

## **Northampton Borough Council - Northampton Diverse Communities Forum**

**Thursday, 21 March 2019, 11am – 1pm.**

### **Officers at the meeting**

#### **1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

**ATTENDANCE:** Pauline Woodhouse (PW, Chair), Cllr James Hill (JH, Chair), Michael Macleod (MM, NBC), Jamie Wells (JW, NBC), Louise Croucher (LC, Job Centre Plus), Jackie Marsh (JM, Job Centre Plus), Sarah Cotton (SC, Workbridge), Janet Gordon (JG, Royal and Derngate), Suzanna Storey (SS, What's The Storey Podcast), Aideen Fogarty (AF, Town of Sanctuary), John Rawlings (JR, Northampton Quakers), Rachel Packman (RP, Northants Police), Ashley Samuels-McKenzie (ASM, Unity and Motion), Dhafer Thamer (DT, L2L).

#### **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

#### **3. SUZANNA STOREY - WHAT'S THE STOREY PODCAST**

Recording of the podcast has started, going really well and the stories have been really eye opening.

Website has been designed, it will have links to the podcasts and there will be pages for each person who has been interviewed.

Website should be finished by first week of April and then podcasts to be released on a weekly basis.

Recently spoke to Rukhsana from Northants Police who has a very interesting and inspiring story.

Recording as much content as possible so won't lose the momentum whilst taking time off after having baby.

Diverse Actors Company had their first workshop – great turnout from different communities. Had 25 people turn up on the day with apologies from 10 people, aim was 30 so really pleased.

Next workshop will be next Tuesday. Neelam and Rotundo helped bring a lot of people to the last workshop. Looking to do a workshop every two weeks and then build up to a show at the deco in June/July.

A lot of people really excited to get this opportunity as they have said there is a lack of opportunity for the BME community. Those who came gained confidence throughout the session and felt very comfortable as the workshop went on.

#### **4. COMMUNITY NEWS EXCHANGE**

Job Centre LC and JM representatives trying to engage with the local communities as currently finding it very difficult. With universal credit bringing a lot more people in to the job centre, finding people are coming in with more diverse needs. Want to connect with the local communities to see how we can support them. We feel like we need to get more involved with the communities and how we can better connect

with them.

PW: I run a community house, we could host a meeting with you and other partners to help connect to the community better.

JW: Could use the forums e-mail system to get the word out there.

Q: Where are with universal credit now?

A: We are doing quite well, it is still new but 85% plus have all been paid on time with no issues. There has been an influx of people coming into the centre. The main issue is that people aren't understanding exactly what they need to provide to receive first payment, for example rent details which is now needed but was not before.

Also having a lot of people coming into the Northampton centre who haven't been in for Northampton for long. It's mainly identity and housing which are causing the most issues.

People at the Job Centre do want to help people, we are doing our best to support people.

JH: The fact that you're here shows that you're looking to connect and help.

Could get someone with better knowledge to come in and talk about Universal Credit in further detail.

**ACTION:** Invite to future forum.

JR: Soon having an organisations meeting, as many as 30 attending, would be good to be put in contact with those, they spread all over Northamptonshire.

St Andrews: provide vocation skills for people/community groups. May also be able to help with spaces and rooms for local community groups.

R&D: Saw a piece from Alter Ego Theatre Company, did a great piece on knife crime, they have done shows everywhere but Northampton and they are from Northampton. It's a powerful piece that needs to be seen by young people in Northampton. Singing for Pleasure has been started. Northampton Carnival is on the 8<sup>th</sup> June, if community groups would like to be involved please contact.

JR: Former police deputy recently died Brian Scarth, used to attend equality meetings in the late 60's and early 70's.

JR - Healthwatch – we pay particular attention to attendance of members and lately we've had people from BME groups not attending which can be an issue when trying to understand the full picture.

RP: The New Zealand shooting, although on the other side of the world has resonated with the local Muslim community, there has been additional patrols etc. Impacted all faith communities, not just the Muslim community.

Asian gold burglaries are still an issue, Metro Bank in town offer safety deposit boxes.

Northampton has a large Zimbabwean community, connect with the Zimwomen Group to see if we can help because of the cyclone impact.

**ACTION:** RP to contact Rutundo.

Town of Sanctuary: evening 20<sup>th</sup> June.

L2L is the ToS youth group.

Globe project – we are all one world, no boundaries. Also got a group called safe haven, looking to bring over a vulnerable Syrian family, looking to secure sponsors. Been very much supported, university, R&D etc.

**ACTION:** MM, JW, JH, PW to meet to with AF to talk about specifics of the event on the 20<sup>th</sup> June.

JR: There are strong links with people from the Middle East already within the town, for example the friends of Palestine group.

## **5. HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE DCF?**

JW: There's obviously always issues around the times, they both bring their benefits and issues.

Hard to find agenda items that will always appeal to all community groups. Could have an item which lets people know what's going on with the council.

Could make meetings less frequent. We (NBC) could go out and visit community groups to see them as meetings like this might seem a bit daunting.

PW: Used to have regular updates from the borough, issues surrounded, forum members struggled to keep everything updated. Bi-monthly seems a bit too much to get the best out of the forum, quarterly may work better and if there is something more urgent, hold a meeting.

SS: feels like same people are getting their agendas met and that other people are being lost in that process. Could make the members facilitate the forum, may be helpful for NBC to go out to the community groups.

Could go to their meetings, gather information and then bring them back to the DCF, so even if representatives do not make it to the DCF, their message can be shared and forum members can offer help still.

JR: with the unitary council, will be different as the boroughs we are merging with areas that do not have BME issues as high on their agenda. Attendance between people and local authorities have slowly dwindled in the past 50 years.

Recommend quarterly meetings.

Other community groups, for example Eastern Europeans and have a one off meeting could be invited to Guildhall. Could do this with all harder to reach community groups or those who aren't usually active.

Should be raised by Cllrs, what will happen to bodies like this? Will this be represented in the new unitary authority as solely Northampton or West Northants?

SS: Might be useful to send out and re-establish what the aim of the Diverse Communities Forum is.

JW: We will look to do this, especially with those harder to reach communities.

RP: Let people know what is in it for the community, people need to know why they should come.

JR: Ask the police, formally, what they think we should be doing in this forum?

JW: **ACTION** - Create something with chairs and Rachel, to explain what this forum has done and what it has to offer, then visit those harder to reach communities.

PW: Also worth asking current members what they want from the forum, not saying that we can accommodate them but if we know what they expect, we can shape this into being something beneficial to all groups.

JW: **ACTION** - To try and get a representative from NBC, to explain what might happen to forums like this and other things concerning local BME groups.

## **6. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETING**

NBC representative to talk about unitary, what is happening and ideas about the future state of the forum.

Veolia representative.

## **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

9<sup>th</sup> May 2019

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified