



**West  
Northamptonshire  
Council**

## **Women's Forum**

Minutes of a meeting of the Women's Forum held at on Tuesday 27 September 2022 at 11.00 am.

Present Pauline Woodhouse (Co-Chair), Eleri Neale, Rachel Packman, Alex Rex, Annabel Pickering, Cllr Danielle Stone, Emma Parry, Lindsey Akins, Matthew Peleszok, Michelle Healy, Tina Collette, Vanesa Kirk, Aiesha Bailey, Morcea Walker

### **1. Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies**

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made around the room and the screen. Pauline stated that even though the official mourning period had finished, she thought it was appropriate, if all agreed to have a couple of minutes silence to remember HM The Queen and others who had recently passed. Apologies were received from Cllr Anna King (Co-Chair), Debs Burns, Rachel Duncan, Neelam Aggarwal-Singh and Dawn Cummings.

### **2. Code of Conduct**

### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

### **4. Introduction to Money & Pensions Service**

Unfortunately Dawn was ill and unable to attend and this would be re-arranged for a future date.

### **5. International Women's Day 2023**

Debbie asked the group if they would like to do a tribute to HM The Queen during the IWD event. The response was largely in favour but to concentrate on the local impact and her qualities rather than as a Monarch. **Action: Debbie to collate local stories/photos.**

Banners outside were thought a good idea to publicise the event. Debbie suggested some members might like to take that up but we would be limited on what we could put outside the Guildhall on the day if a wedding was scheduled.

It was agreed to put on some workshops – Debbie to ask Asy Ho from Nat West whether the offer was still available. Vanessa stated Aquarius could probably offer

some resilience training. **Action: Debbie and Vanessa to speak outside the meeting.**

It was agreed that refreshments should be offered although it was not sure if Elsie's Café was still operating and that the Good Loaf would be a good option. **Action: Debbie to make enquiries.**

It was agreed to keep the 2 categories of Community & Business for the Inspirational Woman award with the option of a Special Recognition Award at the Judge's discretion.

## 6. Community Information Exchange

Rachel – really busy with recruitment with the continued focus on increasing diversity. There were still some avenues open such as Degree and Police Apprenticeship.

Eleri – reported that she had met a lady living in flat, she was frightened of the area she lived in, spoke good English but wasn't confident to do so and surrounded herself with people who spoke her own language. She did not have the confidence to break out and engage with English speakers. Eleri was thinking of developing a social group for ladies who wanted to improve their language conversation and wondered if people thought it was a good idea. Danielle responded that the Derngate had offered a space on a Thursday. She had been working a lot with young people learning ESOL but they conversed with people who looked and spoke like they did which made it more difficult to learn correct pronunciation. Also the Afghan women liked to do embroidery which would be a good focus. Morcea added there was a Ukrainian group who met at the Umbrella Fair for knitting and crochet. Anabel stated that C2C had been running a language café for a long time with the teacher running bespoke groups to suit the attendees. They also had a sewing group and would like to host the ladies. Danielle added that what the ladies missed the most, living in hotels was cooking for themselves. Annabel stated they were having the kitchen sorted out and also had an allotment so they could learn to grow as well as cook the produce. Vanessa added she had resources for ESOL if anyone had service users who wanted to keep busy.

Eleri also asked if anyone had a small lockable cupboard going for free for a community group to keep art materials in securely as they had previously been stolen. Please drop Debbie an email if you do –

[debbie.maccoll@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:debbie.maccoll@westnorthants.gov.uk).

Annabel – the women's Centre Programme had changed – new scheduled to be emailed out.

Tina – The fire service had a total of 400 firefighter applications, 80 from females which was very encouraging.

Danielle Stone – The Activity Fund at allowed an amazing summer of activities for the young refugees. They had been introduced to drama and graffiti art. Currently trying to arrange female only swim sessions, had applied for funding for karate for the girls and was working on the Christmas programme.

Lindsey – Ran a summer HAF programme for children with additional needs, had applied for Christmas funding and had been speaking in schools encouraging girls to go into business. Her background was 20 years working in education then left when she lost her husband. She then teamed up with a business partner to use art to develop people's confidence. They had just received some work from DWP helping get NEET young people back into training. They taught from nursery age up to adults in the professional sector, adapting practice to best suit the person who walked through the door.

Matthew – the Together Fund had funded groups throughout the WNC area including Albanian dance classes and mums & kids classes. Springs Family Centre were starting a new teenage girls sports club soon. Various organisations had been funded for fitness classes for those with long term health conditions. They had about 4 different groups each week wanting to start swimming sessions and were working with providers to see what could be done to open up pool time. The new bike park in Northampton was now open and free to use. They were looking at having a pool of bikes for people to use so if anyone knew of any women who wanted to start to get in touch.

Morcea – currently pulling Black History Month together. The Cinnamon Group were putting an event on in Wellingborough to celebrate the life of Mike Prescott who died a few years ago. The Colour Purple was on at the Derngate. Navratri celebrations were on at Weston Favell Parish hall. 15 October would see a day of celebration for Diwali starting at 10am in the Market Square with the procession starting at 6pm.

Vanessa – Aquarius continued to deliver training which was continuously updated, predominately to front line workers with bespoke face to face sessions as required.

Debbie – the virtual event for International People with Disabilities was scheduled for live screening on 1 December from 11am. Social spaces were being offered during the live broadcast in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester, free to attend and free refreshments but needed to be booked – more details to follow. 16 Days of Activism planning had started.

## **7. Items for Future Meetings**

Invite Dawn Cummings to the next meeting

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 29 November, 11am at Northampton's Guildhall and on Teams.