

LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM
THURSDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2007



6.30 pm at the

Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, SM1 1EA

To all members of the Equality and Diversity Forum:-

*Councillors Margaret Ali, Ruth Dombey,
Abigail Lock, Pamela Picknett and Misdaq
Zaidi (Substitutes: Councillors Sean
Brennan and Brendan Hudson)
Brother Shafi Chowdhury
Edwina McCarthy
Joan Parker
Pam Davis
Beau Fadahunsi
Toby Price
(vacancy)
Andy Wilson*

*London Borough of Sutton
Sutton Faith and Belief Forum
Physical and Sensory Disabilities Partnership Board
Sutton Carers' Forum
Sutton Seniors' Forum
Black and Minority Ethnic Forum
Sutton Corporate Parents' Forum
Sutton Women's Centre
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Group*

Advisers:

*Kevin Biggs
Kate Evans
Chief Insp. David Gair
Alastair Howarth
Tim Lyth
Melodie Shelbourne*

*Borough Fire commander
Learning Services Lead Adviser
Safer Sutton Partnership
HM Prison Highdown
Carshalton College
Sutton Volunteer Bureau*

*Paul Martin
Chief Executive
Civic Offices
St Nicholas Way
Sutton
SM1 1EA*

4 December 2007

*Enquiries to: Peter Snow, Principal Committee Manager
Tel: 020 8770 5119 Fax: 020 8770 5404 E-mail: peter.snow@sutton.gov.uk*

Copies of reports are available in large print on request

Reminder – Declaration of Interests

Members should consider the following interests and whether they have any they should declare.

Personal interests:

Where it can reasonably be thought that a matter will affect the well being of yourself, a friend or relative or an organisation/body with which you are involved, to a greater extent than other people.

In this case you should declare the interest and state the nature of it.

Personal and Prejudicial Interests:

Where a personal interest is thought to be so significant that a member of the public, with knowledge of the facts, would consider it likely to prejudice the member's judgment of the public interest.

In this case you should declare the interest, state the nature of it, and leave the meeting room.

Further information can be found in the Council's Code of Conduct and Protocol. If you are in any doubt as to whether you have an interest you should seek advice before the Committee meeting from either Richard Shortman or Fiona Ledden.

If, during the course of the Committee meeting, you consider you may have an interest you should always declare it.

PLEASE NOTE: *Any decision taken at this meeting does not become definitive until 10am on the second working day after the meeting. Any four members of the Council may notify the Chief Executive by then if they require a decision to be reviewed. Please contact the Project Manager named on the Agenda frontsheet for further information.*

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTES

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)

of the meeting held on 27 September 2007 (ENCLOSURE).

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Further to Minute 15/07, members are reminded that nominations for Vice-Chair must be submitted to the Committee Manager by 5:00 pm on 13 December 2007 (the day of the meeting).

4. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATION

The Head of Strategic Environmental Planning will report orally on the current consultation in respect of the following planning policy documents that will form part of the Local Development Framework:-

- A Core Planning Strategy
- A Sites Development Document
- A Town Centre Plan for Sutton Town Centre

5. SUTTON EQUALITY SCHEME - PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Report of the Executive Head of Policy and Communications (ENCLOSURE).
(to follow)

6. EPSOM AND ST HELIER HOSPITALS ACCESS ISSUES

Further to Minute 16/07, Ted Gates will report orally on any progress.

7. MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Further to Minute 22/07, members are again asked to indicate actions by their individual organisations or generally, that could be developed within the Forum and which could make a difference to minority groups in the Borough.

8. BORDER AND IMMIGRATION AGENCY - DISPERSAL POLICY (Pages 7 - 10)

Further to Minute 23/07, the Border and Immigration Agency has now provided information regarding its policy of dispersal of applicants seeking asylum or refugee status to localities across the United Kingdom. The Agency's response is attached (ENCLOSURE).

9. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

brought forward at the direction of the Chair, who has approved the reason for urgency.

**Equality and Diversity Forum
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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM

27 September 2007 at 7.30 pm

- MEMBERS:** Councillor Ruth Dombey (Chair) and Councillor Abigail Lock, Shafi Chowdhury, Joan Parker, Pam Davis, Beau Fadahunsi, Andy Wilson and Kate Evans
- ABSENT:** Councillors Margaret Ali, Pamela Picknett, Misdaq Zaidi, Edwina McCarthy, Toby Price, David Gair, Andrew Holcombe, Alastair Howarth, Tim Lyth and Melodie Shelbourne
- SUBSTITUTES:** Ted Gates, Physical and Sensory Disabilities Partnership Board
- ALSO PRESENT:** Kate Evans, Sutton Education Lead Adviser
Richard Lennard, Sutton Faith and Belief Forum

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Councillors Margaret Ali, Pam Picknett and Misdaq Zaidi and Alistair Howarth, Edwina McCarthy, for whom Ted Gates substituted, and Tim Lyth.

14. MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following alteration:

Minute 8 – Change Sutton Faith and Belief Group to Sutton Faith and Belief Forum.

15. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

It was reported that no nominations had been received by the time agreed at the last meeting. At the meeting Brother Shafi Chowdhury nominated himself.

Resolved: That Dennis Bartholomew, Equalities Officer remind Groups of the need to nominate a Vice-Chair and that nominations should be received by 5pm on 13 December 2007, the date of the next meeting.

16. EPSOM AND ST HELIER HOSPITALS - ACCESS ISSUES

Despite continued requests, it was reported that the senior management of the Epsom and St. Helier University Trust had not responded to a request for someone to come and report to this Group on the access audits/equality and diversity impact assessments that had been carried out at the hospitals.

Ted Gates indicated that he chaired the Access and Equality Group at the Epsom and St. Helier NHS Trust. There was a meeting of that group in a few weeks time. He offered to raise the request at that meeting and indicate this Group's concern that no response had been received to the initial request.

Resolved: That the offer from Mr Gates be accepted.

17. EQUALITIES IN EMPLOYMENT MONITORING 2007

Paul Naphine, Head of Employment Relations and Elizabeth Goodridge, Organisational Development Manager for Diversity, reported on the progress made on equalities in employment in the last year.

The headline figures showed a further increase in the proportion of people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups employed by the Council, though this

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increase was not reflected for senior posts. There had been little change in the proportion of women employed in senior posts. There had also been a small improvement in the proportion of people with disabilities employed in senior jobs and a significant increase in the number of employees in schools declaring a disability. This had resulted in an overall net increase of such declarations in the workforce as a whole. There had also been a modest increase in the proportion of young people employed over the past year.

As far as recruitment was concerned, there had been a small increase in applicants with BME backgrounds in the non school workforce though these had been less successful in being appointed to a post compared with white applicants. There had also been a modest improvement in the number of BME candidates for posts in schools though, again, these applicants were less successful in being appointed than their white counterparts. Recruitment of disabled employees had also decreased in the non schools workforce and their success rate of being appointed appeared to be disproportionately lower than for other candidates. However, disabled persons were also being recruited by methods other than by application form. Therefore the figures reported might not give a true picture. The position was no better in schools. Concern was expressed at the disproportionately high dismissal rates of disabled staff (April 2006-March 2007). Work needed to be carried out to try and explore the reasons for this and ensure disabled staff received the necessary support to overcome any workplace barriers to inclusion and thereby reduce the number of future dismissals.

The focus for 2007/8 would be on recruiting and retaining disabled employees in the workforce overall, increasing the number of younger people in the workforce and taking positive action to increase the proportion of senior management posts filled by BME employees.

The report also mentioned research that had been carried out with the Greater London Employers Association which showed that a higher proportion of BME staff were involved in disciplinary procedures and that help and guidance from other London Boroughs could be sought. In response to a question, it was noted that the number of persons who would act as a personal supporter for BME staff in such situations had decreased. This situation needed to be rectified and appropriate time allowed for staff to attend training courses.

Resolved: (i) That the progress outlined in the report, the Corporate and Group targets, the action plans set out in Appendix A and the research summarised in Appendix B to the report and the implications for the Council, be noted;

(ii) That the focus for 2007/8 as outlined above, be endorsed.

18. SLAVE TRADE

(a) Sutton Slave Trade - Heritage Links

Kath Shawcross, the Borough Archivist from the Library Service gave a short presentation on a forthcoming exhibition that was being organised to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. The exhibition would be in the Europa Gallery and focus on the borough's connections with the slave trade, through records obtained from one local family who had a slave. It also focussed on modern day slavery and the part that black people played in abolishing slavery. It was noted that grant aid had been obtained to employ a project worker to research the exhibition and to take the results into high schools at Key Stage 3 and produce a teacher's resource pack.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

(b) Modern Slavery - People and Sex Trafficking

Graeme Hodgson and Duncan Parker from the Salvation Army gave a presentation on the problems of current day people trafficking and the results of their efforts, as members of Croydon Community Against Trafficking (CCAT), to reduce the number of brothels in Croydon that it was suspected used such people. It was estimated that there were over 100 brothels in Croydon in this category. CCAT had three objectives:

- To take evidence to the Police, to persuade them to take it seriously and to include, as part of their policing strategy, moves to close such establishments;
- To close brothels
- To stop adult services being advertised in local newspapers

The first two objectives had been achieved.

A preliminary investigation into this problem in Sutton had revealed that over 80 different sexual services were being advertised in local newspapers. It was suspected that the majority of these were provided by people who had been trafficked into this country.

A low key approach was suggested as the best way of dealing with this problem. Measures that could be taken included

- Asking the Police to raid suspected brothels
- Reinforce licensing conditions on appropriate businesses by the Council;
- Urging local newspapers not to advertise sexual services;
- Seeking agreement from local newspapers editors not to accept advertisements from unregistered businesses

It was indicated that the Salvation Army would be happy to assist with this work and that any evidence that they found would be sent to the Police.

Resolved: (i) That Graham Hodge and Duncan Parker be thanked for their interesting and thought provoking presentation;

(ii) That this matter be discussed with representatives at the Safer Sutton Partnership with a view to taking action to reduce the number of people who have been trafficked from working in Sutton.

19. SUTTON PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE - EX-OFFENDERS

Members of the Forum were informed that the next Sutton Partnership Conference would be held on 8 November 2007 at the Phoenix Centre, Wallington. The overall theme of the conference was ex-offenders with four sub-themes – housing, employment, health and relationships.

Further details about the conference were circulated to those present.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

20. TIME OF MEETINGS

Resolved: That, in future, meetings of the Equality and Diversity Forum start at 6.30pm.

**Equality and Diversity Forum
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The Forum received a presentation from James Stonard and Colin Peacock from Sutton Mencap on the grant awarded to Sutton Mencap Pathway to identify and place clients with learning disabilities into work with public service providers.

A number of projects were currently being run in the Borough, one of which was with the Council, to provide jobs for people with learning disabilities. The process in obtaining a post was outlined, from undertaking work experience, through voluntary work to reengaging people back into the community. Each individual was assessed – what did they want to do and what their employment options were. They were then monitored over a six week period and then followed up for a further period of 26 weeks. It had been found that persuading employers to provide work experience for these persons allowed them to look at each individual in a positive and negative way.

Further possibilities for work experience placements were currently being sought.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

22. MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Further to Minute 7 of the meeting held on 21 June 2007, members had been asked to suggest actions by their individual organisations or generally, that could be developed with the Forum over the next 12 months and which would make a difference to minority groups in the borough.

Forum members were reminded that ideas and actions were still being sought.

Resolved: That a further discussion on ideas and actions that this Forum could take forward be held at the next meeting.

23. BORDER AND IMMIGRATION AGENCY - DISPERSAL POLICY

It was reported that the Border and Immigration Agency had been asked to provide information regarding its policy of dispersal of applications seeking asylum or refugee status to localities across the United Kingdom.

Despite several reminders, no information had been forthcoming.

Resolved: That further efforts be made to seek a response from the Border and Immigration Agency in time for the next meeting of the Forum.

24. SUTTON EQUALITY SCHEME - 2007/08 FIRST QUARTER REPORT

It was reported that details of the first quarter's report for the Sutton Equality scheme had been circulated. The Council's new Tracker system, which was designed to highlight problems so that they could be resolved as quickly as possible, was explained. It was also noted that the information contained in the report would be cross referenced with other authorities so that the information could be compared.

Copies of Sutton's Equality and Diversity Policy were circulated to those present.

Resolved: (i) To note the use made of Sutton's Tracker system to monitor the objectives of the Sutton Equality Scheme.

(ii) To note the progress made under the Equality Scheme.

(iii) To note the achievements against Levels 1 to 3 of the Equality Standard.

25. LEIGH ALLEN, INFORMATION MANAGER, LIBRARIES GROUP

The Forum expressed its condolences on the recent death of Leigh Allen whose funeral had been held earlier that day. Mr Allen had been involved with Holocaust Memorial Day, the Skills for Life Training and was a founder member of the Travellers Forum.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the minutes of meetings of the Holocaust Memorial Group be submitted to this Forum for their information.

26. SUTTON VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Details of the Access to Volunteering Conference – Recognising Potential to be held at Strawberry Lodge Conference Centre on 6 November 2007, were circulated.

27. FAITH AND BELIEF FORUM

Copies of Sutton Peace and Justice News were circulated to those present. Those present were reminded of the next Faith and Belief Forum Question Time on 6 November 2007.

28. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: To note that the next meeting of the Forum will be on Thursday 13 December 2007 starting at 6.30 pm.

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Border & Immigration Agency

Mr Dennis Bartholomew
Senior Policy Manager (Equalities)
Corporate Policy and Partnerships Team
London Borough of Sutton
Chief Executive's Grouping Civic Offices
St Nicholas Way
Sutton
SM1 1EA

Asylum Briefing and
Correspondence Team
14th Floor
Lunar House
40 Wellesley Road
Croydon
CR9 2BY

Tel +44 (0)20 8196 0891

Fax +44 (0)20 8196 0951

Email

Janet.Crossman@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Web www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk

28 September 2007

Dear Mr Bartholomew

Thank you for your letter of 11 September to the Director of Asylum Policy. You have asked, on behalf of the London Borough of Sutton's Equality and Diversity Forum, about our procedures for dispersing asylum applicants across the UK and whether local authorities and public service providers are consulted in advance. I have been asked to reply and thought it would be helpful to include some general and background information.

General information

As you know, the United Kingdom is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees and has a duty to give necessary protection to those who are fleeing persecution. Our obligations under that Convention and under the European Reception Conditions Directive also require the UK to support those seeking asylum who would otherwise be destitute or are likely to become destitute whilst their claim remains under consideration by the Home Office and during any in-country appeal against a decision to refuse refugee status. This is given in the form of either providing accommodation and financial support or, for those who are destitute but are able to stay with family or friends, by providing financial support only. Not all non-detained asylum seekers require accommodation or financial support.

Background

You may find it helpful to understand why asylum seekers are dispersed across the UK. Historically, most asylum applicants were located in London and the South East of England (especially Kent), putting disproportionate pressure on local authorities in these areas to provide accommodation. The dispersal system was introduced specifically to house destitute asylum seekers away from London and the South East in places where accommodation is more freely available and in a manner which represents better value for money for the taxpayer. It was also introduced to share responsibility more equitably, relieve pressure on

particularly hard-pressed areas and to help maintain social cohesion by ensuring the impact on local communities/public services is taken into account and managed. We have now regionalised our asylum teams so that they are closer to applicants and each new case is appointed a case owner who keeps in close contact with the applicant and their representative until the case is concluded.

Accommodation

Within each Border and Immigration Agency region, asylum seekers are accommodated in cluster areas. Clusters were established in 2000 in response to the need to disperse asylum seekers where they could best be supported. Cluster areas are defined by the Local Authority boundaries in which they occur and the asylum seeker population was set at an advisory cluster limit of 1:200 of the indigenous population. These clusters were chosen because they had or could develop the voluntary and community infrastructures to support asylum seekers.

The accommodation is provided under target contracts which specify standards and services that need to be provided. Those standards are designed to meet the minimum standards as directed by local authorities. The Border and Immigration Agency has entered into contracts until 2011 with a number of private and public sector providers to provide accommodation to asylum seekers. These contracts were awarded on a regional basis with each region allocated a percentage share of the accommodated intake and each provider contracted to accommodate a specific percentage of that share. Providers are paid a fixed rate for each asylum seeker they support.

Where an asylum seeker supported by the Border and Immigration Agency requires accommodation, whilst taking into account an individual's circumstances, that accommodation is offered on a no-choice basis in areas where there is ready supply of accommodation.

How do we decide where to allocate

In explanation of the actual procedures we follow when dispersing asylum applicants across the UK, the volume of asylum seekers dispersed to each Border and Immigration Agency region is based upon a complex algorithm incorporating information on the availability of accommodation if required, the numbers of asylum seekers already housed in that region, the need to ensure each accommodation provider receives an equitable share of the Border and Immigration Agency's business, asylum case owner capacity and any other special circumstances which may need to be taken into account. The number of teams that have been located in each region reflects the current asylum population in that region

The Border and Immigration Agency first establishes whether there are special circumstances that would require an applicant to be housed in London or in a specific location outside London (for example if a medical condition was treatable only in a limited number of hospitals in the UK). The Border and Immigration Agency's central Routing Team will then assign cases to one of the Regional Asylum Teams and arrange for those asylum seekers who require accommodation to be moved to Initial Accommodation (IA) in the particular region to which the case has been allocated. Not all asylum applicants require accommodation.

IA is located reasonably near the Asylum Team's office. The accommodation typically comprises full board hotels, houses in multiple occupation, hostels or self contained self-catering property. The provider arranges transport for the applicant to the accommodation, provides an induction briefing and helps connect the applicant to a GP and other local services.

Asylum seekers generally remain in IA for approximately 2-3 weeks during which time they will meet their case owner. The regional dispersal team will arrange for the asylum seeker to be moved on to dispersal accommodation in that region once they have been assessed as eligible for asylum support. This section 95 accommodation is where the applicant will be accommodated for the remaining period of their asylum claim, and any appeal.

Consultation

You have asked whether local authorities and public service providers are consulted in advance about the asylum seekers who are being dispersed to their area whilst their application is being determined.

Each Border and Immigration Agency region has a Regional Strategic Co-ordination (RSC) Group which ensures that all relevant local stakeholders have an input to important decisions about the dispersal of asylum seekers and the impact this has on the local community. The RSC Group is made up of senior officers from a cross-section of local stakeholders, including members of the regional assembly, local authority, police, health, the voluntary sector, accommodation providers, Government Office and the Border and Immigration Agency. Whilst local authorities and public services providers are not consulted about each individual asylum seeker who is dispersed to their area, via the RSC Group they will have had an opportunity to:

- determine the dispersal clusters used within a region.
- make recommendations relating to the overall regional numbers of dispersed asylum seekers
- monitor the dispersal of asylum seekers into the region,
- monitor the impact on community cohesion, housing, education and health services

Accommodation providers have contractual obligations to maintain effective on-going consultation and liaison with relevant regional stakeholders and Local Authorities with regard to the location of accommodation to ensure that social cohesion issues are taken into account. In addition, there are well-established procedures for temporarily suspending or restricting dispersal to a particular cluster or area when community cohesion issues arise.

Yours sincerely

Janet Crossman
Asylum Briefing and Correspondence Team

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