

Cllr. P Joshi and Cllr. R Joshi highlighted their involvement with the Oadby & Wigston Hindu Community group. It was noted by Cllr. R Joshi that she is also a 'Menopause Champion' for Age UK and has set up a menopause group in the Borough which meets on the first Friday of each month. It was raised that the Hindu Community group has started a Friday Lunch Club aimed at enabling people who feel isolated to participate in a community activity as well as receive a hot, nutritious meal at a nominal price; this club is open to anyone in the Borough.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair noted the delay to the commencement of the meeting due to confusion over the Teams joining details. M Smith confirmed that as the responsible officer for the Forum he had set up a Teams link for today's meeting and those details were included on the Agenda Pack which was published to the Council's website and via Mod.Gov. Unknown to M Smith was that Democratic Services had created an alternative Teams link that had been sent out to Members and attendees via an, at this stage, unknown mailing list. This resulted in there being two Teams meetings running simultaneously, delaying the start of the Forum.

Steps will be taken to prevent this reoccurring including ensuring that M Smith is the only Officer responsible for creating Teams links for the Forum, and including those details on the Agenda Pack. M Smith will also collate the email addresses present on Mod.Gov and the Democratic Services emailed invite into one master list for the Agenda Pack and Teams link to be distributed through.

The Chair also noted the low attendance at the meeting despite a large number of email addresses being present on the Mod.Gov mailing list and the list used by Democratic Services, and there being no members of public present within the meeting. Attendees were asked to promote the next meeting through their own networks and to groups they may have contact with whose work aligns with the purpose of the Community Engagement Forum.

M Flynn noted that a large number of the email addresses present on the invite she received were outdated with a number of people included having changed job roles or left the Borough. The promotion of the meeting via the Council's website is not clear either with it not being immediately obvious that members of the public can participate in the Forum. L Monk suggested that some social media posts promoting the Forum could potentially generate more public interest in the meeting. M Smith used the posts created by the Council's Comms Team for the Residents' Forums as an example of how promotion could take place.

Cllr. P Joshi highlighted that the Council used to have a dedicated Community Engagement Officer in V Quintyne but that this role no longer exists. The lack of this role has potentially contributed to low attendance within this Forum and others. The Chair noted that the responsibility for the Forum appears to have passed to M Smith without a handover being available, and that the meetings are effectively having to start from scratch in this regard.

Cllr. R Joshi proposed a quarterly newsletter be developed that highlights which community groups exist in the Borough and the work of this Forum. A document maintained by L Monk was used as a good example of this, and as something that could be adapted in to something that is present on the Council's website. Each quarter could have a slightly different theme focusing on different elements of community work.

Potentially this could see the development of a dedicated Facebook page for the Community Engagement Forum that other groups in the Borough would be able to tie in to. M Flynn highlighted the existence of the 'Our Borough' newsletter that may fulfil this proposal without an additional cost to the Council through the inclusion of articles covering the Community Engagement Forum.

M Rai-Taylor requested, if possible, some guidance from the Council's Comms Team around how articles for newsletters, social media posts, etc. are considered or prioritised. Reference was given to the previously established Multi-Cultural Group, which existed prior to Covid-19, that was disbanded as it was duplicating work across the whole Borough. M Rai-Taylor also noted that she attends the Oadby Stakeholders meeting and would be happy to talk about the Community Engagement Forum there.

M Smith suggested in light of this conversation that an invite be extended to the Council's Comms Team for the next meeting of the Forum.

M Rai-Taylor promoted an Holistic Evening taking place at Zeph's Café on 26 January 2024. This event is not affiliated with any faith group, and will be a Mexican night with attendance on a first come, first served basis. The Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner, and representatives of the VRN have been invited along. The focus will be on relaxation activities with the cost of attending cover the food and drinks only. Up to 50 people will be able to attend.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 13 February 2024, 1:30pm – Microsoft Teams

Consideration was given in the meeting to moving the Forum to a 6pm, in-person meeting at the Council Offices but this poses barriers to attendance in terms of the time of the meeting and parking charges. This will be reviewed again at February's meeting.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 2.27 pm