



Leicester
City Council

(v)

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the
HIGHFIELDS AREA FORUM

Held: Monday 19 January 2004 at 5.30pm
at Medway Community Primary School

PRESENT:

Councillor Panchbaya – In the Chair

Members

Councillor Mustafa Karim	- City Councillor – Spinney Hills Ward
Amarjit Dhaliwal	- Shama Women's Centre
Val Fisher	- CAPTA
Donna Jackman	- Sure Start Highfields
Heather Jallandi	- St Peter's Community Centre
Councillor Kitterick	- Ward Councillor – Castle Ward
Iris Lightfoot	- Leicester Racial Equality Council
Mustafa Malik	- PYCA
Abdul Osman	- Business2Business
Priya Thamotheram	- Community Learning Manager
Colin Towell	- Foundation Housing Association
Woody Wood	- Highfields Assn of Residents and Tenants

Representing Organisations / Groups

Asha Mapara	- Adhar Project
David Carol	- African Caribbean Centre
Rory Samuel	- African Caribbean Citizens Forum
Lois Wilson	- African Caribbean Citizens Forum
F. Subedar	- Al-Hilal MYA
Pamela Campbell	- Asian Women & Girls Centre
Aktar	- Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti
D. Alam	- Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti
Dr. S.I. Chowdhury	- Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti
Zahirul Haque	- Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti
Javed Hussain	- Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti
Mr R. Islam	- Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti
Nazrol	- Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti
A. Patel	- Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti
Dave Roberts	- Evington Valley Community Residents Assoc
Shah Bhan	- HART
Alison Cottram	- HART
Simon Good	- HART

Nazma Ibrahim	- HART
J Jordon	- HART
W Jordon	- HART
Sylvia Ouditt	- HART
K. Sherrief	- HAPA
Biddy Small	- HART
M. Taverner	- HART
Laura Williams	- HART
Tony Walters	- HART
Paul Henderson	- Highfields Community Association
Dhrutee Mistry	- Hitslink Advice Centre
Dave Roberts	- Hitslink Advice Centre
H. Lambat	- HMC
Ranvir Singh	- Leicester College
Chino Kabon	- Leicester Racial Equality Council
Shamin Ahmed	- Medway Bengali Centre
Shahid Ashraf	- Medway Bengali Centre
Marjahon Khan	- Medway Bengali Centre
Sultana Razia	- Medway Bengali Centre
Oyes Ahmad	- Medway Bangladeshi Centre
Gulshan Ara Begum	- Medway Bangladeshi Centre
Mansur Ahmed	- Medway Bangladeshi Centre
Kazi T Akbar	- Medway Bangladeshi Centre
C. Francis	- Medway School
D. Francis	- Medway School
C. Granston	- Mental Health Shop
L. Graham	- Mental Health Shop
A. Zamakda	- Moat C.C.
Ebrahim Jasat	- Muslim Burial Council of Leicestershire
G Malik	- Pakistani Youth and Community Centre
Nasim Porto	- Samay
S. Kaur	- SHAMAC
L. Chauhan	- Shama Women's Centre
Shilen Pattni	- Shree Sanatan Community Project
B. Sandhu	- Shama Women's Centre
D. R. Samji	- Shama Women's Centre
Kuljit Singh	- St Matthews Playgroup
Ron Whittington	- St Peter's Community Centre
Hanif Aqbany	- St Peter's TA
M. Baig	- SWS
Gill Snowdon	- Voluntary Action Leicester
Vida Pearson	- Wesley Hall CC Pre-School
Sarpal Virdee	- Wesley Hall CC Pre-School

Members of public / residents

Parul Ahmed	Mehas Hussein
Janual Ahmad	Johir Ali
Jan Gerrard	Chris Goodwin
Samira Admam	K. Mistry

K Patel
S. M. Chumban
S. Chauhan
V. Tailor
M. G. Sisodia
M. G. Osai
S. Exley
E. Hutchings
S. Rahmonchey

P. Ali
Zalia Hashim
Elias Hashim
Abdullah Hashim
Shamin Ahmed
AF Bhayat
Maniben Tailor
J. Tinker

In Attendance

John Crookes	- Service Director Lifelong Learning and Community Development
Geoff Payne	- Head Medway Community Primary
John Thorpe	- Committee Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Hasu Pragji, (Sure Start), Councillor Sue Waddington, Jim Marshall MP

2. LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Chair stated that the meeting had been called to consider the Council's budget proposals and reminded employees of the Council in attendance that under the Council's political conventions they should not speak at this meeting. Due to the very extensive concerns raised in the area restrictions on the meeting had been relaxed to allow non-members to attend.

The Service Director (Lifelong Learning & Community Development) stated that in order to continue the rising standards in schools and meet corporate savings targets it had been necessary to re-prioritise spending within the department. As part of a package of proposals the Corporate Director was proposing to reduce funding to those voluntary groups no longer judged to be meeting core priorities. A consultation process was being undertaken after which the Corporate Director would make his budget recommendations to Cabinet which would then consider these proposals before submitting its recommendations to Council. It was emphasised that the savings listed were proposals and that nothing had been decided upon. He stated that he would be happy to take comments and answer questions but he would not be able to answer questions about specific grants.

Comments were then invited from the floor. Concerns were expressed that the proposals:

- would badly affect women's groups and the Council's strategy was questioned;
- would impact on out of school learning and adult education and so as a result effect school standards and literacy and numeracy targets

- ignored the long tradition in Highfields of delivering services through the community;
- were prepared by officers who did not live in or understand the issues within the area;
- had a disproportionate affect on minority communities and in particular the African Caribbean community;
- had so great an effect on the minority community voluntary sector that an impact study would be required to comply with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000;
- would seriously effect the viability of the voluntary sector which would struggle to find funding for core costs elsewhere and so if the Council wished to use voluntary services in the future they may find it unable to assist;
- withdrew funding from organisations that were assessed and found to meet core priorities as recently as 2003;
- would have a serious impact on community cohesion with it felt that minority communities had been targeted and concerns that the lack of activities could lead to a rise in anti social behaviour;
- had a disproportionate effect on Highfields and so were unfair;
- would seriously impact on other organisations operating in the community which would be unable to fill gaps in provision;
- impacted on the most vulnerable with services for the elderly, children and those in deprived communities suffering;
- would further impact on the community through loss of jobs with many organisations concerned that the funding cut off point would not allow time for statutory redundancy and winding up notice periods;
- would mean that Council would not be able to deliver on its promises to the community for example in regard to the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper.

It was also felt that the meeting did not constitute consultation and should not be considered as such and suggested that the Council had not considered the true costs of its proposals and that without a coherent case, which had not been made, it had a moral and legal duty to reconsider the proposals. Confusion was also expressed about whether the proposals came from officers or Councillors.

It was stated that with the change in political control the new administration had defined new core priorities which it had passed to Corporate Directors along with corporate savings targets. Officers had prepared draft budgets in consultation with their Cabinet link. Corporate Directors would make their budget recommendations to Cabinet following this period of consultation. The budget would then be put to Council for approval. The proposals aimed to ensure a more even spread of funding to meet need and a re-prioritisation was necessary to ensure adequate funding got to schools to ensure key standards targets were met. Legal advice had been received that an impact assessment under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act was not needed in relation to the proposed changes to voluntary sector funding. The Chair stated that the three ward Councillors disagreed with the proposals and would be voting against them.

3. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.05pm.