represented on the Committee will be requested to make periodic reports on their activities.**

(2) That the appointed Sub-Group meet on 5 September 2007 to compile the draft questionnaire to seek opinions from representatives of the minority ethnic communities on the level of services provided, access practices and any suggested revisions or improvements, in advance of its submission to the next meeting of the Consultative Committee on 24 October 2007.

07.EM.38 EQUALITY SCHEME

Sarah Dobson updated the Committee on the progress in delivering the objectives of the Equality Scheme.

Sarah confirmed that the Borough Council was fully committed to the embodiment of equality and diversity principles in its culture, with equality issues now being an integral part of the Business Plans of all Council Directorates.

The Council's complaints procedures and processes had been overhauled to ensure that all ethnicity, gender and disability issues were taken into account, and the Benefits scheme was being examined to ascertain how the scheme could be tailored to meet the special needs of the minority ethnic communities. In addition, the Executive Cabinet had authorised the implementation of the measures suggested by the Equality and Diversity Sub-Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that could be taken forward within existing budget resources. The recommendations were aimed at ensuring that the Council's services are delivered against equality and diversity objectives, so that all communities were afforded equality of access, outcomes and opportunity. Bhikhu Patel requested Sarah to present occasional written progress reports to future meetings of the Consultative Committee on the implementation of the Equality Scheme.

Bhikhu also drew attention to a report entitled 'Our Shared Future' published recently by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, which had addressed ways of encouraging greater cohesion and understanding between the different factors of Britain's society. The report could be viewed on www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk Bhikhu suggested that it would be beneficial for the Consultative Committee to examine the contents of the report.

Sarah also intimated the possibility of arrangements being made for a presentation to a future meeting on Lancaster University's current project on community cohesion.

It as **AGREED** that the appointed Sub-Group be requested to consider the content of the report produced by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion and make recommendations to a future meeting of the Consultative Committee.

07.EM.39 ASIAN WOMEN'S FORUM

A report of the current activities and future project plans of the Asian Women's Forum was presented by the Forum's representatives present at the meeting.

Bhikhu Patel congratulated the Forum on their success in obtaining external funding and commended their efforts to assist and improve the quality of life for all female members of the community.

07.EM.40 CHORLEY KHUKHA GROUP

Yacoob Illahi reported that the Chorley Khukha Group had been successful in securing a grant of £6,037 from the Local Funding Network to operate a scheme that would promote facilities for football games and practice sessions for all children and young people in Chorley aged between 5 and 25 years. The project, to be run by volunteers, was to be launched on 29 July 2007 and would be advertised in the Chorley Guardian.

The Consultative Committee congratulated Mr Illahi and other members of the Khukha Group on their efforts to improve community cohesion in the Borough.

07.EM.41 DOSTI MEN'S FORUM

Ayyub Patel thanked the Chorley LSP and the Community Champions Fund operators for their respective grants of £600 to assist the costs of launching the Dosti Men's Forum. A date was yet to be agreed for the official launch of the Forum, whose membership would be open to all male residents of the Borough. Ayyub was optimistic that the Forum would prove to be a positive force in the integration of the different communities within the Borough and hoped to consult soon with the Mosque elders on arrangements to take the Forum forward.

Michael Muldowney reported that over 1,000 leaflets drawing attention to the establishment of the Men's Forum had been delivered throughout the town, which had generated a positive response from the community.

Ayyub also distributed copies of a leaflet advertising the Ar-Rahmah Islamic Academy which had opened in the former Mosque premises at Cunliffe Street, Chorley. The Academy was available for the attendance of all Chorley residents to learn and ask questions on the Islamic faith. The project had been supported by the Chorley Faiths Forum.

The Chair also advised the Consultative Committee that, following an approach by a number of older members of the community, the Asian Women's Forum has been successful in securing a grant of £32,000 through the Lancashire County Council's Social Services Directorate to fund a 2 year project to establish a shelter for residents over the age of 60 to meet, socialise and discuss their special needs.

07.EM.42 MULTI FAITH EVENT

Sarah Dobson indicated that the Chorley Faiths Forum were hoping to hold the impending Multi-Faith Event on Saturday, 6 October 2007. The format of the meeting had not yet been finalised by the Faiths Forum Sub-Group, which was due to meet on 14 July. Any member of the Consultative Committee who wished to become involved in the preparations, or wished to submit any ideas for the event, were asked to notify Sarah before 14 July.

It was the consensus view of the Committee that the date for the proposed event should be postponed slightly to a date in mid-October in order to avoid any conflict with impending religious festivals or social occasions.

07.EM.43 RACIST INCIDENTS STATISTICS

Bhikhu Patel requested the re-introduction of the distribution of statistical data showing the number of racist incidents occurring throughout the Borough pending the reform of the Multi-Agency Diversity Incidents Panel.

Sergeant Hickey, in response, undertook to ensure that the requested data was presented to the next meeting of the Consultative Committee.

07.EM.44 COUNTER TERRORISM GUIDANCE FOR BUSINESSES

Sergeant Hickey circulated copies of a note which Lancashire Police were distributing to local businesses following recent terrorist incidents in London and Glasgow and the raising of the UK threat level to 'critical'.

Sergeant Hickey stated that, whilst there was no information to suggest that Lancashire was being specifically targeted or under any threat, Police Officers from Lancashire Constabulary would be providing high visibility policing, particularly in areas which attracted large numbers of people.

Lancashire Police Officers would be contacting community leaders to dispel rumours, acquaint them of the situation and assure them that the Police would only instigate counter terrorism activities whenever there was credible intelligence information to justify the measures.

The Police had appealed to all members of the community to be especially vigilant and report any suspicious behaviour or activities to their local Police.

07.EM.45 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The members noted that the next meeting of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee was scheduled to be held on Wednesday, 24 October 2007 at 7.00pm.

Chair