

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE FORUM

29 JUNE 2005

Chair: * Councillor Nana Asante

Councillors: * Mrs Champagne (3) * Dharmarajah
* Janet Cowan * Lavingia
* Currie * Anjana Patel

* Denotes Member present

(3) Denotes 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].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**148. **Appointment of Chair:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment, at the Cabinet meeting on 19 May 2005, of Councillor Nana Asante as Chair of the Forum for the 2005/06 Municipal Year.

149. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary MemberReserve Member

Councillor Arnold

Councillor Mrs Champagne

150. **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.

151. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.

152. **Appointment of Vice-Chair:**

Nominations were received and seconded for Councillor Currie and Councillor Janet Cowan. Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Currie as Vice-Chair of the Forum for the 2005/06 Municipal Year.

153. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

154. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

155. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

156. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

157. **Presentations by Community Groups:**

The Forum received a presentation from Harrow Mencap, an organisation that worked with local people with learning disabilities to ensure that their needs, rights and aspirations were met. Harrow Mencap had been invited to the Forum to discuss their experience of involvement with the Council.

Two Harrow Mencap service users were introduced to the Forum. The first service user described the last time he had been to the Civic Centre and said that the staff had listened to him and answered all his questions. He needed people to speak clearly and take their time when speaking to him. The second service user explained that he needed support in reading and writing, and liked it when there were pictures with writing to help him understand.

The new Head of the Community Team at Mencap outlined problems with community engagement identified by the staff at Mencap and the people they supported. Each problem was presented with a possible solution, as outlined below:

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Possible Solution</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with Learning Disabilities found it difficult to approach any department in the Civic Centre without support 	Harrow Mencap could provide Learning Disability awareness training to Council staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council was not pro-active in its approach – it rarely asked what could be done for Harrow Mencap's members – Mencap had to ask them 	The Council could consult – specifically targeting those with any disability – using a variety of methods to ensure inclusion. Harrow Mencap would willingly support any such initiative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information was difficult to understand – needed simpler language and more pictures 	Ask a person with a Learning Disability to help when information was being designed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council lacked understanding of needs associated with ethnicity – for example religious and dietary issues – when dealing with people with learning disabilities 	Mencap felt an improvement had been seen in this area – Harrow Mencap's Advocacy service had helped people to voice their needs to the Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council was not open and honest about how they reached decisions – eg replacements/housing 	Clearer explanations would help – Harrow Mencap was willing to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical access to the Civic Centre (possible problem identified) 	Mencap were not aware of any complaints about accessing the Civic Centre. Most areas appeared to be accessible but sign-posting could be a little clearer

The Head of the Community Team identified three key areas that the Council needed to address with regards to successful community engagement:

1. **Communication** – it was emphasised that effective communication with people with learning difficulties required a little more time and effort.
2. **Equal opportunities employment** – Mencap encouraged the Council to employ people with learning difficulties.
3. **Partnership** – partnership working was identified as crucial for successful engagement.

The meeting was informed that Harrow Mencap's Annual Fun Day would be held on Saturday 2 July 2005 from 11.00 am – 4.00 pm at St Peter's Church on Sumner Road.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted and included in the scrutiny review of community engagement.

158. **Presentation from the Scrutiny Unit:**

The Forum received a presentation from an officer working within the Scrutiny Unit at Harrow Council. The presentation aimed to clarify the role of scrutiny within the Council.

The meeting was informed that scrutiny was a relatively new function of local government. Its main aim was to improve how the Council worked and the services it provided, and it achieved this through several Councillor-led committees and sub-committees. Each committee or sub-committee agreed its annual work programme in May. The work programme could cover issues of strategic or corporate importance, or could address issues of public interest or national priority. The meeting was informed that an important role of scrutiny was to give a voice to, and reflect the concerns of, members of the public and local communities. It was added that much of the work of scrutiny was completed outside of formal committees, through conducting project work and reviews. Examples of recent outcomes from scrutiny work were given, including:

- **Budget processes and consultation** – recommendations had been made to radically change the way that budget information would be presented to local residents;
- **Funding arrangements for special educational needs (SEN) in schools** – improvements had been made to the monitoring and accountability arrangements for the LEA monitoring of schools' use of SEN funding;
- **Cancer services at Mount Vernon Hospital** – the Health Bodies had undertaken to introduce a strategy for cancer services in North West London.

Officers highlighted the scrutiny review of community engagement, a current review that aimed to improve the way that the Council involved people in its activities and services. The meeting was informed that the scrutiny unit were increasingly looking to co-opt community representatives onto review groups, and interested parties were requested to contact the scrutiny unit.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

159. **Workshop on Community Engagement:**

The Chair explained that the next portion of the meeting would comprise a workshop on community engagement, one of the current scrutiny reviews.

At the beginning of the meeting, community representatives and elected Members had been asked to write down their experience of good and poor engagement with the Council, and to identify why that experience had been good or poor.

Community representatives and elected members were then encouraged to write down their ideas for how the Council could improve the way they engage with people in the community. These ideas were then grouped into different categories, and representatives were asked to prioritise the categories identified.

The priorities emerging from each group were as follows:

1. **COMMUNICATION** – groups identified the importance of establishing strong partnership with local community groups and maintaining effective communication between the Council and the community. Alternative forms of media that could be used for engagement were also suggested, such as text messages and community television.
2. **ACTING ON VIEWS** – it was emphasised that it was important for the Council to act on the views received in consultation exercises, and to report back to participants to inform them of what action was being taken.
3. **ATTITUDE** – it was identified that Council staff needed to have respect and patience when dealing with members of the community.
4. **ACTION** – groups emphasised that it was important for the Council to take action on issues.
5. **DIVERSITY** – emphasis was placed on the need for the Council to address diversity in the borough. The need to translate information into multiple languages

was suggested, although representatives emphasised that effective communication would require other strategies as well.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted and included in the scrutiny review of community engagement.

[Note: The full results from the introductory session and the workshop are displayed at Appendices 2 and 3 to the minutes, respectively].

160. **Community Concerns:**
No community concerns were submitted to the meeting. The Chair requested that groups submit any items in advance of the meeting, to allow officers and Councillors to consider them and then address the issue more thoroughly at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

161. **Any Other Business:**

Meeting Young People within the Community

The Chair forwarded an invitation from Councillor Bill Stephenson to attend an event at Harrow Leisure centre, to meet young people and hear their concerns.

Pan-London Basketball Competition

The Chair informed the meeting that the Pan-London Basketball competition would be taking place at Harrow High School on 6 August 2005 at 4pm.

Harrow Leisure Centre

The Forum was referred to the information circular for the meeting, which contained the Council's response to a letter of complaint from a community group regarding the condition of the Harrow Leisure Centre.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 9.25 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR NANA ASANTE
Chair

APPENDIX 1

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE FORUM – 29 JUNE 2005**(1) Representatives of Community Organisations who Attended**

Please note that only those organisations who provided their details to the administrator will be recorded in the register.

Bashir Rattausey	K.S.I.M.C. Islamic Centre
Mohammad Rizvi	Pakistan Society of Harrow
Ms. Serwah	BTWSC
Vinod Lodhia	Sarvedesic Satya Samaj
Jess Saida	African Family Organisation (AFO)
Syed Alam	Harrow Bengalee Association
Alex da Costa	The Harrow Refugee Forum
A. Fernandes	ACCA-Palop
Doreen Luff	Harrow Mencap
Deven Pillay	“ ”

(2) Officers who Attended

Bindu Arjoon	Service Manager, Policy and Performance
Frances Hawkins	Scrutiny Officer
Ekua Boateng	Assistant Review Administrator
Jenny Aulin	Community Support Officer

APPENDIX 2

Results from the Introductory Exercise on Community Engagement

Please note that the comments recorded were submitted by community representatives and Councillors present at the meeting of the Community Consultative Forum on 29 June 2005.

(1) Examples of Good Involvement and reason why it was good

- Positive dealings when booking Council Chamber *Efficient and courteous response*
- Councillors are accessible *Understanding of community issues and need for involvement*
- Involved in lots of areas *People are good*
- Talking *People can listen*
- More information needed *Efficient*
- People listen to me *A woman asked my name (Charles)*

(2) Examples of Poor Engagement and reason why it was good

- Grants Panel: poor communication within Council *Did not appear to be communication between grant officers and Connexions/Youth Service*
- Lack of accessible information *Continues to marginalise groups and individuals (eg people with learning difficulties)*
- Communications *Staff sometimes rude*
- Lack of Consultation with grass root level organisations *No face to face consultation*

APPENDIX 3

Results from the Workshop on Community Engagement

Please note that the comments recorded were submitted by community representatives and Councillors present at the meeting of the Community Consultative Forum on 29 June 2005. They were assigned a rating based on how important they were considered by those present.

(1) Group A:

COMMUNICATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible information – available in large font and with more pictures and simplified wording • Quick responses – requested within seven days • Good communication requires good listening and good understanding • Better contact with community groups and individuals 	Rating: 9 points
ACTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for the Council to take action on issues eg more cameras on buses to prevent people from feeling intimidated 	5 points
ATTITUDES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff should be patient with everybody • Need for respect 	4 points
REPRESENTATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation needed from umbrella organisations at decision-making bodies • Extra community involvement in the committees 	3 points
PARTNERSHIP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All departments need to work together 	2 points
CONSULTATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face consultation required • Ask people what they want from the Council • Importance of listening 	1 point

(2) Group B:

COMMUNICATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the committee structure more user-friendly • Record answers to public questions • Have clearer notices in plain English • Local issues to be well-publicised and feedback encouraged • Council services to be widely publicised • Clearer reports in plain English • Listen more • Different forms of communication, such as text messages, community TV/radio/website • Community involvement would help both parties 	Rating: 6 points
ACTING ON VIEWS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do a lot of consultation – do we act on it? • Take views into account 	5 points

DIVERSITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebration of religious festivals • Multiple language translations 	Rating: 3 points
FACILITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harrow Leisure Centre needs improvement for the community • Hall/community centre to be used by community groups at special rates 	3 points
STRATEGIC PLANNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better at planning (strategic and operational) • Evidence based decisions 	2 points
COUNCIL ACCESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers/councillors should be easily contactable • Invite public to approach Council 	2 points
BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors should make an effort to meet BME groups regularly 	2 points
STRUCTURE/DEMOCRATIC PROCESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of decision-making process 	1 point
ONE-TO-ONE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve community groups on a one-to-one basis 	1 point
CONTRACT MONITORING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the Council follow up the work that is carried out by the contractors they employ? 	
INCLUSION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled people can pre-arrange to meet officers, at their convenience 	