

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS  
21 OCTOBER 2009

7.15 TO 9.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Tariq Ahmad (chairman), Councillors Agatha Akyigyina, Edith Macauley, Henry Nelles.

Revd Mrs Neale, Mr Hadi, Mr Savage, Mr Lusack, Ms Anderson, Ms Mintah-Sem, Mr Sheikh.

ALSO PRESENT: Ms Valentine (Merton Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Group), Ms Salmon (Positive Network), Ms Isaacs and Mrs French (Accede Community Focus), representative from Rhema Church Ministries.

Evereth Willis (Diversity and Community Cohesion Manager), Maureen Branch-Davis (Diversity and Community Cohesion Officer), Kim Brown (Deputy Head of HR), Susanne Wicks (Democratic Services Officer).

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor David Simpson, Mr Rahman, Mr Karim and Ms Poku.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JULY 2009

Ms Mintah-Sem pointed out that her name had been spelt incorrectly.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the amendment of the error noted above, the minutes are agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising. However, Councillor Tariq Ahmad asked officers to write to all JCC members to advise them of the date of the next meeting and to encourage them to attend.

5 REFRESH OF THE BME COMMUNITY PLAN

Ms Anderson delivered a short presentation on the refresh of Merton's BME strategic plan. She gave some information on the background of the BME Forum, and explained why a refresh of the community plan was necessary. Ms Anderson highlighted some of the main points included in the presentation, and asked all members of the JCC to participate in the development of the plan, and to encourage their groups to also do so. Ms Anderson pointed out the ways in which groups and

## JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS 21 OCTOBER 2009

individuals can give their views, and highlighted the willingness of the Forum to do outreach work in order to gather the views of the BAME community.

Councillor Tariq Ahmad welcomed the report, and asked Ms Anderson how Merton Council can reflect the work of the BME Forum in their decision making. In response Ms Anderson underlined the need to ensure that officers engage with all communities, so that they can be part of the decision making process. Plans should link together and resources pooled to ensure that they meet the prioritised issues.

Councillor Edith Macauley advised that many community groups are concerned that Merton does not have a race equality plan. She also highlighted the need for funding to be shared equally and fairly amongst all organisations in the borough. In response, Evereth Willis advised that the race equality scheme has been incorporated into the Corporate Equality Scheme.

Ms Anderson encouraged members of the JCC to join the groups detailed in the peer support network.

Councillor Henry Nelless welcomed the report and confirmed that groups should be involved in decision making.

Councillor Tariq Ahmad thanked Ms Anderson and all others involved in this piece of work.

Report received.

### 6 REVISION OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

Evereth Willis introduced this report. She gave details of the consultation that has already taken place, and detailed the timetable for the approval and adoption of the report by Council. She explained that the action plan will be disseminated through the departments of the authority, and officers will be put in touch with the appropriate community groups, should it be required.

Evereth Willis welcomed further comments from the JCC either at this meeting, or directly to her by 4 November 2009. She advised that she will discuss all suggestions made with regard to their suitability for inclusion in the document. Evereth Willis explained how the action plan will be monitored, and suggested that the JCC should be part of this process.

Ms Anderson suggested that this plan should link with the BME community plan. She also welcomed the reference to particular illnesses in item 57 on the action plan. Councillor Edith Macauley suggested that diabetes should be included in the list, and Mr Sheikh requested that a wider range of health issues be included. Evereth Willis advised that the scheme seeks to forge improved links with the health service, and pointed out that the specific illnesses mentioned are just examples, not an exhaustive

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS  
21 OCTOBER 2009

list.

Councillor Edith Macauley highlighted the issue of community safety and the fear of crime, particularly amongst older people. Evereth Willis confirmed that safety issues have been integrated into the action plan, but agreed that support networks should be put in place, and undertook to liaise with Safer Merton.

Councillor Tariq Ahmad asked that statistics on crime in the borough be provided at each meeting of the JCC.

Report received.

7 EMPLOYMENT OF BME STAFF AND ACTIONS TO IMPROVE  
REPRESENTATION

Kim Brown presented this report. She went through the information presented in the report and invited questions and comments.

Councillor Edith Macauley expressed disappointment that there has been no improvement in the employment of BME staff into senior positions since 1998, when the JCC began to receive reports on this issue. She also advised that she has spoken to many staff members and is aware that morale is very low due to the workforce reduction programme. She asked that the JCC be supplied with information on the workforce reduction programme, and the impact it will have on BME employees.

Mr Sheikh supported these comments, and asked why the report was in a different format to the last report, which gave the information broken down by grade and ethnicity. Kim Brown undertook to make that data available to Mr Sheikh.

Kim Brown gave details of the efforts made to fill senior positions with applicants from the BME community and people with disabilities.

Kim Brown advised that the Ambassadors Programme will be reviewed and comments and suggestions from JCC members would be welcomed.

Ms Valentine noted her interest that there was a high proportion of “unknown ethnicity” applicants reaching the shortlisting stage of application. Kim Brown responded that officers carrying out shortlisting do not have access to the information supplied by applicants on their ethnicity, age, etc.

Kim Brown advised that those boroughs who have successfully recruited BME applicants into senior posts tend to have a higher percentage of BME residents, but Merton does seek to learn from those boroughs.

**RESOLVED:** That the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations requests a report to their next meeting providing details on the restructure of Merton Council and the impact of the restructure on BME

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS  
21 OCTOBER 2009

employees.

Report otherwise received.

8 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

It was noted that this item was added at the request of JCC members. Councillor Tariq Ahmad asked that for future meetings, members wishing to speak on this item should advise officers in advance of the meeting.

Ms Mintah-Sem confirmed that she had attended the last meeting of the Schools Forum, that looked at issues of schools' finance.

Mr Sheikh gave details of the Housing Partnership Board for the Vulnerable People, including the background, membership, remit and achievements of the Board.