

RACE ADVISORY FORUM

8th August 2005 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. A.R. Malik – Pakistan Muslim Association (Chair)
Mrs. J. Bullock – Luton and District St. Vincent & the
Grenadines Association (Vice-Chair)
Mr. P. Markland – African Caribbean Community
Development Forum
Mr. M. Qureshi – Khidmat
Ms. N. Kellett – Luton Irish Forum
Mr. N. Solanki – Shree Sanatan Seva Samaj
Mr. A.R. Khan

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Patterson
Raj Nayer – Equalities Unit
Nina Boston – Democratic Services Officer
Ferri Fassihi – General Catering Manager
Jenny Goff – Team Manager, Department of Housing
and Community Living
Zaheer Ahmed – School Improvement Adviser, Multi
Ethnic Achievement

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Dr. N. Khanum (Luton Multi-Cultural Women's Coalition) and Mrs. L. Rees (Luton Community Housing).

23 MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 6th June 2005 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following corrections:

The addition of the word "must" before the words "not arise in future" in the final line of the second paragraph of Minute 16.

The addition of the words "or Vice-Chair" after the words ".....if there is only one nomination for Chair" in the sixth line of Minute 16(ii).

24 PROVISION OF HALAL MEAT IN LUTON'S SCHOOLS (REF: 5.1)

Ferri Fassihi reported on the provision of Halal meat in Luton's schools.

Members were informed that the suppliers and transporters of Halal meat used by the Council were certified by the Islamic Council and copies of the certificates were tabled at the meeting.

Members were advised that some of the Halal meat came from Thailand. The meat is supplied frozen and transported separately in pallets which come vacuum packed so that there is no danger of cross-contamination. It is then distributed to butchers and wholesale suppliers. At no time is the meat opened or interfered with and open packages would not be accepted.

When the meat arrives at school kitchens the staff have been trained to cook it using separate equipment and it is kept away from other utensils.

When the Halal dishes are served they are labelled stating what the product is and displaying the Halal logo on them so they can be identified.

Other Halal products come from Ireland and are transported in the same way. The Council does not inspect the meat but if it suspects the labelling is wrong it is referred to Trading Standards.

Under Council policy the contract is put out to tender and local producers and suppliers are invited to submit bids.

A member reported that there was great concern among Muslims in Luton about the Halal meat supplied. He enquired why the supplies had to come from Thailand when there were plenty of Halal meat suppliers available locally in Luton.

Ferri Fassihi responded that the contract put out to tender is publicly advertised both locally and nationally. Under the rules it was not possible for the Council to canvass suppliers; they had to apply. The Council could not specify that the bidders must be from Luton.

A member commented that the Council's policy should be changed because if the supplies came from so far away people would not believe that the meat was Halal.

The Chair commented that Luton had many facilities to supply Halal locally and that local bidders should be encouraged to come forward. He added that local resources would be even fresher and would not have to be frozen and that people could be taken to see the facilities so they would be satisfied that it was genuine.

A member enquired what the percentage was of those who ate Halal meals. He added that it was important to look at how many children did not eat meals because they did not think it was Halal.

Ferri Fassihi responded that it was not possible to collect that information. Many children ate vegetable or fish dishes and it was difficult to say whether it was because they preferred those dishes or they did not believe it was Halal. The only way it could be identified was by how many meals were produced and how many were left.

A member commented that parents needed to be convinced before they allowed their children to eat school meals.

A member enquired what the cost of a Halal meal was compared to other meals. Ferri Fassihi responded that all school meals were one set price. He added that he understood the importance of parents being assured that Halal was genuine but the Council had to trust suppliers when they provided a certificate and there was no reason to question this.

Raj Nayer advised that the Council was keen to ensure equality in the contracting and procurement processes but in the meantime if Ferri Fassihi's department felt that the Equalities Unit could assist with a public information campaign to allay any fears in schools about the current supply of Halal meat, the Unit would be happy to do so.

In response to a question of when the current tender expired, Ferri Fassihi reported that it would be another two years.

A member commented that it was advisable now to get the message to parents.

Ferri Fassihi suggested that on future occasions when he needed to contact Head Teachers he could target particular schools requesting that they communicate with parents with regard to the provision of Halal meat.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the General Catering Manager, when writing to Head Teachers to update them on the development of schools meals, be instructed to specifically request the Head Teachers of the schools where a high number of Halal dishes are served to communicate to parents the availability of genuine Halal dishes.

(iii) That the General Catering Manager be requested to provide copies of the Halal certificates tabled at the meeting to the Chair so that he can distribute them among parents.

25 NEW CARERS POLICY – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (REF: 6.1)

Further to Minute 10/05 Jenny Goff updated the Forum with regard to the new Carers Policy.

Members were advised that contact had been made with local PCTs. In addition, meetings had been arranged with the Strategic Health Authority who had advised that they will take the issues back to the PCT to progress.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That Rose Taylor, the Community Services Manager at the Luton PCT be invited to attend the next meeting of the Forum to report on their carers policy.

26 FAIRER CHARGING POLICY – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (REF: 7.1)

Jenny Goff reported that she was responsible for co-ordinating an equality impact assessment with regard to the Council's draft new Fairer Charging Policy.

Members were advised that guidance from the Department of Health emphasised that Councils should ensure that their policies in relation to charging for non-residential community care services are fair and reasonable. The guidance provides a broad framework but leaves local authorities with discretion in the design of the policies.

The proposed draft policy covered Home Care and Day Care services and approximately 1700 current service users had been consulted over the last six weeks. Approximately 500 responses had been received which were currently being analysed. The questionnaire was made available in community languages. And although 4 were requested none had been sent back.

The proposals are for a charge of up to £12.00 per hour (chargeable pro rata for each full 15 minutes) for Home Care and a charge of up to £20.00 per day (up to 8 hours) for Day Care (this does not include luncheon clubs). The charges had been worked out in a fairer manner in order that people pay for exactly what they receive. All charges would be means tested and no one would be left with less than the basic income support/pension credit plus 25% after paying for services.

The proposed policy had been through an initial equalities impact consideration and the following issues were highlighted with regard to racial equality:

Service usage – Older peoples day centres are accessed by 23.8% of black and minority ethnic service users and therefore may have a greater adverse impact on users from the BME community.

For day care for adults aged 18-65, the percentage of people from the black and minority ethnic groups accessing services was also 23% as opposed to 26.5% of Luton's general population of that age. Whilst this means there may be work to be done in terms of people accessing services, it will mean that the impact of the proposed charging policy will be positive.

Home Care – Only 12.6% of those who use home care services arranged through the Council come from the BME communities. In terms of the proposed charging policy there will be fewer people impacted and therefore possibly fewer offered welfare benefits advice and the impact would be neutral.

A new finance team would be established to undertake the financial assessments and they will be provided with cultural awareness training. Benefits

Advisers will also be integrated into the finance team so that that people receive the best advice.

The Chair enquired how much additional money the new policy would generate for the Council. Jenny Goff responded that it was difficult to say because it will be based on the financial assessments. However, it was thought that it would be approximately £600,000 in a full year but there were many caveats to that because people may not have the income.

A member raised concern about people who were just above the threshold as the services were a lifeline to isolated elderly people. Jenny Goff reported that costs for people who were only just over the threshold would be worked out on that basis and they would not be required to pay the full cost. She added that it was about ensuring the service exists because of budgetary pressures.

A member enquired whether a cost would be applicable for the provision of equipment such as handrails. Jenny Goff responded that equipment would remain outside of the policy.

A member enquired how many service users received care services. Jenny Goff responded that approximately 1700 were listed on the Council's database.

A member enquired whether the consultation questionnaires would be broken down by ethnicity. Jenny Goff responded that the questionnaires did provide for ethnicity but it was a matter of whether people declared it.

A member enquired whether the cost of the meals on wheels service would be increasing. Jenny Goff responded that this service was not included in the policy and it would remain at the current price.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

27 “SLAVE” POSTER (REF: 8.1)

Patrick Markland reported with regard to an occasion where he had been concerned about how black history was taught in schools. He commented that people needed to learn about history but sensitivity with regard to how it was delivered was crucial so that people were not offended.

Zaheer Ahmed reported that the programmes of study are:

- Knowledge, skills & understanding**

- Chronological understanding

- Knowledge understanding of events, people and changes in the past

- Historical Interpretation**

- Historical inquiry

- Organisation and communication

•**Breadth of content**

–Britain 1066-1500

–Britain 1500-1750

–**Britain 1750-1900 – A study of how expansion of trade and colonisation, industrialisation and political changes affected the UK, including the local area.**

–A European Study before 1914

–A world study before 1900

–A world Study after 1900

These are not determined by the schools but set out through the National Curriculum by the Government.

The roles and responsibilities of the school are to use the National Curriculum programmes of study as a basis to plan schemes of work.

The roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority are to monitor, support and challenge schools to raise standards of attainment.

Additionally, the Local Authority offers schools guidance on:

- Ensuring that curriculum planning takes account of the ethnicity, cultural background and language needs of all pupils
- Build into the curriculum opportunities for pupils to identify and challenge racism, prejudice and stereotyping
- Planning a curriculum which acknowledges and celebrates the contribution made by diverse cultures to all subject areas

Members were advised that the Local Authority is working with schools on the teaching of this specific issue in the following ways:

- EMAS to incorporate guidance on curriculum planning for ethnic, cultural and language needs of all pupils into next term's newsletter, which goes out to all schools
- Advisory teach working with Head of Humanities at Lea Manor to review activities used to teach this unit of work
- Advisory teach to attend History co-ordinators' meeting to offer guidance and resources to support the teaching of this unit in all Luton schools

The Chair commented that he had discussed the matter in length with the Director of Children and Learning and the Local Education Authority were going to deliver a general policy for history so that in the future any adverse affects could be considered. He added that teachers had to be sensitive while teaching in a way that was effective

Councillor Patterson commented that it was very important for children to learn but not to be upset or affected.

The Vice-Chair commented that it was very important for people to understand their history but that teachers have to be sensitive to the community they are teaching.

Councillor Patterson commented that the only way to have some input was by bringing good practice into schools. The curriculum needed to be taught in a way that was rational. He added that as the school concerned had requested guidance then this was a positive step.

Councillor Patterson further commented that schools should ensure that closer monitoring of teachers should be undertaken.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Director of Children and Learning be requested to ensure that the Race Advisory Forum is consulted upon the guidance on curriculum planning for ethnic, cultural and language needs of pupils when it is developed prior to it being issued to schools.

(iii) That the Head of Equalities be requested to write a letter on behalf of the Forum to the Chairs of all Governing Bodies of schools in Luton requesting them to ensure that the curriculum is taught in a way which is sensitive to all communities in Luton; a copy of the letter to be sent to the Chair of the Luton Schools Forum.

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

- Carers policy of Luton PCT.

(Note: The meeting ended at 9.25 p.m.)