

**Equality and Diversity Forum
27 September 2007**

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.

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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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