



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Women's Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Women's Forum held at on Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 11.00 am over Teams.

Present Pauline Woodhouse (Co-Chair), Alex Rex, Sally Wood, Morcea Walker, Laura Boatman, Mavis Mundirwa, Anthony Dumi, Debs Burns, Debbie MacColl

Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from Anna King (Co-Chair), Rachel Duncan and Neelam Aggarwal.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

BAME Sub Group

Mavis reported that they were hoping someone from Children's Trust could come to talk at a meeting in the new year about the support available to children and families who were victims of DA, asylum seekers etc. A couple of times it had been arranged but had to be cancelled at the last minute.

They would be joining in with a lot of activities including the Mayor's event on 25 November with a march and vigil. It was hoped to develop a leaflet to hand out and Mavis was trying to get hold of Anjona. Morcea offered to add this to her email to Anjona. There had been talk of various coffee and chat sessions including a specific BAME one but this was now a single virtual event to be held over Facebook Live.

Action: Debbie to send Mavis the details.

An officer had been recruited to the Voice role now but their start date was not yet known. Voice were wishing to place the new officer with different BAME groups as part of their induction but, when asked, they said there was no funding to support this. Mavis said they fully recognised the need for this engagement but that it would take a worker off their own tasks in order to facilitate it. Pauline advised to keep asking the question about financial or in kind support for assisting with the induction as it should not just be expected to happen for free.

There was also a need for lawyers to give advice around immigration and DA to put on a database but had yet to get details. Morcea stated that Community Law were funded to work across communities so had a responsibility to work with BAME communities although they might not be specialists. Pauline said they had someone from Community Law attend the Diverse Communities Forum to speak about Windrush who had been good. It would also be good to link in with University third year students and also the Sikh and Bangladeshi Associations how might already have some contacts. Although the university students were not qualified they would

be able to assist with advice and research. Sally stated she and Mavis were meeting the Changemaker team the following day and would bring it up.

Creating Equalz had offered 2 free spaces to the BAME sub group for the FGM Awareness and Prevalence Training in November 2022 thanks to a donation from the Co-op. For more details and booking use this link:-

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fgm-awareness-prevalence-training-tickets-213722318207>

Pauline encouraged everyone to attend the 16 Days virtual coffee and chat with Sup Int Sarah Johnson 7pm, 7 December on Facebook Live (further details to be circulated nearer the time) and also the march and vigil on 25 November.

International Women's Day

Debbie stated she had booked all the publicly accessible rooms in the Guildhall for Saturday 5 March in the hope an actual event would be possible. However, it would probably have to be looked at differently to allow more space and avoid crowded spaces. The idea of having some interviews in a quiet space streamed into the hall had previously been discussed and would be followed up. Using the outdoor space was suggested as when we had the vintage fashion show.

Inspirational Women award would follow last year's format with community and business categories. Debbie & Debs to follow up with last year's business winner who had some good ideas for IWD and had been keen to get involved.

Northampton Guardians

Scott Fitzsimmons introduced himself as the volunteer lead for the Emergency Services Volunteers and had been involved with the voluntary sector for over 20 years. He explained that there was a new venture for Safe Nights Out for the night-time economy and he had been in discussions with both the PCC and India Chipchase's mother who had originally set up Northampton Guardians. The intention was to keep the name and get more volunteers on board, especially females.

The intention was to initially do Friday and Saturday nights from 8pm until 4am based from the new van which would be parked in either Market Square or the top of Bridge Street. Once established, other nights such as Freshers and student nights could be considered. It wasn't expected for people to sign up for the whole shift, but an hour or 2. It was thought that most vulnerable females would feel safer with a female volunteer but there would also be males working each shift.

Alex recommended that Scott contact Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire

Community Information Exchange

Miranda introduced herself as the Chair of the VCSE Assembly and was based in South Northants. The purpose of the assembly was to get all the community groups the opportunity to speak with one voice. This had been tried before and failed but it was felt now, with the new Unitary Council it was a good opportunity to work as equal partners. The model adopted had been used successfully in Shropshire. There were 12 themes with all the groups now up and running. It had been a really difficult time

for the voluntary sector not helped by the fact that everyone was fighting for the same pots of money. Laura and Miranda to have a conversation outside the meeting. Laura stated that she hoped to attend meetings on a regular basis and would try and bring stats relevant to each meeting's discussions. Their key aim was to ensure people claimed whatever they were entitled to and was happy for forum members to contact her direction on laura.boatwright@dwp.gov.uk. She would be attending the January meeting to speak about a new project supporting women at risk of exploitation. They were doing more outreach work than ever and she was especially keen to link in with the BAME sub group to see what support could be offered.

Action: Debbie to put Mavis and Laura in touch. Miranda asked if there were any particular themes coming out due to Covid. Laura stated that there were more job vacancies than ever with employers desperate for staff but their clients were reluctant to engage due to anxiety brought on from the pandemic. Face to face support had not been possible which had had a negative effect. In March 2020 they had received the same amount of claims in one day as they usually get in a month. The focus had been totally on money with a lot of safeguarding issues coming up. This included a lot of self-employed people who had never claimed before. This had been very stressful and busy. As a result the team had been increased and they were in the process of opening a new job centre on Bedford Road. Face to face had now recommenced but the world had moved on while people hadn't.

Mavis stated that they were running a climate project and would appreciate speaking to Miranda outside the meeting. They also now had an allotment – Pauline offered the gardeners at Belling Community House for advice on growing.

Sally was an enterprise advisor at Northampton International Academy ensuring young people had access to people in different careers and would be running a Dragon Dens type event on 6 December with them. The intention was to help dismiss stereotypes and she would look at how it could tie into the work the Forum was doing.

Alex – current funding opportunities:-

Winter Well-being Fund

This fund aims to tackle winter fuel poverty and social isolation by supporting older, and vulnerable people in our county.

We welcome applications from all groups including: constituted community groups, registered charities, community interest companies running activities to protect and help older and vulnerable people in supported environments during the winter months.

A Winter Well-being grant is for a project activity between £250 and £5,000. The Winter Well-being Grants Panel meets on a bi-monthly basis to allow work to take place each winter.

Grants awarded by the Winter Well-being Fund will meet at least one of these five aims:

- Keep homes warm
- Dress for warmth
- Stay warm at night
- Eat well
- Keep active

Please note the closing date for applications is Friday 10 December -

<http://www.ncf.uk.com/grants/grant-finder/winterwellbeingfund>

ENGIE's Regeneration Fund for Enterprise

ENGIE has set up a fund with Northamptonshire Community Foundation to support groups delivering education, training and social enterprise activities in Northampton. For the next twelve months, Engie will be supporting the communities of **Overstone Lodge, Bellinge, Headlands, Cherry Orchard, Cottarville, Weston Favell, Standens Barn, Little Billing, Great Billing, Ecton Brook, Rectory Farm and Woodfield** via their regeneration programme in partnership with Northampton Partnership Homes.

As part of their commitment to building stronger communities, Engie would like to invite groups to apply for up to £5,000 to support education, training and social enterprise activities.

The fund is open to charities, community groups and social enterprise businesses working in these specific areas.

As part of the application process, applicants will be invited to attend the panel to discuss their application in more detail. Details of the date and time of the panel will be given once the written application has been assessed.

Example projects include:

- Local job clubs
- Small scale training, rental and staffing costs
- Apprenticeships and volunteering programmes
- Small and large pieces of equipment to enable an activity to take place
- Social enterprise initiatives e.g. co-operatives

Please note the closing date for applications is Friday 28 January 2022 -

<http://www.ncf.uk.com/grants/grant-finder/engie-fund>

Miranda thanked Alex and the rest of VIN for all the work they had been doing over the pandemic.

Items for Future Meetings

Alzheimer's and dementia – especially in the Black community

Adult Safeguarding

Carers

Support for women at risk – Laura Boatwright

Update on perinatal and maternal mental health update – Anthony Dumi

Date of Next Meeting

Dates for 2022, all meetings are Tuesday at 11am

25 January

29 March

24 May

27 September

29 November