

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MULTICULTURAL GROUP HELD AT
THE COUNCIL OFFICES, WIGSTON ON THURSDAY 12th DECEMBER
2013 COMMENCING AT 7.00 P.M.**

<p>Present: Councillor Jeffrey Kaufman – Chair</p> <p>Councillors: , D Gamble, L Kaufman.</p> <p>Also in Attendance: Salim Boodhoo, Z Hassam, A Mohindra, Albert Mosley, Chris Swan.</p> <p>Officers in Attendance: Kalv Garcha, Kelash Plaistow.</p>

Min Ref	Narrative	Officer Resp
	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>These were received from S Morris, Sarah Dickinson, Rupa Kanabar, R Thakor, S Haq, S Baliley, Kim Wallis, Sally White, S Thanki.</p>	
11.	<p><u>MINUTES OF MEETING</u></p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2013 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.</p>	
12.	<p><u>BUDGET/BANK BALANCE OF GROUP</u></p> <p>The balance of the account is approximately £740.97</p>	
13.	<p><u>REPORT OF HR AND EQUALITIES OFFICER.</u></p> <p>Kel Plaistow introduced herself to the members. Chair asked each member to introduce themselves to the new HR and Equalities officer.</p> <p>Kel Plaistow re-iterated the fact that it was lovely to see everyone today, and the purpose of the Multicultural group is to bring together residents from the Borough with a view to sharing each others diversity and learning about each others cultures.</p> <p>Kel Plaistow listed the recommendations from her report;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) That the multifaith calendar 2014 be approved. b) That Members, in principle, agree to the multi-faith sign 	

	<p>situated in Oadby town centre being replaced by another piece of public art or monument.</p> <p>c) That a further report is brought back to this group once the details and costs have been established.</p> <p>Kel Plaistow explained that there will be an opportunity later to discuss the Multicultural sign in length, as it was an agenda item.</p> <p>She went onto say that as part of a joint Leicestershire County Council and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) public realm project within Wigston and Oadby, granite cubes are to be provided as part of street furniture replacement. The County Council is currently considering whether there is any funding capacity within the already committed ERDF budget to etch some words onto the granite cubes. In order to reflect the diversity of the Borough and so as to greet people into the new schemes in each town the wording being quoted for is 'welcome' in languages relevant to the Borough's population. She explained that it is still very much early days, and discussions are still happening as we speak.</p> <p>The Head of Corporate Resources, Kalv Garcha confirmed that she was awaiting clarification as to the terms of the ERDF funding and the extension of its applicability to something like the granite cubes, as street furniture and its distinction from being defined as art. She further stated that at present we were trying to convince Leicestershire County council to work with us in that if we were successful with this granite cube setting through the ERDF funding we should be looking to replicating the same in all 3 town centres. Kelash explained that some granite cubes had been reserved at the entrance to Bell Street, which was an appropriate location as everyone accessing Bell Street will see the stones as well as those passing along Leicester Road. She said that we were expecting to have 6 cubes in total.</p>	
<p>14.</p>	<p><u>EVENTS UPDATE</u></p> <p>Kel Plaistow explained that amongst other things, and as a result of the new replacement remote not working it was very difficult to arrange a gathering for the events.</p> <p>The Chair explained that due to the sign not working, he felt it was wise to defer celebrations and start afresh, at least until we had a permanent sign which was working. For that reason it was decided that Hanunukah celebrations would wait until next year.</p>	

Kelash was disappointed that despite sending out numerous email reminders to members, bar a few members, she had very little response back from members who offered to help in organising events at the last meeting. She went onto state that the Multicultural forum was a unique creation which celebrated everyone's different cultural backgrounds, but sadly it had lost its way and become stagnant. It was really up to each and every one its members to bring it back to life again.

Kalv Garcha explained the distinction between the Multicultural Group, being a group that brought the celebration of faiths, communities and cultures together and the Equality & Diversity Forum, which was to ensure that we as a Council were aware of and providing services to all members of the Oadby & Wigston communities and gathering information about any services and areas we needed to further reach out to. In simple terms, she explained that the former was about socialising, integrating, and celebrating and the latter was about strategic planning, collecting and monitoring information and providing services where required.

Lily Kaufman mentioned that she was extremely pleased that there was a differentiation between the Multicultural group and the Equality and Diversity forum and thanked Kalv Garcha for such clarity and distinction. Kalv Garcha advised that from the outset, and in her mind, that has always been the clear functions and distinctions of the 2 groups and was surprised at how this distinction was getting compromised or lost

Chris Swan mentioned that her impression of the group was that it had lost its vision, its way and blame was being shifted and she stated that she felt the that the environment was extremely stiff, far too formal and rigid.

Jeffrey Kaufman mentioned that there was the possibility of Oadby Library hosting an indoor digital sign. The group welcomed the idea.

Kel Plaistow stated that there was no reason why we couldn't make arrangements for both the Library sign and the granite cubes. A discussion then ensued about the aesthetics of the granite cubes.

Kalv Garcha clarified that no blame was being apportioned and went on to explain how at the last meeting, certain members offered to assist the HR and Equalities officer in organising events but regrettably despite contact being made by the HR and Equalities officer, very few members assisted and got back to her. She stated that we needed the participation of everyone to make this work. A togetherness

and a real sense of community cohesion and engagement.

Ashok Mohindra stated that there will always be a cross over of the Equality and Diversity Forum into the Multicultural group. He had concerns that he hadn't seen information from the Equality and Diversity forum being filtered to him. He suggested that the Council should set out the objectives and members of the public be informed and advised on what they were doing to meet those objectives and the public sector duties. This was seconded by Zubeir Hassam

Kalv Garcha explained that is what she was driving forwards with the Equality and Diversity forum, but to some extent her hands were tied because of the consultative nature of the Equality & Diversity Forum, where it was moving too slow. Kalv Garcha explained that she was presently in talks with the Chief Executive and how she sees the Officers should set out how they were going to meet the equality objectives and then update the Equality & Diversity Forum after that as to their progress etc. for their awareness and information. To date, she advised that a monitoring questionnaire had been put together and would be made available in reception in the new year so that people could fill it out at their own leisure. An equality and diversity calendar 2014 had been designed and sent to the printers. Most importantly the Council has an Equality agenda and it sets out the objectives that were agreed we would work too, in order to meet our public sector duty. Zubeir Hassam, Chris Swan and Ashok Mohindra nodded in approval to the commencement of such initiatives thus far.

The Chair mentioned that he wanted to have something practically written down as to what we as a group wanted to achieve in terms of signage, and whether the library was a good place to host a sign.

Chris Swan felt that the library was a really good idea. If the group wanted to start with Vaisakhi, then the library would be a really good hub. She suggested that perhaps the group would want to do a joint Vaisakhi and Easter celebration as they fall on similar dates.

Zubeir Hassam enquired about whether the Council had any money to donate towards the Multicultural group. He also stated that he had lost confidence with the Chief Executive of the Council and that he didn't feel that he took such important matters seriously.

Dean Gamble stated that there was no spare cash anywhere.

Kalv Garcha, stated that as Officers they were here to do a job, and that they did not have access to the purse strings freely and instead had allocated budgets to provide services, in accordance with existing governance arrangements.

Dean Gamble commented that if the group put a proposal forward, the costings would have to be done by the Council. Alternatively he said that members of the group could apply to the Forums for funding to assist with activities of this group.

Albert Mosley asked the question as to whether £700 would be enough to have a sign in the Library.

The Chair suggested that the first stage would be to get a sign in time for April 2014, which could be enhanced by the granite blocks.

Ashok Mohindra suggested that we should go to each others venues or focal points, and learning and being part of the celebrations even if it meant going outside of the Borough and into the city. e.g. during Vaisakhi, there are 100s of people who line the streets to celebrate this occasion.

There was then a discussion about Easter and Good Friday.

Albert Mosley commented that something always happened at each others churches on Good Friday.

Chris Swan suggested that it was important not to have dates which clash with interfaith week.

Dean Gamble made the comment that the Multicultural group was dying and that it wasn't the responsibility of the Council to move the group forward or take ownership of it. He stated that there was no funding available and that when this group was set up, it was a pioneering group, now the stakeholders were doing far more. He didn't see the point in having this group anymore, because he believed it was dying.

Chris Swan stated that if we didn't have this group, then we wouldn't touch the Wigston and South Wigston forums.

The Chair said that he strongly disagreed with Dean Gamble because of events beyond our control.

Kelash Plaistow said that she was sensing that members would much rather have future meetings held in less formal atmospheres away from speakers and rigid formalities.

Chair suggested 'a room at the top of Costa Coffee', ASDA, or

perhaps Waitrose.

VAISAKHI

Chris Swan suggested that Amandeep Rai should be contacted to arrange the above. Kalv Garcha agreed to contact him.

GOOD FRIDAY

With regards to Easter and Good Friday, the church was yet to be decided. Chris Swann to come back to the next meeting with details of this.

CHRISTMAS

Chris Swan announced the carol singing event on the Parade on Friday 20th December from 10am

Kel Plaistow confirmed that email reminders had been sent out to the membership.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

The Chair announced that the above will be held on the actual Memorial day itself which will be 27 January 2014 from 5:30pm. He explained that in the past it was always held on the eve of this day. The theme this year is Journeys, and there will be an exhibition which will be provided by the Holocaust Memorial day trust. The guest speaker will be Dr Martin Stern from London. There will then be prayers, followed by children singing songs from the local school.

Dean Gamble, suggested whether members of the Muslim community could be invited, perhaps from the Bosnian and the Yugoslavian communities, as it was his understanding that genocides have and continue to happen all around the world.

The Chair explained that Holocaust memorial day was for all the genocides. The mobile exhibition reflects all the genocides which have occurred in the past and continue to happen.

Zubeir Hassam said that his son who is a doctor is heavily involved in work in Syria. He was also in Bosnia, and therefore he was happy to ask him to attend the Multicultural group to do a talk.

It was suggested by Kalv Garcha to use Brocks Hill, one of our own buildings, for the venue to hold the next Multicultural meeting. Everybody said that was a good idea. Kalv Garcha

<p>went on to advise how she was working with Carolyn Holes (and previously Carolyn's predecessor) and had offered ideas and initiatives to make the Brocks Hill centre community and diversity inclusive with the celebration of events, hiring out of the venue i.e. Chinese New Year and lanterns etc. Everybody was pleased to hear of such pro-activity and inclusive thinking. It was agreed that Kalv Garcha would ensure that there would be teas and coffees available and all members would bring biscuits or cakes.</p> <p>Zubair Hassam announced that he will be sending an email for the celebration for the prophet's birthday. The Mayor and his wife will be attending. The date is 23 January 2014, between 6:15pm and 7:30pm.</p> <p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u></p> <p>This will be on Monday 10 February 2014 at 7:00pm at Brockshill.</p>	
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The Meeting Closed at 8.40 p.m.