

## **RACE ADVISORY FORUM**

**4<sup>th</sup> June 2007 at 6.00 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Mr. P. Markland – African Caribbean Community Development Forum  
Mr. G. S. Rumpal – Guru Nanak Gurudwara Luton  
Mr. M. Qureshi – Khidmat  
Mrs. L. Rees – Luton Community Housing  
Ms. N. Kellett – Luton Irish Forum  
Mr. M. Suleman – Pakistan Kashmir Welfare Association  
Mr. A. R. Malik – Pakistan Muslim Association  
Ann Farthing – Victim Support (Racial Harassment)-  
Mr. A. R. Khan

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Raj Nayer – Equalities Officer  
Fahim Qureshi – Arts Development Manager  
Ms. P. Stepney – Luton equalities Agency  
Ms. S. Legate - Equalities Manager, Housing and Community Living Department, Luton Borough Council  
Mrs. P. Manning - Performance & Support Services Manager  
Mrs. M. Drummond – Equalities Support Officer  
Matt Hussey – Democratic Services

### **18 MINUTES (REF: 4.1)**

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2007 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **19 FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS FORUM MEETINGS (REF: 6)**

The Equalities Officer reported on feedback from the previous meeting of the Forum.

A member of the Forum raised concern that although requested to attend this meeting of the Forum, the Chief Executive was not present. He added that he had several questions to ask him.

The Equalities Officer replied that the Chief Executive was unable to attend the Forum but would attend the next meeting of the Forum.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report (Ref: 6) be noted.

(ii) That the Chief Executive be requested to attend the next meeting of the Race Advisory Forum to answer any questions the Forum may have.

## 20 CHANGES TO LUTON CARNIVAL (REF: 7.1)

The Arts Development Manager updated the Forum on changes made to the Carnival. He advised the Forum that due to adverse weather conditions and flooding, the 2007 Carnival had been cancelled.

A Member raised concern that several music stages had been withdrawn from the Carnival at the request of the Police, due to several incidents in previous years. This had led to a number of claims of discrimination by BME groups in Luton, and that an Equality Impact Assessment had not been carried out on the changes made.

The Arts Development Manager replied that the changes made to the Carnival had been decided upon by the Carnival Planning Group following recommendations made by the Police due to weaponry being confiscated from members of the public at the previous Carnival. He added that the Group had produced a document, which highlighted 3 options of possible change to the Carnival. These were:

1. Keep the event as it is i.e. No Change
2. Eliminate all the sound sites including the urban stage from the event. Keep the current parade route, but have fewer groups of a much higher quality and focus the other elements of the event into a smaller event area i/e. Wardown Park, St. George's Square and Street only. Or;
3. Focus the event around 3 main areas Parade, Wardown Park and St. George's Square/Market Hill. Eliminate the Urban stage, Alma Link (Starlight sound site and Gordon Street Drum and Bass site), and retain some elements of these programmes on the other performance stages. Encourage more of a family based carnival arts cultural programme.

He added that any changes would be restrained by budgets available. He went on to say that the document had highlighted any impacts and perceived discrimination that any changes could have. Of the above options, Option 2 had been adopted for the 2007 Carnival on the advice of the Police, but had received opposition from several community groups. He concluded that lessons had been learnt by this decision and that there was now an opportunity for greater engagement with the community.

The Equalities Officer commented that the Carnival Planning Group needed to be more representative of the communities of Luton.

The Equalities Manager, Housing and Community Living Department commented that an impact assessment had not been undertaken on changes made to the Carnival.

A member of the Forum commented that no formal apology had been received for the hurt caused to several communities in the town by the changes made to the 2007 Carnival.

The Arts Development Manager acknowledged that mistakes had been made on the 2007 Carnival.

A member of the Forum enquired how much the Council funded the Carnival and Luton Mela respectively.

The Arts Development Manager replied that the Council had funded the Carnival £300,000 in 2007 and £18,000 for the Luton Mela.

He explained that the Luton Carnival had been running for more than 30 years and was the largest one-day street event in the country which attracted a very large number of both residents and visitors to Luton. This created a large revenue for the town, but also required policing, security, road closures, fencing/barriers etc being taken from the budget. He added that less than 10% of the Carnival budget actually went on the artistic programme. He went on to say that by comparison, the Mela was a relatively new event that took place on one site.

The Chair requested that the Arts Development Manager submit a report on a quarterly basis on the Luton Carnival to the Forum.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report (Ref: 7.1) be noted.

(ii) That the Arts Development Manager be requested to submit a report on the Luton Carnival to future meetings of the Forum on a quarterly basis.

## **21 LUTON EQUALITY AGENCY CONFERENCE UPDATE (REF: 7.2)**

Ms. P. Stepney, Luton equalities Agency updated the Forum on the development of the Luton Equalities Agency. The Forum were notified that the Agency aspired to develop links with local and regional organisations to promote equality. To date the Agency had achieved:-

- Charitable status
- Robust and proactive trustees
- Premises
- Build Capacity (July 2007)
- Hate Crime Forum and helpline (July 2007)
- Developed contacts
- Conferences on racism and hate crime (September/October 2007)
- Official Launch of the Luton Equalities Agency

The Agency had four main priorities, these were:-

- Supporting residents who had experienced hate crime or discrimination.
- Dealing with harassment.
- Legal advocacy/advice.
- Developing links with local and regional organisations to promote equality.

She went on to say that the Agency was working towards addressing gaps in services in Luton which included:-

- Dealing with harassment
- Counselling
- Conflict resolution
- Supporting residents who had experienced hate crime
- Advocacy and legal advice – signposting

She added that the Agency were in the process of recruiting a Board of Trustees, and an advert had been placed in a local paper. There had been 10 responses to date, and applicants had been issued a recruitment pack. Interviews would be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

The Agency's 'Build Capacity' involved:-

- Capacity building training for REC's and Equality Agencies (BTEG)
- Information, support and guidance from the Minority Ethnic Network in the Eastern Region (MENTER)
- Affiliation to the regional Race and Equalities councils in the East of England
- Reaching Communities – collaborative bid for casework
- Connecting Communities Plus

She went on to explain that the Luton Equalities Agency could offer organisations advice on policy and procedures, race/equality impact assessments and training, cultural awareness training, equality and law training, a critical friend and consultancy.

She concluded that the lack of funding could prevent the Agency from being as effective as it should be.

**Resolved:** That the report (Ref: 7.20) be noted.

## **22 DRAFT DEPARTMENTAL EQUALITY ACTION PLAN (REF: 7.3)**

The Equalities Officer reported on Council department's agreed Equality Action Plans for the year 2007/08. The Committee were informed that the

Council had adopted four key themes and their objectives from the Equality Standard for Local Government to provide continued focus for the annual equalities action plan. These were:-

- Leadership and Corporate Commitment;
- Consultation, Community and Development and Partnership;
- Service Delivery and Customer Care, and Employment and Training

Officers from the Chief Executive's, Housing and Community Living, and Regeneration Departments were present at the meeting to answer any questions on their respective Equality Action Plans.

A member of the Forum raised concern at the recent outbreak of Tuberculosis (TB) in the town and enquired how the Council would help prevent future outbreaks. He suggested that officers, when considering policies particularly around social inclusion and housing, included issues around disease.

The Equalities Manager, Housing and Community Living Department and ensured that appropriate officers would be informed of the members concerns.

A member of the Forum raised concern that the Council did not currently carry out effective research and consultation with different parts of the community.

Equalities Manager, Housing and Community Living Department replied that with the introduction of the White Paper, the Council would be developing improved methods of engaging with the community.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report (Ref: 7.3) be noted.

(ii) That the four key themes and objective of Leadership and Corporate Commitment, Consultation, Community Development and Partnership, Service Delivery and Customer Care and Employment and Training be noted.

## **23 RACE ADVISORY FORUM ATTENDANCE – PROPOSALS (REF: 7.4)**

The Head of Equalities submitted a report in regard to membership proposals following a request for a review by the Forum. The Equalities Officer advised that letters had been sent to 28 local minority voluntary organisations drawing their attention to the fact that they had not attended a meeting of the Forum for sometime and asked them if they still wanted to continue to receive agendas and papers for future meetings. Only 8 organisations replied giving assurances that they wished to remain members of the Forum and 18 had not responded. Of the 28 letters despatched 2 had been undeliverable. He suggested that the organisations that had not responded be removed from the membership of the Forum.

Members of the Forum suggested that the Equalities write to the 18 organisations once more explaining that if they did not respond they would be removed from the membership.

A member of the forum suggested that to encourage new members to the Forum, an advert be placed in local newspapers and Luton Line.

A member of the Forum suggested that the Forum should encourage residents of Eastern European origin.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report ( Ref: 7.4)be noted.

(ii) That the Equalities Officer write to the 18 organisations again explaining that if they did not respond they would be removed from the membership.

(iii) That the Equalities Officer be requested to place an advertisement in local newspapers and Luton Line to encourage new members to the Forum.

## **24 WORK PROGRAMME (REF: 8)**

The Scrutiny Officer updated the Committee with the details of the latest version of its work programme.

**Resolved:** That the following item be added to the Committee's work programme:

- Traffic Calming Measures Criteria.

**(Note: The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.)**