



CABINET REPORT

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| Report Title | Community Forums Report: Achievements March 2009 to October 2009 |
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AGENDA STATUS

PUBLIC

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| Cabinet Meeting Date: | 4 November 2009 |
| Key Decision: | NO |
| Listed on Forward Plan: | YES |
| Within Policy: | YES |
| Policy Document: | NO |
| Directorate: | Chief Executive's Office |
| Accountable Cabinet Member: | Cllr Paul Varnserry |
| Ward(s) | All |

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Through the attached Community Report, this report updates Cabinet on the work and achievements of the Community Forums in the first part of 2009-10 and makes some recommendations.
- 1.2 The purpose is to raise awareness of the value of the forums in supporting the Council to meet its equality and diversity obligations, develop good customer service and work successfully with its diverse communities, statutory and third sector organisations.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Recognise and welcome the work and achievements of the Forums and the Council's engagement with them;
- 2.2 Encourage NBC services to look to provide more opportunities for volunteers from the Forum networks (and otherwise) to liaise with them, work on projects

etc. day to day to help work up design for services, policy etc. through involving service users.

2.3 Encourage NBC services to allow members of Forums networks the chance to be involved in training staff in customer service, mystery shopping etc, being able to give feedback on how they've been dealt with as service users and enabling staff to understand more about their needs.

2.4 Support the long-term development of the Disabled Go access guide.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1 The Forums have played a key role in the ongoing development of the Council's work for a new Single Equalities Scheme and in the Peer Review Challenge on Equality and Diversity. Their work was highlighted in the assessor's feedback as showing many instances of strong practice in relation to equalities and diversity, practice that contributed to the Council's achievement of Level 3 of the Equality Standard.

3.1.2 Some key examples from this period's activity include

- the 'Money 4 Youth' scheme has seen over 3,000 young people actively involved in the first part of 2009-10, a rise on previous years.
- NBC Housing and Neighbourhood Management Services have now achieved the Charter Mark for Youth Involvement and in so doing have increased youth involvement in service planning and delivery.
- the Forums achieved a high level of compliments in the period from January 2009, particularly in relation to two projects in which they took the lead, being the Anne Frank Festival of Northampton and the Heritage Days at the Guildhall (for which in 2009 they planned and delivered the Guildhall activities and related publicity, working with NBC services).
- the Jewish Heritage Trail leaflet which Northampton Youth Forum worked with Jtrails (national Jewish heritage organisation) to create to be youth and family-friendly has been well received. The first trail associated with it, achieved record numbers of attendance for any such walk in the UK, including young people which Jtrails considered to be significant. The leaflet is due to be used to support Northampton Inter Faith Week and Holocaust Memorial Day activities and can be used to link to school curriculum and community activities.
- Pensioners Forum's held an initial meeting to seek interest from NBC services in involving older people more routinely day to day to inform and support services to ensure they work in ways accessible to older people. There is now interest from e.g. Revenues and Benefits service in pursuing this further.

3.2 Issues: Forums and the Council

It would be helpful to see the Council formally recognise and promote closer links between its equalities and diversity work corporately and the Forums.

3.2.2 There is potential for Forums to work more closely with NBC services day to day, to help develop cultural, age and disability awareness and support the Council in further increasing its achievements in relation to equality and diversity.

3.2.3 There is some potential for such development to enhance the use of volunteers within the organisation, to help support people such as young people, people with disabilities, women returners etc to gain quality work experience that can help them in progressing to paid or new directions in work in the longer term, while also helping to bring their voices and ideas into the workforce to better reflect and involve the communities it serves.

3.3 Choices (Options)

3.3.1 Cabinet can accept the recommendations, as argued above and in the community report, or not.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

No significant implications

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 No significant resource implications at this stage.

4.3 Legal

No obvious implications

4.4 Equality

The various forums offer a wealth of understanding of equalities issues faced by our diverse communities, and if used effectively will contribute very positively to improvement both in the services we offer and in the perception of the Council as committed to ensuring equalities.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 For the community report attached – as detailed within it.

4.6 How the Forums' work relates to current Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 Policy 2009 - 10 Service Plan.

4.6.2 NBC Corporate Plan priorities

5 Background Papers

5.1 Community Report

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