

RACE ADVISORY FORUM

11th October 2004 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. A.R. Malik – Pakistan Muslim Association (Chair)
Dr. N. Khanum – Luton Multi-Cultural Women's Coalition (Vice-Chair)
Mr. B.A. Chaudhri (United Pakistan Welfare Association).
Mrs. J.A. Dennis – UNISON
Mr. A.R. Khan (co-opted member)
Miss. S. Mallin – Caribbean Golden Age Group
Mr. P. Markland - (African Caribbean Community Development Forum)

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Siederer
Professor D. Barrett, Dean of Partnerships, University of Luton
Mr. R. Newcombe, Chief Crown Prosecutor, Crown Prosecution Service
Miss. L. Butler, Carlisle Group Managed Solutions
Miss. N. Patel, Carlisle Group Managed Solutions
Miss. J. Bailey, Programme Manager, Luton Safer Partnership
Sergeant S. Daize, Partnership Officer, Bedfordshire Police
Val Grant, Head of Equalities (Luton Borough Council)
Raj Nayer, Policy Officer (Luton Borough Council)

28 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

An apology for absence from the meeting had been received on behalf of Mrs. L. Rees (Luton Community Housing).

29 MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

In considering the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 9th August, 2004, Dr. Nazia Khanum referred to Minute 20 in regard to the Black Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy and the focus groups which were planned to assess what the current and future needs were and requested that a progress report be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.

Dr. Nazia Khanum referred to Minute 20 in regard to the report of the Social Services Inspectorate following the joint review of social services and enquired when the Forum would receive the list of strengths and weaknesses based on the inspection reports. The Chair requested that the Director of Housing and Social Services report on the list of strengths and weaknesses based on the inspection reports to the next meeting of the Forum.

Resolved: (i) That the Head of Equalities update the Forum on the progress made with regard to the Black Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy and

the focus groups which were planned to assess what current and future needs were.

(ii) That the Head of Equalities be instructed to arrange for the Director of Housing and Social Services to present the list of strengths and weaknesses based on the Social Services Inspectorate report to the next meeting of the Forum.

(iii) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 9th August, 2004 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

30 PRESENTATION BY SERGEANT SIMON DAIZE, PARTNERSHIP OFFICER, BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE ON THE COMMUNITY SAFETY CONSULTATION (REF: 3)

The Forum received a presentation from Sergeant Simon Daize, Partnership Officer, Bedfordshire Police and Joan Bailey, Programme Manager, Safer Luton Partnership, on the Community Safety Consultation which formed part of Luton's Community Safety Strategy 2005 – 2008. The Community Strategy was required by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 "To create a partnership between agencies and the community that develops safer neighbourhoods, improves the quality of life, and reduces the level of crime for those who visit, live and work in Luton."

Responding to questions from Mr. Chaudhri, regarding the ethnic groups set out in the Breakdown of Victim Ethnicity indicated in the Racial Incidents recorded, Sergeant Daize advised that the victims of racial incidents self-classified their ethnic group.

The Forum was asked to respond to following questions in relation to the Luton Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership:

- What to we do well?
- What should continue to be in the Community Safety Strategy?
- Given the comparisons outlined, what are the areas that we should be improving?
- How can we best address the fear of crime within Luton?

Members agreed that the Head of Equalities suggestion that a copy of the presentation and list of questions could be attached to the minutes to provide all members of the Forum with an opportunity to consider the questions and to respond to Joan Bailey at the Safer Luton Partnership by the end of November 2004.

Resolved: That the Democratic Services Officer circulate a copy of the presentation on the Community Safety Consultation to all members of the Race Advisory Forum with the request that responses to the questions contained within the presentation be returned to Programme Manager of the Safer Luton Partnership, Joan Bailey, by 30th November 2004.

31 PRESENTATION BY PROFESSOR D. BARRETT, DEAN OF PARTNERSHIPS, UNIVERSITY OF LUTON, ON THE EFFECT OF THE RACE RELATIONS ACT 2000 ON THE UNIVERSITY OF LUTON (REF: 5)

In the absence of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ebdon, the Forum received a presentation from Professor David Barrett, University of Luton who informed the Forum of the effect of the Race Relations Act 2000 on the University of Luton.

The introduction of the Act had implied general and specific duties on the University, for example, the publication of a Race Equalities Policy.

The University had a duty to promote racial equality to enable students, many of which were from overseas, to reach their full potential; to prevent unlawful discrimination; monitor race relations and to report the finding annually to central Government. As a result, the University had carried out an assessment of its policies and were raising initiatives, training and awareness of racial equality.

In response to questions from Dr. Nazia Khanum regarding the possibility of the University establishing a Department of Cultural Studies and providing the Forum with a detailed break down information contained in the monitoring reports in relation to race and gender, Professor Barrett undertook to take the comments back to the Vice-Chancellor, who he was sure would be willing to accept the suggestion to share the monitoring data with the Forum. He stated that the University would welcome any feedback or advice from the Forum which would be given full consideration.

Responding to Mr. Chaudhri's suggestion that there should be more representation of the ethnic groups on the University's Board of Governors and those who monitored race relations at the University, Professor Barrett advised that it would be helpful if the Forum could advise the Vice-Chancellor, in writing, of their suggestions in order that they are given full consideration.

Professor Barrett advised that as far as he was aware there had not been any racial incidents in the last three or four years. However any incident would be reported to the Police, with whom the University had a close working relationship. He assured the Forum that the University had a procedure in place to deal with racial incidents, which would be treated very seriously.

Mr. Khan asked how the students were made aware of the race relations initiatives at the University. Professor Barrett explained that all the students were issued with a copy of the University's regulations and handbooks, which set out the details of the initiatives and procedures.

Professor Barrett acknowledged that some of the University's practices could be improved and that a more proactive approach could be taken. He also acknowledged that the wider community was not represented proportionately, as yet, on the University staff, however steps were being taken to address the imbalance.

Dr. Nazia Khanum, questioned the proportion of Black and Ethnic Minorities on the staff at the University and requested more information on race equality and the diversification of students, the Board of Governors and the steps taken by the University to improve the situation.

The Chair requested that the Vice-Chancellor be invited to a future meeting of the Forum to provide additional information of the data on race relations gathered by the University and a work programme for the implementation of the Race Relations Act 2000 by the University.

Resolved: (i) That Professor Barrett be thanked for his presentation.

(ii) That the Head of Equalities make the necessary arrangements for the Vice-Chancellor to attend a future meeting of the Forum to present additional information on the race relations data gathered by the University and its work programme on the implementation of the Race Relations Act 2000.

32 PRESENTATION ON THE EFFECTS OF THE RACE RELATIONS ACT 2000 ON THE CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE BY MR. R. NEWCOMBE, CHIEF CROWN PROSECUTOR (REF: 6)

The Forum received a presentation by Mr. R. Newcombe of the impact of the Race Relations Act 2000 on the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

The CPS is a national organisation consisting of 42 areas. Each area is headed by a Chief Crown Prosecutor and corresponded to a single police force area, with one area covering London. The CPS is governed by a Code for Crown Prosecutors which gives guidance on how the CPS should make decisions about whether or not to prosecute. There is also a booklet for Racist and Religious Crime. A separate Race Equalities Scheme has been implemented nationally in May 2002.

Staffing Issues

Nationally there are 46 Chief Crown Prosecutors, three of which are black and ethnic minority women and there is one male from the ethnic minorities.

The Bedfordshire Crown Prosecution Service employs about 60 people. The service employs many black or ethnic minorities at all levels of the service, and many are highly skilled. The number of BME staff in Bedfordshire exceeds the labour forced benchmark. BME staff are represented at all grades other than middle management. These posts are advertised nationally, but as yet not many applications for them have been received from BME staff. Whilst this is of some concern the Chief Crown Prosecutor was confident that it would be rectified in due course. The Service has launched a law scholarship scheme, which enables staff to pass through the academic and professional exams.

Defendants

All defendants are treated carefully. Last year Professor Gus John had carried out research and reviewed between 12,000 – 15,000 cases and found no evidence that there had been discrimination by the CPS. Although a small handful of cases gave cause for concern on matters other than race.

In the past the Service have lacked ethnicity data. However, recent advances in information technology have enabled the Service to put the necessary procedures in place to gather and update information required.

Victims and Witnesses

A national initiative “No Witness – No Justice” is aimed to enhance the service and is due to be rolled out in February 2005. The purpose of the initiative is to increase the number of victims willing to go to Court and thereby increase the number of defendants who plead guilty.

Community

The CPS has started work to develop community engagement and ensure that people are aware that everyone will be treated fairly by the CPS.

Responding to a question from the Head of Equalities regarding the difficulties implementing a national Race Equalities Scheme in Bedfordshire, the Chief Crown Prosecutor explained that the CPS worked in partnership with a number of organisations and where appropriate used the Police’s existing consultation mechanism.

Dr. Nazia Khanum, welcomed a national Race Equalities Scheme which could be implemented nationally and asked if there was a disproportionate number of black or ethnic minorities defendants locally and nationally. The Chief Crown Prosecutor replied that figures indicated that there were disproportionate numbers in prison but he had no information about defendants nationally or locally.

In response to a question from Dr. Nazia Khanum, the Crown Chief Prosecutor advised that race awareness training is compulsory for all new members of staff. It is currently not repeated throughout the employment of a person in the CPS. The course itself is revised and updated on a regular basis.

Responding to concerns from Mr. Markland regarding fairness to defendants of which he referred to the addresses of defendants being quoted in the local press. The Chief Crown Prosecutor advised that the CPS did not supply the information to the newspapers. This information was placed in the public arena at the Court House unless a juvenile reporting restriction applied.

In response to concerns raised by Mr. Khan about the under representation of black or ethnic minorities in middle management in Bedfordshire the Chief Crown Prosecutor confirmed that, despite two recruitment exercises, where the positions had been advertised nationally, it

had not been possible to recruit a person from the black or ethnic minority group and there are no black or ethnic minorities in middle management at this time.

The Chief Crown Prosecutor reiterated that the CPS in Bedfordshire complied with the requirements of the Race Relations Act. The CPS in Bedfordshire has a small working population. All applicants are appointed on merit, which may from time to time result in an imbalance of ethnic groups. He assured members that nationally and locally the CPS was above the labour force for benchmarking. Nationally black or ethnic minorities are represented in management post nationally, and a good proportion are lawyers.

Resolved: That Mr. R. Newcombe be thanked for his presentation.

33 PRESENTATION FROM CARLISLE MANAGED SOLUTIONS (REF: 7.1)

The Forum received a short presentation from Lorraine Butler and Nisha Patel on the work of the Carlisle Group Managed Solutions and as the temporary workforce was not representative of the local community, members were asked to consider how the process could be eased to encourage people in to the Council via temporary work.

Carlisle Managed Solutions were appointed as neutral vendor in September 2003, to be based within the Council's premises. Working in partnership with the Human Resources department, Carlisle acted as a central point for all temporary bookings, allowing the Council's staff to focus on their core activities. By using local agencies to source local people wherever possible, Carlisle assisted the Council to achieve its objectives of:

- Saving money on temporary staffing costs.
- Creating common standards across all suppliers.
- Improving Human Resources practice relating to temporary staff.
- To ensure that people from the local community were encouraged and employed on the temporary side.
- Ensure equal opportunity monitoring was conducted measuring gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, nationality, religion and disability of candidates submitted.

The Forum were advised that a poster campaign would be undertaken shortly, and that all skill levels were available.

Dr. Nazia Khanum suggested that Voluntary Action Luton be made aware of the initiative and that a brief article in their monthly newsletter would reach out to the local community.

Mr. Markand suggested that a press release be placed in Luton Line, as this particular publication would reach many of the local population.

The Forum requested that data regarding the number of people who were registered with Carlisle Managed Solutions, how many were employed on a temporary basis and how many were successful in gaining permanent employment be reported to the meeting on a regular basis.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Head of Equalities arrange for regular reports on the progress of Carlisle Managed Solutions, as a central point for all temporary staff and for information gathered on the outcomes of the initiatives be made to the Race Advisory Forum.

34 LUTON EQUALITY AGENCY

The Head of Equalities informed Members on the progress made to date in further exploring the possibility of the establishment of an Equality Agency in Luton.

Members were advised that the Council had secured funding in the sum of £15,000 from the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) for a feasibility study to be undertaken. The study would gather data in order to prepare a report, which was intended to be completed by March, 2005. A questionnaire would be circulated shortly to the relevant organisations.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That an item on the Luton Equality Forum become a standing item on each agenda of the Forum.

35 UNISON MEMBERSHIP ON THE RACE ADVISORY FORUM (REF: 8.2)

Members welcomed Mrs Jennifer Dennis, as the UNISON representative, as a member of the Forum.

Resolved: That Mrs. Jennifer Dennis's membership of the Forum be noted.

36 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE MEETINGS (REF: 9)

Members welcomed the effectiveness of the timed agenda and agreed that the practice should be continued for all future agendas.

Items for Consideration at Future Meetings

- Presentation of the Race Relations Act 2002 on the University of Luton – details of race relations monitoring – quarterly.
- Progress report on the Carlisle Managed Solutions initiative - quarterly.
- Black Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy and focus groups – progress report – 6th December 2004.
- Luton Equality Agency – standing item.

Update from the Race Advisor on an application for funding from the Commission for Racial Equalities

The Race Advisor informed the Forum that a further application for funding had been made to the Commission for Racial Equalities for capacity building projects to run from December 2004 onwards. The outcome of the application was likely to be known in the first week of November 2004.

Resolved: (i) That the Democratic Services Section ensure a timed agenda for all future meetings of the Race Advisory Forum.

(ii) That the meetings of the Race Advisory Forum scheduled on 6th December 2004; 7th February 2005; and 4th April 2005 be noted.

(iii) That the following items be considered at future meetings of the Race Advisory Forum:

- Presentation of the Race Relations Act 2002 on the University of Luton – details of race relations monitoring – quarterly.
- Progress report on the Carlisle Managed Solutions initiative - quarterly.
- Black Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy and focus groups – progress report – 6th December 2004.
- Luton Equality Agency – standing item.

(iv) That the application to the Commission of Racial Equality for the capacity build project be noted.

(The meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.)