

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM

13 December 2007 at 6.30 pm

MEMBERS: Councillor Ruth Dombey (Chair), Councillors Margaret Ali, Abigail Lock, Pamela Picknett, Shafi Chowdhury, Nasser Butt and Alastair Howarth

ABSENT: Councillor Misdaq Zaidi, Edwina McCarthy, Joan Parker, Pam Davis, Toby Price, Andy Wilson, Kevin Biggs, Kate Evans, Beau Fadahunsi, David Gair, Tim Lyth and Melodie Shelbourne

Also present:
(*Absent)

*Kevin Biggs	Borough Fire Commander
*Kate Evans	Sutton Education Lead Adviser
*Beau Fadahunsi	Sutton Minority Ethnic forum
*Chief Insp David Gair	Safer Sutton Partnership
Alastair Howarth	HM Prison Highdown
*Tim Lyth	Carshalton College
*Fran Massiah	Sutton Housing Strategy Group
*Melodie Shelbourne	Sutton Volunteer Bureau

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Chief inspector David Gair, Tim Lyth, Edwina McCarthy and Andy Wilson.

The Chair welcomed Nasser Butt, who was now the representative of the Sutton Minority Ethnic Forum.

Resolved: To note that Nasser Butt's substitute will be Gerry Jerome and that of Brother Shafi Chowdhury will be Mark Tomlinson.

30. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2007 were approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

31. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

It was reported that only one nomination for Vice-Chair had been received, that of Brother Shafi Chowdhury.

Resolved: That Brother Shafi Chowdhury be elected Vice-Chair of the Forum until the first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2008.

32. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATION

It was reported that the Council would shortly be undertaking a six week consultation on three policy documents of the new Local Development Framework. The Framework would eventually replace the current Unitary Development Plan and the policies it would contain would guide future development in the Borough over the next 10-15 years. Officers were communicating with local residents to ensure that the policy documents would, so far as possible, meet peoples wishes and needs.

The three policy documents were a core planning strategy, a site development policies document and a plan for Sutton Town Centre.

The core planning strategy set out the key strategic elements of the planning framework and comprised a long term spatial vision and strategy, strategic

objectives, core policies and a monitoring and implementation framework. It recognised the need to create housing and employment, and to invest in town centres, whilst protecting most open land. The site development policies document identified possible sites in the Borough that might be suitable for development to meet long term needs. The Sutton Town Centre plan document identified certain sites where there could be opportunities for the development or improvement of residential, employment or retail uses.

Some members expressed the view that there was a need for additional meeting and worship space, which would promote social inclusion. It was said that some local authorities made special provision to establish meeting places for ethnic minorities. It was also noted that some shopping areas outside the Borough catered for the specific needs of minority interests and it was suggested that Sutton could encourage the development of, for example, an Asian market.

There were concerns about accessibility within sustainable transport areas for disabled people. Sustainable transport areas were defined as within a ten minute walk or 800 metres in any direction from the edge of the town centre boundary. That distance could be achieved by some 'Shopmobility' vehicles.

Resolved: That the comments by members of the Forum outlined above be taken into account by the Head of Strategic Environmental Planning as part of the consultation.

33. EPSOM AND ST HELIER HOSPITALS ACCESS ISSUES

Further to Minute 16/07, the Chair reported that Ted Gates had had two meetings with officers from the Hospital Trust but was not yet in a position to report on the progress achieved.

Resolved: To defer.

34. MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Further to Minute 22/07, the Chair reported that the new Sutton Minority Ethnic Forum had established an interim executive committee; a project to enable members of black and minority ethnic groups to 'shadow' local councillors, with a view to encouraging them to stand for the Council, had been very successful; and the Faith and Belief Forum had organised a second 'question time' event for students.

Members also drew attention to the wish of the Sutton Minority Ethnic Forum to identify the eastern European community in Sutton; to an invitation to members to attend meetings on equality at HM Prison Highdown; and to the United Nations day for disabled people on 3 December, when there had been a local awards ceremony to mark the achievements of disabled people.

It was suggested that the Forum promote a joint project with a cross-cutting theme common to all local organisations with interests in equality and diversity issues.

Resolved: That further consideration be given at the Forum's next meeting to a joint project.

35. BORDER AND IMMIGRATION AGENCY - DISPERSAL POLICY

Further to Minute 23/07, the response from the Border and Immigration Agency was submitted. The Agency had set out in a standard response the detail of their policy but appeared to have misunderstood what the Forum had sought. The Agency dispersed asylum seekers to Sutton, and other local authorities, on a rota basis, but without any warning. The Forum had asked that the Agency notify the Authority in advance of how many asylum seekers were to be sent and when, but that information had not been given.

Resolved: That the Agency be asked again to liaise with officers regarding the number of asylum seekers and the dates when they will be sent to Sutton.

36. SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS

Members noted the forthcoming celebrations of different faiths.

The meeting ended at 8.38 pm

Chair:
Date: