

**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM
7PM TUESDAY 27 JANUARY 2015
MEETING ROOM 5, SUTTON CIVIC CENTRE**

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES

| | | |
|----------|------------|---|
| Adrian | Davey | Councillor (Chair) |
| Moira | Butt | Councillor |
| Pathumal | Ali | Councillor |
| Hanna | Zuchowska | Councillor |
| Debbie | O'Neil | Citizens Advice Bureau (Vice Chair) |
| Judy | Okeke | Age UK |
| Tyrone | Ashby | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Forum |
| Toni | Walsh | Sutton Centre for the Voluntary Sector |
| Justine | Middlemiss | Ecumenical Borough Deans |
| David | Dickinson | Ecumenical Borough Deans |
| Ian | Kershaw | Safer Sutton Partnership |
| Olwen | Stewart | Sutton Refugee and Migrant Network |
| Frank | Brown | Sutton Centre for Independent Learning and Living |
| Joan | Parker | Sutton Carers' Forum |
| David | Parker | Sutton Carers' Forum |
| Julie | Turner | Head of Revenues, Benefits, Insurance and Pensions, LBS |
| Joanna | Steele | Arts Engagement Coordinator, LBS |
| Victoria | Lawson | Acting Head of Policy and Customer Services, LBS |
| Fiona | Cameron | Policy and Projects Officer, LBS |

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTES

| | | |
|---------|-----------|---|
| Callum | Morton | Councillor |
| Nali | Patel | Councillor |
| Joseph | Jeffers | Sutton Centre for Equalities |
| Laura | Netley | The Smart Enterprise |
| Lorri | Dawson | Sutton Refugee and Migrant Network |
| Stephen | Hawkins | Sutton Vision |
| Janet | Smith | Carshalton College |
| Mark | Tomlinson | Sutton Faith and Belief Forum |
| Colin | Stewart | Executive Head of Education and Early Intervention, LBS |

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 11 NOVEMBER 2014

Minutes were confirmed as an official record of events.

3. UPDATE: CRISIS LOANS AND GRANTS SCHEME AND COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Julie Turner, Head of Revenues, Benefits, Insurance and Pensions Resources Directorate, provided a verbal update on the Crisis Loans and Grants Scheme and Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Crisis Loans and Grants Scheme

Julie first updated the Forum about the Crisis Loans and Grants Scheme. She explained the context and background of Sutton's offer to residents, then discussed the recent review of the scheme. Details are provided in **Attachment A**.

The group then asked questions.

Questions were asked about how elements of the system worked such as food vouchers, the role of the Vine project and utilities.

- Morrison's were the only provider as they were the only supermarket to agree to the restrictions around tobacco and alcohol.
- Recently the Council was able to provide the Foodbank with additional funding for storage as identified in the recent review.
- Only 2 vouchers permitted within the period of a year.
- The Vine Project is part of the bulk waste initiative and details about response times would be followed up by Julie.
- The utility works by key charge, or the customer will submit the bill itself. Paypal voucher can also be provided after assessment.

Questions were also asked about eligibility and who uses the scheme.

- Refugees and migrants are eligible for the service if they have passed residency requirements.
- For people where English is not a first language, it was explained that when developing the scheme there was lot of outreach work by internal colleagues/social workers including to church groups and the mosque, speaking about welfare reform including the scheme.
- Eligibility is restricted to those who get a benefit or get a council tax reduction. They have to be responsible for the household. Cannot be a non-dependent. They would need to be assessed, go online to apply or there is also a direct telephone line
- For signposting around mental health and emotional wellbeing, there are some officers that are working in the area. The council is aware that some customers are disengaged and the Council is looking to connect with the community and work towards considering individuals needs and how that intersects with Adult Social Services to identify underlying issues or potential ongoing problems or need.

Council tax Reduction Scheme

Julie explained about the previous and current state of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme including a needs assessment that was conducted around vulnerable people. The details can be found in **Attachment A**.

Action: An ongoing update on the Crisis Loans and Grants Scheme and Council Tax Reduction Scheme be provided to the Forum when appropriate.

4. UPDATE: INFORMATION AND ADVICE FRAMEWORK

Victoria Lawson, Acting Executive Head of Policy and Customer Services, provided an update on the Information and Advice Framework. The history behind the Information and Advice Framework was explained and it was confirmed that the framework has now been published on the Sutton website.

The Framework is now being rolled out with soft market testing in February. A draft specification will be developed and will be reviewed by the Strategy and Resources Committee in July 2015.

Questions were asked about whether the information and advice will all be an online offer only. Victoria responded that there is an understanding that there is a large digital component to the provision of information and advice, but that in some circumstances face to face or telephone contacts were preferable depending on the situation and level of crisis.

Another question was asked about deaf accessibility and whether they are excluded. A Forum member responded about drop in sessions offered by SCILL and an information officer there who signs.

Action: An update on the Information and Advice Framework be given following Strategy and Resources Committee in July 2015.

5. REVIEW: TERMS OF REFERENCE (Pages 7 - 10)

Fiona Cameron, Policy and Projects Officer, explained the need to update the Equality and Diversity Forum Terms of Reference which were last updated in 2008. The Forum were brought to the attention of the document in the Agenda Papers with track changes for the proposed amendments.

The Forum discussed possible changes, including:

- Membership of the group and expectations of conduct
- The requirements (and relevance) for a quorum and the link to committee decision making

Action: The group to email comments to Fiona Cameron by Friday 6 February.

6. ARTS DEVELOPMENT OUTREACH SERVICE (Pages 11 - 14)

Joanna Steele, Arts Engagement Coordinator, gave an overview of the Arts Development Outreach Service. She went through the Agenda Paper describing the service, sought feedback and answered questions.

Several issues were discussed:

- Increasing attendance (and breadth of attendees) to events.
- Communicating what work is being done within the council and to the broader Borough and utilising local newsletters and communications.
- Nature of project based funding which can make ongoing work disjointed.
- The need to interact with those who are isolated or less mobile e.g. care homes, older adults
- Inclusion and working with individuals with mental health issues and the arts e.g. Art as Therapy Exhibition.

Action: Cllr Butt to assist in communications in the Clockhouse area where there is more isolation.

7. REDESIGN OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES (Pages 15 - 22)

Deferred

8. HATE CRIME REPORT

Ian Kershaw, Safer Sutton Partnership talked through the Hate Crime Report and commended the work being done by other members of the voluntary sector.

There was a brief discussion on the current events in the national press and Ian confirmed that in the annual Community Safety Survey there is a question about social cohesion that probes these areas. Feedback from more than 600 interviews shows a negligible amount of comments that indicate any particular concerns with community cohesion.

9. UPDATES

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Forum

Tyrone Ashby, Chair, reported to the group a number of events and projects planned for the LGBT Forum for 2015. Tyrone also reported positively on the increased reach of the group to Epsom and Ewell and the support the Forum will be providing to rebuild the Merton LGBT Forum.

Events

- St Helier Festival
- London Pride
- LGBT History Month

Projects

- LGBT books in all Sutton libraries
- Working with AgeUK to reach out to LGBT community
- Outreach programme – helping the homeless LGBT community

Voluntary Sector

Toni Walsh talked about the role of Sutton Centre for the Voluntary Sector and what they have been doing lately engaging with residents and the voluntary sector, including:

- Working with groups to help them to achieve the PQASSO standard,
- Safeguarding adults board,
- Starting engagement with Somali group around FGM,
- Working with supplementary schools helping them with policies,
- Fuel poverty strategy – picking up further on that work.

10. EVENTS

The Chair updated on the Holocaust Memorial Day event in Sutton.

The group also shared information about the following events:

- Friday 30 January - Wellbeing Day in Sutton at AgeUK
- Europa Gallery exhibitions
 - Carer's Centre – Photographic exhibition about substance misuse
 - Safer Sutton Partnership History

11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No additional items of business.

Equality & Diversity Forum 2014/15 Meeting Dates

- 14 April 2015

All meetings commence at 7pm, Sutton Civic Centre.