

**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM**  
**7PM TUESDAY 14 JULY 2015**  
**WELCOME ROOM, SUTTON INCUSION CENTRE**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**ATTENDEES**

Adrian	Davey	Councillor (Chair)
Hanna	Zuchowska	Councillor
Joseph	Jeffers	Sutton Centre for Equalities (Chief Officer)
Joan	Parker	Sutton Carer's Forum
David	Parker	Sutton Carer's Forum
Megan	Perryman	Stonewall
Jonathan	Williams	LBS LGBT Staff Network
Justin	Walker	LBS LGBT Staff Network
Victoria	Lawson	Head of Policy, Leadership and Governance, LBS
Jisa	Prasannan	Commissioning and Business Insight Officer, LBS

Staff at the Sutton Inclusion Centre were thanked for hosting this meeting of the Equality and Diversity Forum. Members of the Forum were informed that a tour of the excellent facilities at the Centre was available after the meeting.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies were received from the following members of the Forum.

Callum	Morton	Councillor
Pathumal	Ali	Councillor
Nali	Patel	Councillor
Holly	Ramsey	Councillor
Debbie	O'Neil	Citizens Advice Bureau (Vice Chair)
Janet	Smith	Carshalton College
Frank	Brown	Sutton Centre for Independent Learning and Living
Razia	Sattar	Sutton Centre for the Voluntary Sector
Toni	Walsh	Sutton Housing Partnership
Lorri	Dawson	Sutton Refugee and Migrant Network
Rev. David	Dickinson	Ecumenical Borough Deans
Ian	Kershaw	Safer Sutton Partnership

**2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 14 APRIL 2015 (Pages 1-34)**

Minutes were confirmed as an official record of events.

### 3. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON SUPPORTING OUR LGBT COMMUNITY (Pages 35-38)

The Chair introduced the item and explained that the purpose of this roundtable discussion was to understand how good the Council and its partners were and how they could improve in supporting the Borough's LGBT community when producing policy and commissioning/delivering services. It was not intended to be a critique, but rather an ideas generating session which could be feedback to senior managers or committees to influence decision making.

Megan Perryman from Stonewall gave a presentation on the history of Stonewall and the development of legislation to support LGBT people. As many of the legislative battles have been won, Stonewall were now focusing on changing hearts and minds by empowering people at home, schools and work. For example, teacher training to support students throughout their school life and supporting employers to ensure they provide safe places to work. The Forum were informed that Stonewall were now a LGBT charity.

The Forum were informed that Sutton were part of the Diversity Champions Programme run by Stonewall and would this year, for the first time, be completing their workplace equality index assessment. A question was asked about who would own the assessment and taking forward the feedback received from Stonewall. It was confirmed that the LBS Equality Champions Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council, would take ownership. It was agreed the assessment could be shared with the Forum members for the learning purposes of other organisations.

**Action: LBS Workplace Equality Index be shared with Forum members once completed.**

Jonathan Williams gave an introduction to the work of the LBS LGBT Staff Network. He explained that from a staff network and personal perspective, the London Borough of Sutton values and encourages diversity – flying the flag for Pride Week is one such example. The Staff Network was set up 6 months ago. It came out of the need for visibility and what he learnt in the Stonewall Role Model course. The course prompted thought on what individuals could do for the organisation or for other individuals. The Network continues to have a link with Stonewall. It was recognised that the Staff Network needed to come to a consensus on the purpose of the Network going forward and the Network identified that as well as being a support group, members of the Network also had a duty as officers of the Council towards the public. The Network has therefore begun to have 'important conversations' with Children's and Adult Services.

The important conversation with Children's Services involved asking senior managers to fill out questionnaires asking questions such as whether they knew who their LGBT users were and how they were recognising their needs. This led to discussions around bullying, supporting young people with their identity, care leavers, foster carer, and assessing the need of LGBT service users when commissioning Children's Services.

The Staff Network currently has a small membership. There has been a recruitment drive recently, but there have been no new joiners. A question was asked about whether heterosexual staff could join the Network. The Network has discussed this as a possibility for the future. Stonewall advised that LGBT groups generally tend to work best to begin with, with just LGBT members. Other things have been done to improve the Network's visibility e.g. setting up a LGBT Staff Network Google+

Community. Visibility of LGBT people could be improved in the Council and across the borough e.g. representing LGBT people and families on posters in the Council, schools, youth clubs etc.

Justin Walker, also a member of the LBS LGBT Staff Network, spoke about their 'important conversation' with the then Adult Social Services, Housing and Health Directorate. This took the same format as Children's and considered LGBT needs in respect of housing, social care, homelessness etc. Barriers to collecting data to identify protected characteristics, particularly when working with vulnerable adults was discussed. For example, there seemed to be very few responses to a question asked about the user's sexual orientation but this is the sort of information which would be very useful when assessing need for commissioning activities. Stonewall has an easy to understand leaflet called "what's it got to do with you?" to explain why it is important to ask questions around the protected characteristics. This was offered to the Council as it could be useful for our frontline staff.

**Action: Megan Perryman to send "What's it got to do with you?" leaflets to Victoria Lawson.**

In the borough of Sutton there is a LGBT Forum, but a question was asked about what other help was available in order to support the LGBT community? It was agreed that it was important for the Council and its partners to find out from its providers on what support they provided and what user data they collected.

Different LGBT people will have different needs e.g. BME LGBT people, LGBT people with mental health needs, or older LGBT people. It was recognised that culture and religion may have a huge impact on LGBT people in the borough. Visibility and invisibility of different groups was also discussed. Stonewall were working hard within their organisation and those they support, to provide role models and make LGBT visible and inclusive for all people.

There was a discussion about how the Council and the Forum could improve its approach to supporting LGBT people when making key decisions and policies:

- There was shortly due to be an Integrated Impact Assessment Campaign internally.
- The Council does not currently have a Trans policy, this was a potential area for development.
- The Council could perhaps do more work with young people around LGBT issues, subject to proper safeguarding being in place.
- Hearing directly from people/role-models via podcasts could be much more powerful than reading a report. Other digital options like Google+ Communities and videos could also be explored.
- Could use the Life Centre to highlight LGBT issues to young people as this is not currently covered in the education content.
- The LGBT Forum have recently donated 20 LGBT related books to Sutton Central Library.

- Different LGBT groups in the borough e.g. the Sutton LGBT Forum, the Sutton Youth LGBT Forum, and the LBS LGBT Staff Network could work more closely together whilst recognising they are distinct groups with different objectives.
- All LGBT groups need to be made to feel inclusive recognising the different groups and characteristics among LGBT people and be truly representative of the local community.
- Need to establish what good looks like for the Council and its partner organisations in the voluntary sector. Stonewall could perhaps help with this. Manchester CC and Brighton & Hove Council were identified as good examples, but a lot of this was community driven rather than Council driven – but these examples could be looked at to see how this drive has impacted policy and decision making.
- Stonewall may look to develop their workplace employment index to include more about service users rather than just staff. This would be very helpful for public sector organisations like the Council.
- It was suggested that the BME Forum, when celebrating Black History Month, could get LGBT speakers at their event and the Forum could also put forward an item on LGBT people for a future agenda.

**Actions:**

- **LBS to carry out a wider survey of the voluntary sector on LGBT, similar to the important conversations by the LGBT Staff Network.**
- **LBS to develop a trans policy, working with Stonewall.**
- **LBS to liaise with the Life Centre re: possibility of providing educational content around LGBT.**
- **Stonewall to send LBS examples of what good looks like.**
- **BME Forum to try and organise LGBT speaker for Black History Month and have an item on LGBT people on future Forum Agenda.**

Thanks were given to Cllr Zuchowska for proposing the motion that the Council fly the Rainbow Flag for Pride Week.

**6. HATE CRIME REPORT (Pages 77-80)**

The Chair deferred this item due to the low numbers of attendees in attendance.

**7. UPDATES****Black and Ethnic Minority Forum**

The Forum were informed by Joseph Jeffers that there was Hate Crime training available, 25 people were needed for the training and to contact Debbie O'Neill if interested.

**Action: LBS to share this information with the Forum and publicise in Insight.**

## Human Rights Act

Jisa Prasannan, Commissioning and Business Insight Officer provided an update on the Human Rights Act.

The Conservative government has pledged to abolish the Human Rights Act and replace it with a new British Bill of Rights. The Human Rights Act 1998 became law in 2000. It brought the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. The Convention contains basic rights and freedoms which every citizen in Europe is entitled to. It includes the rights to life, liberty and security, a fair trial, respect for private life, and freedom of expression. The Convention also bans torture, slavery and discrimination. As a result of the Act, UK judges must read and give effect to other laws in a way which is compatible with the Convention rights. It is also unlawful for public authorities to act in a way which is incompatible with a Convention right.

Critics of the Human Rights Act claim it has led to perverse judgments. Supporters say that that by scrapping the Human Rights Act, the UK will lose legitimacy and effectiveness in speaking out against human rights abuses elsewhere.

The conservative government wants to replace the Human Rights Act with a Bill of Rights specifically designed to fit British needs and traditions. It would mean that people in the UK would no longer be able to bring their complaints to the European Court of Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights would no longer be able to order a change in UK law and would become an advisory body only.

Human rights reform is very complicated and any changes would also need to tie into government decisions on devolution to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. There are also wider consequences to be considered e.g. impact on UK's membership of the Council of Europe, its commitments as a member of the EU, and impact on international treaties such as the Good Friday Agreement.

**Action: LBS officers to monitor the issues and keep the Forum updated.**

## 5. INFORMATION & ADVICE OFFER UPDATE (Pages 63-76)

Victoria Lawson, Head of Policy, Leadership and Governance provided an update on the Information and Advice Offer. A paper had been agreed at Strategy and Resources committee on 29th June. Commissioning of the new information and advice offer would start shortly.

The Forum were asked to note progress.

## 6. SUTTON AUTISM STRATEGY FRAMEWORK (Pages 39-62)

Councillor Davey declared an interest in this item due to his role as Joint Mental Health Commissioner for Sutton.

Apologies were given for Dominique Sydamah, who is the LBS officer working on this, for being unable to attend the Forum.

Cllr Davey provided an introduction noting that not enough is done in this area. There had been lots of guidance from central government in the past few years. We know what good looks like, but the key question was how do we get there?

Victoria Lawson presented the slides attached to the Agenda. Victoria explained that this item had been brought to the Forum to (i) make sure it is on the agenda as it has equality and diversity elements, and (ii) use the Forum as a critical friend in the self assessment and future plans.

It was noted that there was an autism strategy group led by LBS but involving wider stakeholders. This was going through a refresh at the moment due to the new government guidance.

A number of points were raised in the discussion:

- Policy guidance needed to be set corporately with wider directions from directorates – to take a top down and bottom up approach.
- The challenge is that no two autistic people are the same. However, a baseline could be established as to good practice.
- The self-assessment, once completed, could be brought to Forum to seek examples to reinforce or counter the assessment.
- It was noted that Councillors may benefit from autism training as part of their member training.

**Actions:**

- **Results from self-assessment to come back to the Forum for discussion next year e.g. March 2016.**
- **Copies of previous self-assessments to be circulated to the Forum.**
- **Request for member training on autism to be raised with Dominique Sydahmah.**

## **8. EVENTS**

Jisa Prasannan, Commissioning and Business Insight Officer provided an update on events.

It was noted that a lot of events had taken place over the past couple of months.

### **Mental Health Awareness Week (11th to 17th May)**

This year, the theme was mindfulness. We promoted our Embracing Mental Health Project to staff. This project provides local people who have experienced mental illness with an opportunity to gain competitive paid employment and work trials in the local area. In addition, the project provides local employers with training and support provided by local organisations to create healthier workplaces for people in the borough.

### **Volunteers Week (1st-7th June)**

It was also the 50th anniversary of both Volunteer Centre Sutton and SCVS, as well as it being 50 years of local government. The Volunteer Centre Sutton hosted a Big Breakfast at the Europa Gallery. This was an opportunity to say thank you to the Volunteers of Sutton, have breakfast, and communicate the Centre vision for volunteering over the next 5 years.

### **Refugee Week (15<sup>th</sup>-21 June)**

The Refugee and Migrant Network Sutton marked the week by celebrating the creative work of students from many different cultures with an exhibition in the Europa Gallery. The students had all taken part in a course called Crafty English which encourages them to learn new ways to express themselves both in English and in craft skills. The course was led by local artist, Adrienne Roberts, and it was supported by Arts Network Sutton.

### **Carers' Week (8th-14th June)**

The theme this year was building Carer-friendly Communities – communities that support carers to look after their loved ones well, while recognising they are individuals with needs of their own. The Mayor of Sutton, Cllr Muhammad Sadiq, held a lunchtime reception on 8 June in Sutton Civic Centre to launch Carers' Week, where he honoured Sutton's carers and welcomed staff from Sutton Carers' Centre and other prominent supporters of carers' issues in the borough. Sutton Carers Centre hosted a range of events throughout the week including a quiz night fundraiser.

### **Pride Week (21th-28<sup>th</sup> June)**

The work the Council does to champion equality issues in the borough was symbolised by the flying of the rainbow flag over the Civic Centre. Sutton's LGBT Staff Network was also promoted to staff. This year's Pride Week had the theme of Pride Heroes to celebrate the people and organisations that have contributed to LGBT rights over the years.

### **Armed Forces Day (25<sup>th</sup> June)**

Sutton raised the Armed Forces Day flag on the High Street. The flag symbolised the support the Council give and the debt we owe to the brave men and women who serve and have served our nation around the world as soldiers, sailors and aircrew. The Mayor, Cllr Muhammad Sadiq, was joined by the leaders of Sutton and Kingston Councils, Cllrs Ruth Dombey and Cllr Kevin Davies to pay our respects to all Armed Forces personnel.

### **Remembering Srebrenica**

Monday 6th July 2015 commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. A service was held at Westminster Abbey, including survivor testimony. The Charity Remembering Srebrenica has expressed an interest in attending a future Forum meeting and inputting into our Holocaust Memorial Day event next year.

### **Ramadan (18<sup>th</sup> June – 17<sup>th</sup> July)**

Ramadan is the Muslim month of fasting during which Muslims observing Ramadan do not eat or drink during daylight hours. During the fast, Muslims believe that they can gain understanding of how those who are less privileged than them feel. We advertised an event to staff, organised by the

Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association of Cheam, which was a Ladies Only Evening of Faith & Fasting, where there was a discussion on the role of fasting in different religions followed by a Break the Fast dinner.

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