

Merton Council

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS AGENDA

Membership:

Councillors Tariq Ahmad (Chairman), Agatha Akyigyina, Edith Macauley, Henry Nelles, David Simpson

Ethnic Minority Organisations

African Educational Cultural & Health Organisation (AECHO)

Deputy

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association

Asian Diabetic Support & Awareness Group

Asian Elderly Group of Merton

Asian Youth Association

Bangladeshi Association of Merton

Deputy

Bengali Association of Merton

Deputy

Bengali Women's Association of Merton

British Muslim Association of Merton

Ethnic Minority Centre

Euro Bangla Federation

Deputy

London South West Chinese Community Association

Merton African Organisation

Merton Racial Equality Partnership

Merton Somali Community

Merton Unity Network

Deputy

Pakistan Cultural Association of Merton & Wandsworth

Pakistan Welfare Association

Deputy

South London Irish Welfare Society

South London Tamil Welfare Group

Victim Support Merton and Sutton

Wimbledon Mosque

(Revd) Mrs H Neale

Ms E Idienumah

Mr S Ahmad

Mrs N. Shah

Mr M S Sheikh

Mr T Hassan

Mr. N. Islam

Mr J Choudhury

Mr. M Rahman

Mr M Karim

Mrs M Ahmed

Mr M Rafique

Mr A Savage

Mr M A Karim

Mr Q Anwar

Ms L Saltoon

Mr C J Lusack

Mr F Anti

Mr A. Ali

Ms P Anderson

Ms J Mintah-Seu

Mr M A Shah

Mr S.U. Sheikh

Mr H Ejaz

Mr M Guest

Dr P Aru

Ms D Moseley

Mr I Khan

A meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations will be held on **Wednesday 22 July 2009**, commencing at **7.15 pm** at **Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, Surrey** in **the Council Chamber**.

This is a public meeting and attendance by the public is encouraged and welcomed. For more information about the agenda and the decision making process contact democratic.services@merton.gov.uk or telephone 020 8545 3574.

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JCC With Ethnic Minority Organisations Agenda

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Future meeting dates: 21 October 2009, 27 January 2010

NOTES:

¹ Members are advised to make declarations of **personal or prejudicial** interests they may have in relation to any item on this agenda. Members may make their declaration either under this item or at any time it becomes apparent that they have an interest in any particular item.

If a member believes that their interest is **prejudicial** they should leave the meeting while the item is discussed. If in doubt, members are advised to seek advice from the Head of Civic and Legal services prior to the meeting. to whom completed forms should be returned

Declaration forms will be available on request from the attending Democratic Services Officer, to whom completed forms should be returned

Agenda Item 4

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS
29 APRIL 2009

7.15 TO 10 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Edith Macauley (in the chair). Councillors Tariq Ahmad, Agatha Akyigyina, Rod Scott and David Simpson.
Mr M Sheikh, Mr Islam, Mr Rafique, Mr Savage, Mr Karim, Ms Anderson, Mr S Sheikh, Dr Aru, Mr Khan, Mr Rahman.

ALSO PRESENT: Chief Inspector Mark Payne (Metropolitan Police), Kate Martyn (Stronger Communities Manager), Maureen Branch-Davis (Diversity and Community Cohesion Officer), Richard Cullip (Better Homes Project Manager), Susanne Wicks (Democratic Services Officer).

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were made.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Fosuah Poku, Revd Mrs Hannah Neale, Mrs Ahmed.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2008

Maureen Branch-Davis undertook to send Mr Sheikh a copy of the powerpoint presentation regarding Merton's intergenerational centre given at a previous meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes are agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 HOUSING STOCK TRANSFER

Richard Cullip delivered a presentation on the housing stock transfer. Hard copies of the powerpoint presentation were available to the JCC, together with copies of the summary offer documents. The presentation covered the reasons for seeking to transfer, the consequences of not transferring, Merton Priory Homes, the offer document, and the timetable for the project, including the ballot process. Richard Cullip welcomed comments and questions.

Richard Cullip explained that, if the transfer goes ahead, Merton Priory Homes will be the owner of the properties and the landlord for tenants. As such, any service complaints should go direct to them. However, London Borough of Merton will retain a monitoring role, particularly regarding the promises made by Merton Priory Homes prior to transfer. A Management Board will be in place, comprising six residents, four tenants, two leaseholders, five independent members and four Merton councillors. In the transfer agreement, there will be sanctions in place for poor

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performance by Merton Priory Homes. Richard Cullip advised that, after the five year rent guarantee has elapsed, Merton Priory Homes will have to set rents in accordance with government policy and regulations.

Richard Cullip explained the financial position in more depth. In response to concerns about this project in the current financial climate, he advised that Merton Priory Homes are backed by Circle Anglia, a much larger organisation, and noted his confidence in the project being successful financially.

Report received.

5 OUTCOME OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW ON DEMOCRATIC
ENGAGEMENT AND ELECTORAL SERVICES

As a member of the task group that conducted the review, Councillor Edith Macauley introduced this item. She went through the document and highlighted the recommendations arising from the review, as shown on page 17 of the agenda. Councillor Edith Macauley invited questions and comments from the Committee.

Saleem Sheikh supported the recommendations, but expressed doubt about whether there would be budget available to support some of them (R4, 6, 10 and 21). In response Councillor Edith Macauley advised that there will be no cost associated with publishing information on Merton's website, and some costs will be covered by existing resources.

In response to concerns about residents who may not have access to ICT equipment, Councillor Edith Macauley reminded the JCC that free internet access is available for all in Merton's libraries.

Councillor Edith Macauley advised the JCC that the report has been endorsed by the Corporate Capacity Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and will be considered by Cabinet on 22 June 2009.

Report received.

6 ISSUES RELATING TO THE TAMIL COMMUNITY IN MERTON

Chief Inspector Mark Payne introduced this report and gave an update on the issues relating to the Tamil community. He offered his apologies for the cancellation of the meeting arranged for 20 April, and explained that advice was given that the situation was becoming so severe that a meeting would not be useful. Chief Inspector Mark Payne advised that contact has been made with various Tamil groups in the area, and asked the JCC for their view on steps taken so far, and future actions.

Mr Karim gave thanks to the Police and officers for the actions taken so far. He highlighted the need to stop the genocide in Sri Lanka, and welcomed support from all parties. However, he also expressed disappointment that the support currently

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being lent to the Tamil community in Merton was not offered to other community groups during other similar situations, for example the recent conflict in Gaza.

Councillor Edith Macauley noted her concern at the lack of input from other countries and the UN. Mr Savage highlighted the need for concerns expressed at this meeting to be taken to central Government and, Councillor Macauley advised that Siobhain McDonagh MP is already involved in raising awareness of this matter, and suggested that the JCC could raise their concerns with her.

Kate Martyn sought to reassure the JCC that all relevant organisations are working together to lessen the impact of the situation on local communities. She advised that all suggestions will be picked up and acted upon. In response to Mr Karim's comments about other conflicts, she offered her apologies if any groups did not feel adequately supported and offered to discuss the matter further outside of the meeting.

Dr Aru echoed the sentiments already expressed regarding the lack of media attention in Sri Lanka. He undertook to organise a public meeting, to which all JCC members would be invited, in order to discuss the situation. Patricia Anderson confirmed that a representative from Merton Unity Network would attend, and encouraged the JCC not to focus on past events, but to work together in future to ensure support is given where needed.

Councillor Edith Macauley noted that the JCC supports current actions, and asked Dr Aru to invite JCC members to the meeting organised by the South London Tamil Welfare Group.

Report received.

7 SUMMARY OF COUNCIL-LED COMMUNITY COHESION EVENTS AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Kate Martyn introduced this report. She invited all JCC members and their organisations to attend activities and events.

Mr Islam thanked members and officers for the organisation of Peace Week 2008, but asked that publicity of the week and associated events be better publicised in future to encourage attendance. Councillor Edith Macauley responded that Peace Week was advertised in My Merton and London Peace Week Magazine.

Report received.

8 REVISION OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

Kate Martyn introduced this report. She advised that the draft of the new scheme will be available in May, when it will be shared with community groups and then opened to public consultation. She asked for suggestions from the JCC on how to best

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involve their organisations in the consultation.

In response to a question from Councillor Agatha Akyigyina, Kate Martyn reassured the JCC that the scheme will form part of the council's standards and target setting process, and this process seeks to bring the scheme up to the required standard, to promote and support equality in the borough. The document will govern Merton Council as an employer, and as a provider of goods and services.

Kate Martyn confirmed that there is a race equality impact assessment toolkit in place, which has been revised and amended in recent months. Furthermore there has been an improvement in the quality of equality impact assessments, and gradually this is feeding through all departments in the authority.

Saleem Sheikh suggested that the old and new schemes are provided to the JCC in advance of the next meeting, for full discussion at their meeting in July.

The meeting moved onto further discussion which is covered below under item 9.

Report received.

9 VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING

Kate Martyn introduced this report and amended two errors shown on the table in the supplementary agenda detailing 2009/10 funding by department and funding stream. She circulated a document around the chamber detailing the assessment criteria supplied by Environment and Regeneration department. Kate Martyn welcomed comments and questions, but advised the JCC she could only answer those regarding the funding schemes for which she is responsible.

Patricia Anderson advised that, contrary to published information, Merton Unity Network will not cover the role previously carried out by Merton Race Equality Partnership (MREP) with regard to race issues. Other members of the JCC expressed their disappointment at the withdrawal of funding for MREP.

Kate Martyn gave an outline of the reasons why MREP did not receive funding for 2009/10 from Merton Council. She gave details of the proposal by MREP to develop into an "umbrella" organisation to cover all equality strands across the borough. She also reminded the JCC that Merton Council was not the only funding source for MREP, and stated that it was unfair to suggest that MREP was closed by Merton Council.

Mr Savage clarified the source of the £10k funding received by the EMC. Kate Martyn supported this information, but also reminded the JCC that the notional rents paid by London Borough of Merton represent a significant investment, which the authority pays in recognition of the good work done by various groups in the borough, and the wish to support them in appropriate premises.

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Councillor Edith Macauley stated that she was not convinced that an equality impact assessment was carried out prior to the decision being made to cut funding to the MREP. Kate Martyn gave assurances that an equality impact assessment was carried out. Councillor Edith Macauley suggested that she may be persuaded if some evidence were provided.

Councillor Edith Macauley asked for it to be placed on record that the majority of JCC members present at the meeting were dissatisfied with the withdrawal of funding to MREP by Merton Council, as no other voluntary group in the borough fulfils the same role with regard to race equality.

Saleem Sheikh gave details of the consequences to services provided by Asian Elderly Group, due to the cut in funding, and asked that the decision be revisited. Kate Martyn undertook to take the comments back to the Head of Community Care. Councillor Tariq Ahmad advised that the Leader will be meeting with the chair of the Asian Elderly Group to discuss this issue.

Kate Martyn reported that a meeting has been arranged for 13 May with the Ethnic Minority Centre in order to discuss other sources of funding available to them. Mr Savage expressed his appreciation for Merton's support.

Kate Martyn explained that, when considering how to best manage the 10% cut in funding available, officers consulted with the Funding and Procurement Board, a sub-committee of the Merton Compact. She agreed with Patricia Anderson's view that transparency of the process is key, and invited the JCC to give their views on this year's process.

Following some more debate on this issue, Kate Martyn reminded the JCC of the council's difficult financial situation, from which the voluntary sector cannot be entirely shielded. She undertook to address any concerns expressed by JCC members about the grant application process.

Councillor Rod Scott noted that Kate Martyn's responses to comments and questions were comprehensive and satisfactory.

It was moved by Councillor Edith Macauley, seconded by Councillor Agatha Akyigyina and:

RESOLVED: that the JCC expresses its dissatisfaction over the decisions made in respect of funding to MREP, Asian Elderly Group and Ethnic Minority Centre.