

Women's Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Women's Forum held at The Jeffrey Room - The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Tuesday 30 May 2023 at 11.00 am.

Present: Pauline Woodhouse (Co-Chair), Sally Wood, Mavis Munderwa, Dawn Thompson, Cllr Danielle Stone, Tina Collett, Anjona Roy, Katy Johnson, Cllr Cathrine Russell, Matthew Pelesok, Alex Rex, Vivian Irene Bianchi, Rachel Packman, Eleri Neal, Eleanor Sier, Charlotte Goodwin, Aiesha Bailey, Debs Burns, Debbie MacColl

1. Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions made around the table and screen. Apologies were received from Cllr Anna King, Sarah Franklin, Nicky Brown, Divya Terry, Rachel Duncan, Chris Carr, Neelam Aggarwal, Cllr Rosie Humphreys, Syrah Nazir and Morcea Walker.

2. Code of Conduct

Circulated with the Agenda.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes agreed as a true record except Cllr Cathrine Russell should be added to the attendance list.

4. Delapre Consultation

Development of 19 Century Stables, Delapre Abbey

Eleanor explained that they had received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop the old stables and wanted to use it as a well-being hub for the community with a link back to the heritage of the site.

The plans were:-

- Office space for well-being organisations
- Studio space which could be hired out for the running of well-being activities

Eleanor was especially interested in factors that affect women being able to access the site, both practical and also around feelings of safety. For example, it was relatively easy to get a bus to the end of the drive, but the length of the drive could make it difficult for some people and they were looking into the practicality of having some golf buggies available.

Danielle stated that she was working with refugees and what connections could be made and also how to encourage people to walk or cycle rather than drive there. Debbie added that there needed to be a safe place to leave bikes.

Mavis stated that a lot of the black and brown women she worked with had little time or money for leisure which was often why they did not get so involved with sports. If there was somewhere safe/ someone to look after young children it would be really helpful. Also a lot of the women were not comfortable doing exercise classes or similar in mixed groups.

Dawn stated that with Safer Routes, thinking about walking from Briar Hill and Camp Hill, if there was a Safer Street help point (as on the Racecourse) it would be helpful. Also to encourage use of the Flair app. Access to mental health support was a real issue and a female only safe space would be invaluable. At the Racecourse they had a raised bed that was separate with locked gates where they could have a female only gardening session. Eleanor responded they had gardening groups in the walled garden already and could facilitate women only groups as it was an enclosed space and the gates could be locked.

Eleri mentioned she had a meeting with an historian who was also doing research on poverty to see how his research could impact on communities and Eleanor was welcome to join. Eleri and Eleanor to make contact outside of the meeting.

Other groups to talk to were suggested such as residents associations, the Caribbean community, groups at Weston Favell, Teresa McCarthy and Inspiration Radio were very helpful. Offering a more affordable afternoon tea would also likely be popular. Eleanor responded that plans already included a 'muddy café' with cheap teas and coffees for dog walkers etc.

Eleanor thanked everyone for their input and asked them to get in touch with any other ideas/groups to be contacted. Eleanor can be reached on eleonor.sier@delapreabbey.org.

5. Supporting Independence Programme

Charlotte Goodwin, Area Manager

Charlotte introduced the service as part of Public Health and West Northants Council, it was currently countywide and would be continuing in the West but she was unsure of its future in the North. The supported anyone over the age of 18 years, focussed on implementing preventative measures to support healthy living and manage current health issues to enable and maintain levels of independence. It was a free 12-week programme of weekly, 1 hour, one to one sessions giving support with the potential of extending if necessary and an expectation of passing on to a friendship group or activity as appropriate. Validated assessment tools were used to identify support needs and anyone in a greater need would be referred on to the most appropriate service. Trained well-being advisors would look at all aspects of a person's life, often the real issues not coming out until several weeks later once trust had been built. Home visits were not made but customers were encouraged to come out into a social setting.

Since the pandemic a lot more people had been suffering from anxiety and feeling anxious and the walk and talk sessions were born. The advisor would meet the customer at home and they would go for a walk, often starting very small, but building

as the person built confidence. A friendship group was being piloted in Weston Favell Library. It had been going for 9 weeks and a now had 15 regulars and was increasing. The aim was for the Friendship Group to become peer led.

If the customer's need was too high, they were often still able to support the partner.

There were similarities with Social Prescribers, although they seemed to work differently in different areas where this service was constant across the whole of WNC. Also this service would see the individual every week for 1 hour whereas social prescribing did not necessarily do so and also offered the walk and talk sessions. They were still trying to understand the exact differences though.

Mavis asked about support for survivors of domestic abuse. Charlotte responded that their needs might be too high and require a specialist but they could certainly help with re-gaining confidence and perhaps could be a sticky plaster whilst waiting for the IAP Team could see them.

Danielle stated she was delighted to hear of the service as we often forget the lower-level support can be so valuable and walking had huge physiological benefits.

Tina asked about support for hoarders as they were obviously a fire risk and there was little help available. Charlotte responded that if someone acknowledged they had a problem they could give some support and encouragement to make small changes over time but they did not do home visits so it would be limited.

Referral contact information:-

Website:

Email: sipinfo@westnorthants.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 126 7000

Tel: 01604 361533

6. Community Information Exchange

Sally – wanted to recognise all the hard work that went into International Women's Day making it such a positive and enjoyable day.

Mavis – ladies wine and chat on Zoom, 8pm every Friday, as part of our domestic abuse awareness project. Link available on the Power of Mind networks. We invite different speakers.

Eleri – the language café was progressing and would be starting soon in a private room in the Central Library most likely on a Thursday from 11 -12. She was keen to link in with the most vulnerable people as they were the most reluctant to approach the police. She did have access to a plain minibus to help with transport issues. Dawn asked if there was a link agencies could put on their websites – Eleri to make enquiries. Last week Eleri had attended Black Heritage Network event at the Uni. One of the issues brought up was in relation to the older people getting dementia then re-living the trauma they had when re-settling in the UK. This was not from this

area but Eleri wondered if it was an issue here and whether anyone had heard of anything similar. Often the wider family was totally unaware of the historic trauma. Although it was not a particular police issue it could be relevant if and when people went missing. She would speak to the Missing Persons Unit.

Rachel – a lot of Positive Action work planned over the next few months.

Irene Bianchi – reminder that GamCare were still here to support people affected by their own or someone else's gambling with drop ins and awareness sessions on offer.

Cllr Stone – For Earth Day they had run an event looking at the impact of air pollution on women, especially black women. It had been well received and was going to be run again virtually so that more women could join. Refugee week was 19-25 June with an event at the Guildhall on 22 June. Spring Boroughs event was being planned for July.

Debs – upcoming events included:-

Refuge Week – 22nd June

Windrush – 22 June

Pride – 8 July

Carnival – 10 June (leaflets given to members in the room)

Green Summit – 1 July

A new webpage was being developed which would have a calendar of all the WNC events.

Dawn – There was a gap in mental health support below the crisis point but above therapy and NRCC were running a pilot with IAP. Reclaim the Night planning had started.

Alex – Avon funding tackling VAWG of up to £3k [Northamptonshire Community Foundation - The Avon Fund for Women & Girls \(ncf.uk.com\)](https://www.ncf.uk.com) and High Sheriff initiative tackling and preventing serious youth violence again up to £3k [Northamptonshire Community Foundation - The High Sheriff's Initiative Fund \(ncf.uk.com\)](https://www.ncf.uk.com).

Anjona – NREC had received funding to assist with Windrush justice, to qualify a person had to have arrived in the UK between 1948 and 1971 and experienced detriment due to the hostile immigration policy particularly if they came from a Commonwealth country and had privileges taken away. If in doubt, get the person to contact NREC who will be able to have a discussion and determine whether or not they qualify. A Windrush event was planned for 24 June at the Cricket Club with entertainment. Book your place here - <https://bit.ly/WindrushNorthampton>

Cllr Russell – Kingsley Front had been subject to a tsunami of drug dealing which the police were struggling to come to terms with along with street drinkers and beggars. She was meeting with the police but it was a very difficult situation at the moment. Dawn responded that the back alleys in Abington and off the Wellingborough Road and outside the Barry Road Co-op were the same.

Debbie – following the business workshops at IWD she and Debs had a meeting coming up with the Library who also gave business support, to see how they could support local business women. Debbie reminded everyone that the July meeting was at 6pm.

7. Items for Future Meetings

Cllr Stone stated that she was hearing from residents that many people felt unsafe in both in their own homes and outside due the high level of crime and domestic abuse. Girls felt unsafe in school but since the advent of Academies was any data being recorded and, if so, what was happening with it? The county's figures for serious violence were higher than the national average. Eleri stated this covered several areas of expertise and it was unlikely that one person could cover it all and suggested that everyone send their questions to Eleri by 13 June. Eleri would then be able to get some answers of what the current picture is, what we don't know and find who would be best to invite to speak at the next meeting. Pauline thanked Eleri for organising this.

Anjona agreed and added there were specific issues experienced by black and brown women such as hate crime reporting to the police and we need to look at alternatives. Also, a lot of information was being pulled together in the Local Area Partnerships, there was a certain messiness around everything and it needed to be pulled together so legitimate evidence based interventions could be put in place. Dawn added that there was already a lot of work going on for example Laura Jones was leading a task & finish group around schools as VAWG, Safer Streets work and the Black & Brown women's group was looking into No Recourse to Public Funds. Discussion on data being collated for the LAPs Danielle added that the Local Authority used to be responsible for collecting data on what was happening in schools but since the advent of academies it was unclear where that responsibility now sat but felt the women's Forum needed an overview of the impact on women & girls and need to measure improvements over time.

Rachel added that vulnerability needed to be taken into consideration as being vulnerable would make people more susceptible.

Action: everyone sends their questions to elery.neale@northants.police.uk by 13 June.

8. Date of Next Meeting

6pm Tuesday 25 July – Guildhall & on Teams