

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE FORUM

22 OCTOBER 2003

Chair: * Councillor N Shah

Councillors: * Arnold * Mrs Champagnie (3)
 * Bluston * Janet Cowan
 * Burchell (4) Currie

* Denotes Member present
 (3), (4) Denote category of Reserve Member

[NB Attendance at this meeting by representatives of community organisations and representatives of the Local Authority is recorded at Appendix 1].

43. **Introduction by the Chair:**

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome members of the Forum, it was explained that October was an extremely busy month for community activities and religious celebrations which affected member attendance. However, he thanked those who managed attend and greeted new members of the Forum.

44. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Anjana Patel
 Councillor Omar

Reserve Member

Councillor Mrs Champagnie
 Councillor Burchell

45. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of personal or prejudicial interests made by Members of the Forum arising from the business transacted at this meeting.

46. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all the items be considered with press and public present. It was decided by the Chair that item 6 of the agenda would be first, followed by item 7, the rest of the items continued in the same sequence stated on the agenda. For clarity purposes, the layout of the minutes correlates with the order of the items that were heard at the meeting.

47. **Presentation by Sangat Community Centre:**

The Forum heard a presentation from Kanti Nagda, Manager of the Sangat Community Centre regarding the Centre's work and future plans.

The mission statement of the Centre was explained to provide cultural and linguistic services and support for the Asian community in Harrow and neighbouring areas with the aim of reducing deprivation.

Members were advised that the Sangat Centre that exist now was not always like that, it was explained that in 1973 it was known as the Anglo-Indian Art Circle, it came into existence as a result of the migration of Asians from Uganda and diaspora to Harrow. The Circle's aims then was similar to the Sangat Centre now in that it was registered charity, non-party political and provided help and support to combat stress related to migration and adaptation to a new country.

In 1982 the Circle bought a dilapidated Second World War building traditionally occupied by the Territorial Army. The building was used by disabled people and for the Asian community to meet.

In 1982 the world war building was renovated as it was reaching breaking point due to its age and the numbers of people who used it, when it was renovated the building was renamed the Sangat Centre.

The Manager advised the Forum of the economic hardships the Circle group faced in buying the building and renovating it. It was also said that organisers and volunteers came under tough opposition in respect of discrimination and manipulation by authorities at that time. It was mentioned that the Centre raised £20,000 by fundraising to equip the building and received financial assistance from the Department of Environment and Harrow Council. More recently the Centre had received further funding from the Millennium Commission for further development work.

The Centre's long term goals included: providing culturally sensitive community centre facilities to the Asian community, high quality welfare advice and advocacy services, create jobs, training scheme for unemployed people, educational support for under achievers, strengthen the voice of the Asian community, assist members of the community who face injustice, organise activities, health promotion and provide information and advice on social and welfare issues.

The Centre had 8 projects currently running simultaneously, they included: legal advice centre, therapeutic workshops for children and young people experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties, dance and drama workshops for disabled children, Information, advice and guidance services, exhibition titled 'History of Asians in Harrow' that dates back one hundred years (the exhibition was a permanent feature of the Centre), IT projects and cultural and fund raising activities.

It was also highlighted that Centre was the first in Harrow to achieve a Legal Service Quality Mark for excellence.

The Manager advised the Forum that funding was always a problematic area but work was being carried out to resolve that problem by fundraising. It was also stated that the workload of the Centre in relation to casework undertaken was very high when compared with resources available.

The Manager ended his presentation with the many achievements that the Centre had undertaken over the past couple of decades, such as encouraging Asian people to become more aware of local politics in relation to voting and what councillors say. It was also emphasised that despite the Centre being aimed at helping and supporting the Asian community, the Centre's doors were always open to help people of different backgrounds especially young people.

The Chair and Forum Members welcomed the presentation particularly the way the Centre had grown despite facing difficulties.

A community representative of the Forum asked about the make-up of Asians that used the Centre such as people from Uganda or India. The Manager responded by saying the Centre could be used by all communities in Harrow and that there was no requirement to hold such information relating to users' ethnic origin.

The Chair, Members and community representatives thanked the Manger of the Sangat Community Centre for his presentation

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

48. **Presentation regarding Council Grants:**

The Forum received a presentation form Zach Stavrinou, Community Development Officer detailing the Council's grant process.

It was explained that the deadline to submit a Council grant application had passed on 26 September 2003 therefore the process for next year's grants (2004/5) had started. The eligibility criteria for receiving a grant was explained, it was said that community organisations interested in applying for a grant had to be based in Harrow and that 80% of the users who would benefit from the service should come from Harrow, however, allowances could be made if an legitimate explanation was made regarding why.

It was said that the Grants Advisory Panel, which was made up of Councillors, make decisions of whether a community group receives a grant; meetings were not held in private and minutes of decisions were published in the public domain. It was said that applications were available for groups between June and September of any year, after that time officers sort through applications ensuring that each application meets the set criteria. Completed applications were passed to the Panel for decision then community groups were informed of the Panel's decision. Decisions of the Panel were then passed to Cabinet for endorsement. However, grants were not ratified until after the Council meeting in February or March of the following year, when the Council's expenditure had been agreed. In April of that year an officer would write to the

organisation stating the position of their grant. It was also said that groups who had been refused a grant or had a grievance regarding their application could appeal.

The officer indicated that an important component of a grant application was having an equal opportunities policy, not just referring to ethnicity in the group's terms of reference but demonstrate an awareness and safeguards against possible discrimination in relation to age, gender and disability. It was also emphasised that requests for grants hugely out-weighed the funding available.

It was stated that financial administration was important when completing an application and when in receipt of a Council grant, particularly documenting how it would be used. It was also stated that having an audit trail representing income and expenditure of the group's affairs was important especially at the time of Council assessment.

The officer stated that monitoring of grants was carried out by officers and the results of their findings were reviewed by the Panel annually. Members were advised that groups who had received grant funding under three and half thousand were required to submit an annual report of their activities and accounts which was presented to the Panel. Groups that received funding over three and half thousand were visited and assessed on how they spent their grant which was presented to the Panel.

A community representative asked a question in relation to the equal opportunities policy, it was said that her group she represented did not have a policy however reference was made to it in the constitution, it was asked whether that would be acceptable. The officer responded by saying it was difficult to give an answer having not seen the document, but said decisions were made on the perception of how a member of public would see their document and the group's intentions.

It was queried by a community representative whether there was information available detailing the amount of money given to refugee groups in Harrow. The officer responded by saying it was possible for information to be given to him detailing the amount of money refugee groups had received last year, but he did not have the information with him, so advised the community representative to contact him after the meeting. The Chair also advised the Forum that a review of the grants process was being undertaken, which was hoped to make the whole process of applying for grants easier.

A community representative asked whether groups that received a Council grant had their own autonomy in spending the money. The officer replied that it was entirely the decision of the group on how they spend the grant, unless the Panel had placed conditions, in which case the group would have to adhere to them.

A community representative asked whether it would be possible for the Council to consider having a system whereby a group completed an application that covered a three-year period instead annually, as it was very traumatic. The Chair replied by reinforcing the need for a review and saying the Council would not like to preclude new groups from getting a grant which could happen if that idea was adopted.

A community representative also asked whether groups such as HAVS and HCRE that had a Service Level Agreement had to apply for grants each year. The officer responded by saying each group had to complete an application form for a grant each year and that the Panel decides whether to issue the grant based upon their application.

The Chair thanked the officer for presenting to the Forum and said that it would be a good idea if a workshop was organised concentrating on grant funding for community groups.

RESOLVED: That (1) the presentation be noted; and

(2) work would be undertaken to arrange a grant workshop for community groups.

49. **Presentation on the Harrow Strategic Partnership:**

The Manager of the Strategic Partnerships Section addressed the Forum in relation to the developments that had so far taken place in the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP).

It was explained that the Harrow Partnership Steering Group in October 2001 agreed to develop a local strategic partnership for the borough to be called the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP). The HSP was launched in May 2003. Members of the Forum was

advised that one of the key tasks of the Partnership was the development, delivery and monitoring of a Community Strategy for Harrow. The document would be the key strategy document for the borough and would promote Harrow's environment, strengthen local communities, promote lifelong learning, improve quality of health and social care, and develop a prosperous and sustainable economy in Harrow.

The Forum was informed that the constitution and the membership structure of the HSP had been developed; elected Councillors nominated by Cabinet to sit on the HSP were: Lyne, Foulds, Lammiman and N Shah. It was also mentioned that the Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS) had undertaken the responsibility of organising and conducting elections for the voluntary and community sector positions available on the Board of the HSP, it was confirmed that Prem Pawar of the Harrow Council for Racial Equality, Asoke Dutta of Harrow Association for Voluntary Services, David Summers of HA21 and Barry Newitt of Harrow churches had been elected.

The officer advised that in November 2003 the Partnership would be undertaking a major consultation exercise to establish community groups' issues and what should be addressed by the Partnership. It was stated that a meeting would be arranged and that Members of the Forum should make every effort to attend as the four members representing the voluntary and community sectors interests were not enough.

A community representative asked why a refugee member had not been invited to sit on the Board, the officer responded by saying the elections were carried out by HAVS and input from the Council would affect the democratic process. It was emphasised that the Partnership had only been in operation since May 2003 and was hoped next year that other groups would become more involved. Members were advised that elections would be held annually, therefore making it possible for groups to nominate a representative from a refugee and community organisation (RCO) to sit on the HSP Board.

A Member commented that it would be a good idea for community groups to meet and elect two members to sit either on the Board or on a focus group, which would present an opportunity for smaller groups to get involved in the Partnership.

RESOLVED: That the Forum notes the developments of the Harrow Strategic Partnership.

50. **Presentation on Black History Month:**

The Manager of the Strategic Partnerships Section advised the Forum of the Black History Month activities. Members were advised that this was the seventh year that the Council had played a role in Black History Month.

It was also explained that the title of this year's activities was called 'Celebrating Cultural Diversity in Harrow' and included forty-four events that ranged from book reading to cultural dances; the programme had taken a year to plan and organise.

Members were informed that each year the event grows in strength and includes more community groups, it was emphasised that most of the planning and decisions come from the Black History Month steering group which comprised of community groups and volunteers, it was emphasised that the Council's input was mainly financial.

It was said that evaluation of Black History Month's activities would be carried out on 19 November 2003 at 7pm at the Civic Centre in order to discuss issues that had arisen and to plan for next year. Forum members were advised to attend the meeting if interested in contributing to Black History Month activities.

A Member of the Forum commented that the activities detailed in Black History Month should include more youth presentations. The officer responded by saying she was aware of the issue, and it was hoped that more schools and teachers would get involved next year as funding had been reserved for youth initiatives.

The Chair thanked the officer for her presentation.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

51. **Open Forum:**

The Chair called for suggestions of topics for discussion at future meetings. Members put forward the following ideas:

- Information relating to refugee groups in Harrow
- Other areas of grant funding
- Possible ways to celebrate Divali next year.

RESOLVED: That the above ideas be noted.

52. **Satisfaction Surveys 2003/4:**

RESOLVED: That the Information be noted.

53. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no public questions, petitions or deputations submitted to this meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rules 18, 15 and 16 (Part 4B of the Constitution) respectively.

54. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2003, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record, with the addition that Mr M Rizvi of the Pakistan Society Harrow was present at the last meeting.

55. **Any Other Urgent Business:**

- **Indian Vegetarian Meals**, Vijay Malik, Equalities Manager advised the group of the progress that had been made in relation to providing Indian Vegetarian meals to elderly Asian people who were currently on the waiting list. The officer reminded the Forum that there was a six months' waiting time for the fresh cooked vegetarian meals service, which was unsatisfactory. Therefore, as an interim arrangement it had been decided to offer an alternative option. All those currently on the waiting list would be given the opportunity to consider whether they wish to accept the offer of a fortnightly delivery of frozen meals service. The arrangement would continue until such time when they were able to receive the fresh cooked meal delivered to their home on a daily basis.
- **Margaret Nun of Harrow Association for Voluntary Services**, the Chair explained that Margaret Nun former chief executive of the Association had retired earlier that month; the Chair and Forum Members expressed their good wishes to her for the future.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.16 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR NAVIN SHAH
Chair

APPENDIX 1

Community Consultative Forum - 22 October 2003**(1) Representatives of Community Organisations:-**

Anna Reynolds	Okapi Women's Association
Bibi Mayo	Okapi Women's Association
Anzayi Antamkapa	Okapi Women's Association
K Mahmood	Harrow Muslim Education Society
Dr M. A Rahion	Harrow Bengalee Association
K Nagda	Sangat Centre
V Bavishi	Harrow Mencap
Punitha Perinparaja	Kala Anjali Arts Circle
G Ali	Pakistan Society Harrow
M Rizvi	Pakistan Society Harrow
P Turner	Harrow African Caribbean Association
A Hassan	Refugee Link and Training Agency
K Pujara	Harrow Refugee Forum
J Masliete	SAHARA, Harrow
A Icelils	Harrow Somali Women's Association
L Salah	East African Welfare and Development Group
N Hatin	Harrow Bengali Association
Mr Maw	Hatch End Association

[Please note that Mr M Rizvi of Pakistan Society Harrow was in fact present at the last CCF meeting held on 2 July 2003]

(2) Officers of the Council:-

Vijay Malik, Equalities Manager
 Bindu Arjoon-Matthews, Manager of the Strategic Partnerships Section
 Zach Stavrinou, Community Development Officer