

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS

9 MARCH 2016

(19.15- 21.15)

PRESENT Councillors: Councillor Edith Macauley MBE (in the Chair), Councillor Abdul Latif, Councillor Marsie Skeete and Councillor Charlie Chirico

Rev Mrs H Neale, Mr Sheikh MBE, Mr Rizvi, Mr Savage, Mr Anwar, Mr Huq, Mr Islam, Mr Rahman, Evereth Willis, Mr Haque, Dr Arumugaraasah, Mr Khan, Mr Hall, Ms Gallen, Councillor Henry, Councillor Akyigyina

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillor Gadzama, Mr Savage and Ms Colquhoun

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed.

4 MATTERS ARISING (Agenda Item 4)

5 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - ZOE GALLEN, LEAD FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MARAC, SAFER MERTON (Agenda Item 5)

Zoe Gallen updated the meeting on the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy and the work being done to prevent Domestic Violence (DV) and support victims. She outlined the work of the One Stop Shop and measures implemented to support victims, including: awareness raising, a drop-in service for victims. The four staff who provide the One-Stop Shop service; a Health Worker, 2 Solicitors and Zoe are funded by MOPAC. The One-Stop shop opens from 9.30 to 12.00.

30% of victims are male. 1400 crimes have been report in the last 12 months.

Ms Gallen urged the JCC members to contact her to help raise awareness of the DV support services available.

Question? – Do male cases get to court? Ms Gallen replied that male DV victims find it difficult to talk about what has happened to them, due to the stereotype that males are not usually DV victims. Male victims are given support.

All victims get support to help with safety planning. It is difficult to get sufficient evidence to get cases to court.

Cllr Akigyina added that the Police tend to believe the woman. Zoe responded that improvements have been made in the support that staff give to male victims.

Question: What is the age group that are commonly DV victims? – 35-40 years is the average age. Female victims are usually in their 20's but recently there has been an increase in victims aged 40 plus.

Question: Are DV rates lower in Asian communities? The main client group is White British; there are a lot of Asian women (Tamil). For every one victim an average of £5000 is incurred providing appropriate support.

How is cultural sensitivity dealt with now that SLAWO no longer operates in Merton? Ms Gallen replied that the support is provided from another group that works pan-London. London Councils fund groups that operate London wide.

It was suggested that Ms Gallen presents statistics on DV. Ms Gallen informed the meeting that Safer Merton's Data Analyst will be producing statistics and comparing them with other boroughs and she undertook to bring the figures to a future meeting.

Councillor Skeete asked what happens when cases are dropped against DV perpetrators and how are the victims kept track of? Ms Gallen replied that the victim continues to get support.

There was a discussion about preventative strategies and Ms Gallen updated the meeting on some of the initiatives such as working with schools to teach children about healthy relationships. Ms Gallen has been working with Head Teachers and drama has been used to express relationships. The key is to educate children from an early age about DV.

Ms Gallen gave an update on the Domestic Homicide Review and advised that a work plan is being developed to deliver the priorities.

Dr Arumugaraasah asked why DV is increasing if preventative measures are in place and how are vulnerable groups being targeted? Ms Gallen explained that DV is

discussed more and people are now more comfortable to talk about it. Confidence and awareness has increased and this may be part of the reason for the increase.

Cllr Henry asked if we have figures for Forces Marriages in Merton? Ms Gallen replied that the numbers are low and generally the victims do not believe it was forced, but an arranged marriage, so it is difficult to quantify. Victims do not want family members to be arrested.

6 MORDEN LEISURE CENTRE - CHRISTINE PARSLOE, LEISURE AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER (Agenda Item 6)

Christine Parsloe gave an overview of the planned renewal of the Morden Leisure Centre and asked for views on the proposed redevelopment. It is envisaged that the new centre will open on 1 January 2018.

The new centre will be a family friendly facility. The pools will be close to the front. Following consultation the plans have been modified, the new structure will fit in with South Thames college – to create nice lines.

The entrance is on the car park side. Fund raising is to be done to fund a sports hall.

There will be accessible toilets and a café is included. The large pool will be 13m width x 20m length .The small pool will be 13m width x 15 m length and will have a moveable floor and diving facilities.

There will be separate gender changing facilities, family changing and group changing.

The new centre will also include a fitness suite, studio and spectator seating overlooking the pools.

Questions

The estimated cost of building the centre is £1.9 million, where will the funding come from? Ms Parsloe replied that currently the focus is on design, getting to planning and getting a contractor. The market is fluctuating so there is a need to get real figures when the cost of the project is priced. The council will do the best with available funds to build the best it can.

Ms Parsloe clarified that the building would have a green roof and structural engineers are finalising the design to include vertical columns which will be at an angle to support the sloping roof. The London skyline will be visible from the gym.

7 MORDEN PARK FIELDS COMMUNITY TRUST (MPFCT) - SIMON

DAVISON, CHAIR OF MPFCT (Agenda Item 7)

In the absence of a representative of the Morden Park Playing Fields Community Trust, Christine Parsloe gave an overview of the proposed redevelopment which will compliment the redevelopment of the leisure centre.

The playing fields have not been used for many years. The pavilion is being redesigned and the planning application is in progress. The playing fields are a third of the park area, the facilities of the redeveloped site will include:

1. Outdoor sports – tennis and cricket
2. A sports Pavilion with changing facilities.

The trust aims to use sport to integrate the community and put on multi-cultural outdoor activities.

The trust is aiming to get the college's involvement and wants to share or integrate facilities also, e.g. site security.

Initial funding is nearly finished and the trust is doing more fundraising and working with Morden Park Trust and leafleting the local area. The cost of the project will be £4-£4.5 million.

The Trust has agreement from the council to sign a lease. Once the terms have been agreed and planning permission sought, the Trust will then bid for Lottery funding and other external funding.

8 BAME VOICE- HANNAH NEALE, CHAIR OF BAME VOICE (Agenda Item 8)

Hannah Neale updated the meeting on the BAME Voice that was launched on 4 February at Vestry Hall. The landscape has changed in recent years and the borough has had 5 BAME Mayors and 17 Councillors. This shows progress but there are still issues that the BAME community need support.

1 in 3 of Merton's residents is from a minority ethnic background and this will change to 30%.

The borough is becoming more diverse and has newer communities such as Tamil and Eastern European. Over 100 languages are spoken in schools.

Disparities exist in social conditions, particularly in East Merton where the life expectancy of a male in Cricket Green is 77 years compared to 85.3 years in Hillside.

There is an over representation of the BAME community in mental health, these communities have higher claimant rates for Job Seekers Allowance. Also there are many highly qualified migrants who want to convert their qualifications.

These are just some of the reasons why BAME Voice has an important role to play to tackle issues and be positively and actively involved in decisions. Rev Neale informed the meeting that BAME Voice needs to work strategically to be represented and influence decisions that affect BAME people's lives. The new organisation wants to hear all voices and be heard at the highest levels.

Action is also needed within the community. There is a need for the newly settled to learn English, feel settled and become familiar with the values and customs of the country and innovative ways to do so.

BAME Voice has been given £40,000 for 2015/16 and 2016/17 by Merton Council. The key focus over the next two years will be:

- Mapping BAME organisations and their services in Merton and the surrounding areas.
- Identifying suitable BAME grass roots residents, and providing them with training, where necessary, to participate in various decision making bodies.
- Marketing culturally appropriate packages to the various sectors working with BAME communities e.g. Social Services, NHS, Schools, the Police.
- Running Workshops/programmes to encourage intercultural communications, particularly between the more established BAME communities and the newer settlers in the area.
- Securing additional funding to extend awareness of the heritage of the various BAME communities in Merton as a legacy for future generations.
- Preserving the BAME contribution to Merton's growth and development, through the production of written and oral publications/DVD's.
- To make BAME VOICE a visible presence through joint community action in the disadvantaged areas of the Borough. e.g. Community gardening, 'Harmony' spaces where people of different ethnicities can meet and work out issues affecting their community.

Rev Neale then introduced Nuria who was supported by AECHO and attended workshops to build her confidence and skills. Nuria informed the meeting how the support from AECHO helped her and her family.

There was general discussion about the importance of BAME Voice and some of the issues faced by the BAME community such as; difficulty gaining employment with qualifications obtained abroad and getting promoted at work. Stereotyping of some

communities has also been a problem. There was a general consensus that most of the issues mentioned have been the same for decades and it was now time for change.

There was a discussion about the complexity of the issues faced because not all BAME communities have the same experience and it was felt that some groups have it worse than others.

Councillor Macauley encouraged everyone to support the new organisation.

9 SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARD UPDATE (Agenda Item 9)

Evereth Willis presented the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) meeting update report on behalf of Abayeh Savage,

The JCC membership was urged to provide Mr Savage with issues to raise at future SNB meetings.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 10)

None.