

## Minutes

Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy

Overview Committee

Tuesday, 13 November 2012

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

	<p><b>Members Present:</b> Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Lindsay Bliss, Beulah East, Neil Fyfe, Raymond Graham, Carol Melvin, Richard Mills and Michael White.</p> <p><b>Witnesses:</b> Khalida Obeida (Afghan Women's Group, Women in the Community Network and Refugees in Effective and Active Partnerships (REAP) and Duncan Struthers (Chair of Hillingdon Inter Faith Network)</p> <p><b>Officers:</b> Fiona Gibbs (Council's Stronger Communities Officer) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).</p>
23.	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2012</b></p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record.</p>
24.	<p><b>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <p>It was agreed that all items of business would be considered in public.</p>
25.	<p><b>COMMUNITY COHESION WITHIN HILLINGDON</b></p> <p>For this witness session, the Committee heard from a community representative from a Women's Group in the Borough and from the Chair of Hillingdon's Inter Faith Network.</p> <p>Duncan Struthers, Chair of Hillingdon's Inter Faith Network provided the review with details of the organisation's work in relation to community cohesion, together with the aims of the Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To hold regular inter faith network meetings, with faith leaders and community representatives where common issues could be discussed</li><li>• To develop a programme of inter faith activities and events</li><li>• To work together, supported by the police and the local authority, to develop strategies to address misunderstanding and local tensions</li><li>• Acting as a resource for information on different faiths in the Borough</li><li>• Participate in consultation activities and events with statutory and voluntary services to influence service development and delivery</li></ul>

- To provide support to different faith communities in Hillingdon for the furtherance of the Network's aims

There were 110 faith buildings in the Borough. Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Jain, Muslim and Sikh faith buildings were documented in the database.

An audit which had taken place highlighted that 48% of the activities were run for the wider community in comparison to 52% that have a religious emphasis. This was broken down to well over 1,000 different activities which ranged from activities for religious services, for community groups, for groups specifically for older people, youth groups, children's groups, pre-school groups, activities where food and drink were sold or provided and self-support groups. This indicated the wide ranging community groups and activities which took place around the Borough.

Reference was made to the inter faith work which took place where people from different religions learnt about other faiths and religions and often went to observe others at worship. This integrated people from different religions and gave an opportunity to learn more about other people and their religions.

Members were informed of some of the work of the Network which included:

- Regular themed network meetings bringing faith groups together with common concerns i.e benefits, housing, crime and safety, planning, young people
- Work with schools and young people including faith in schools programme with volunteers from different faiths running workshops in local schools on social issues. A regular inter faith workshop in partnership with Swakeleys school that brought students from secondary schools from across the Borough together to discuss matters relating to building inter faith understanding and dialogue. Involvement in a research project with Brunel University in relation to young people and religion and creating a DVD with sixth form students
- Bringing faith leaders together from across the Borough to act as a resource for guidance and dialogue in times of difficulty or tensions in the Borough and to work in partnership with LBH and the Police as necessary

Reference was made to the excellent work which the Strong and Active Communities Partnership carried out and special thanks was paid to Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities Officer, who drove many of the initiatives forward.

Khalida Obeida from the Afghan Women's Group who were

part of the Women in the Community Network also attended the meeting and provided Members with a summary of some of the activities of the groups she represented.

The aims of the Women in the Community Network were:

- To establish a network of women from different community groups and representatives from the diverse communities in Hillingdon to share and address the key issues facing women in the Borough
- To empower women to make the difference they need within themselves, their families and communities
- To promote a healthier understanding between women of different communities and backgrounds in Hillingdon

The objectives of the Network were:

- To increase partnership working amongst the various existing community groups supporting women in the Borough
- To promote women to foster healthier lifestyles
- To support women to feel safe and secure in the community
- To equip women with appropriate skills, confidence and self esteem
- To disseminate and celebrate the achievements of women
- To facilitate and encourage women from different communities to access and participate in mainstream services
- To support and empower women with parenting skills
- To facilitate an arena for women to share and learn about each other and common issues they faced. These included: religion, the environment, community, citizenship, children's education, health and employment.

The Afghan Women's Group supported Afghan women with the following:

- Work took place with often isolated women from a male dominated culture
- Work took place on building trust with the husbands of Afghan women to enable the Group to work with these women
- Every Wednesday afternoon an English Language class was provided at a Children's Centre. This was important as this enabled women to learn the language and culture of the country and to integrate better and not to feel as isolated
- Work took place with the Council's library service, adult education, leisure services to provide various activities for these women. These included swimming classes, knitting classes and helping women access the many

services offered in libraries

Reference was made to the good use which the organisation made of the Council's libraries and Children's Centres, however an area which the Group found difficult to access was after school clubs for children. Any influence the Council could have on enabling Afghan children to access after-school clubs would help those Afghan women who were working.

The information which the Council communicated was not always accessed by the community and this was an area which could be further investigated. The representative reported that she provided an information link to Afghan Women in the community and she would ensure Council information on services would be passed onto this group.

The Committee noted that lots of information and communications was sent out to community groups that were part of the Network. In addition residents of the Borough also received Hillingdon People which was a source of useful information on Council services.

Members were provided with written evidence from the Corporate Head of Communications which provided details of the work which took place to ensure the Council were communicating effectively with all the Borough's communities, helping to ensure integration and cohesion.

Discussion took place on different ways the Council's services were communicated and how this could be improved. Reference was made to the Council providing information for groups to produce their own newsletters which would include pertinent information which would be readily available.

The Council's Stronger Communities Officer reported that there were a number of different contact lists of community organisations which different Council services used and a suggestion could be for a central data base to be used, which could be used by all Council services. The message from the Council needed to be communicated more effectively to encourage integration and there needed to be further thought given as to how the Council was enabling communities to find out about Council services.

The Committee asked that the Corporate Head of Communications be invited to the next meeting to advise Members on how Corporate Communications was getting Council messages across to all communities within the Borough, and to suggest other possible means of enabling communities to find out about Council services.

**RESOLVED –**

	<p>1. That the information provided be noted and the witnesses be thanked for their attendance and for the information they had provided which would help the Committee with their findings.</p> <p>2. That the Corporate Head of Communications be invited to attend the next meeting to help the Committee with their review.</p>	<b>Khalid Ahmed</b>
<b>26.</b>	<p><b>GENERATOR UPDATE</b></p> <p>The Committee noted a report which provided Members with details of the work which had been carried out on the generator for the Civic Centre since its installation in January 2011.</p>	
<b>27.</b>	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>Noted. Members were informed that at their next meeting consideration would be given to the Committee's next review topic. A suggestion was made that the Committee could look at an aspect of Safer Neighbourhood Policing.</p>	
<b>28.</b>	<p><b>CABINET FORWARD PLAN</b></p> <p>Noted.</p>	
	<p><b>Meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 9.10m</b>  <b>Next meeting: 6 February 2013 at 7.30pm</b></p>	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Khalid Ahmed on 01895 250833. These minutes are circulated to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.