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STRATEGIC RACE & EQUALITIES FORUM

A meeting of EREC's SREF was held on 29th November 2010 to discuss the **LBE's Consultations on the budget and Improving Customer Access** and members had the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns.

Budget

Richard Tyler (LBE Acting Assistant Director of Finance) highlighted the salient points of the 'Enfield Spending Review 2011/12' informing that the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review indicated cuts of 26% to Enfield Council's budget over 4 years. He stated that the overall reduction so far was £70.8m (up from £51.3m last March 2010). The views of all Enfield residents, service users, voluntary organisations, businesses and stakeholders were being sought and consultation questionnaires had been widely distributed.

Mr Tyler reported that Enfield has a programme of generic Equality Impact Assessments that cover race, disability, gender, age, faith and sexual orientation and that these were agreed with partner organisations in the voluntary and community sector. Assessments would be carried out focussing on the impact of BME residents/service users, people with disabilities, members of the transgender, lesbian, gay or bisexual community, older and younger people and those with different faiths or beliefs.

Members expressed concern about the excessive 100% rise in parking charges in this harsh economic climate. Some welcome key manifesto commitments included in the budget plan were –

- * £100 council tax rebate to low income pensioners
- * Pilot scheme free school meals
- * School uniform grant for low income families
- * Grants for voluntary sector - £1.9m over the next 3 years to aid capacity building

EREC submitted its own response to the consultation and emphasised the importance of fairness in any cutbacks locally, as there would be multiple detriments and adverse effects on BME communities due to the national social policy changes. These needed to be borne in mind for local policy prioritization and service delivery. Impact assessments needed to be carried out to assess how BME communities and race relations may be affected. It was also requested that if the LA still went ahead with the proposed cuts, measures should be put in place to counteract these.

'Repatriated' funding resulting from the 50% reduction of LBE's contribution to London Councils should be ring fenced to support the voluntary sector. This would avert the necessity for the possible £300,000 reduction suggested in the LBE budget consultation document and it could be used for projects to enhance community cohesion throughout this difficult economic environment, which may aggravate racial tensions when scapegoats are sought. Comments made by community organisations at the BME conference held last November at Community House should be taken into account when the spending review decisions are made. **(cont'd over)**

2011 Census Reminder — All households will receive a **purple envelope** containing a questionnaire which must be completed on **Census Day - Sunday 27th March**. The information will be confidential for 100 years. To find out more go to www.census.gov.uk or telephone 0300 0201 101.

Equality in Enfield: *The impact of policy changes*

Following the consultation event on 18th November held jointly with the Middlesex University Social Policy Research Centre, a funding proposal was submitted to the Economic and Social Research Council Knowledge Exchange Fund (ESRC) which would to monitor the impact of new government policies on equality in Enfield. The outcome will not be known until mid June. Letters of support were received and submitted along with the proposal from Age Concern; Enfield Council; Enfield CAB; Enfield Voluntary Action; Enfield Primary Care Trust; ETCA; SECCA, Enfield Caribbean Assn; LGBT. (A report on the event held last November is now available from EREC).

SREF (cont'd from page 1)

Improving Customer Access

Kate Robertson (LBE Assistant Director of Customer Services, Communications and Business Change) presented Enfield's approach on 'Improving Customer Access' and highlighted the improvements already made (see chart below):

Enfield's Customer Improvement Journey



07/03/2011

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The LBE received a Customer Service Excellence Award in 2009, however, they would continue to improve their services and next phase plans included the creation of a single "front office" with trained and knowledgeable staff aiming to resolve the vast majority of requests by customers. Further improvements to the website and online services would be made empowering customers to have access to information and enabling them to self serve, but face to face contact would be retained for those who really need it. Better linking of information of customers' queries and histories would enable them to track responses.

It was hoped to save £6.9m over the next 4 years in order to protect the front line service, maintain consistent standards, and provide better access to information and services. More queries would be resolved on first point of contact due to bi-lingual staff. In response to questions asked about what languages were spoken by customer services staff and if Somali was included, a list later provided stated: Afrikaans; Creole; Dutch; Fanti; French; German; Greek; Greek Cypriot; Gujarati; Hebrew; Hindi; Italian; Lithuanian; Nigerian; Polish; Punjabi; Russian; Turkish; Twi; Urdu. Somali was not one mentioned. Members also raised questions on whether customer care training was being provided to all staff and what percentage of customer queries were being resolved within the first call. Currently, training is not mandatory for staff from backroom services, however they were trying to get funding for training of all staff. 60% of calls were resolved by the Customer Service Centre, others were being passed on. However, accurate figures could not be provided on queries resolved by back room services. (Full notes of the above meeting will be available at the next SREF meeting. For more information or to join the Strategic Race & Equalities Forum, please contact 020 8373 6272).

Holocaust Memorial Day

Enfield Council commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January at the Dugdale Centre to mark 66 years since the liberation of the concentration and extermination camp at Auschwitz in Poland in January 1945. The event was hosted by Cllr Anwar Chaudhury (Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion) and the celebrations were led by Doug Taylor, Council Leader and Cllr Michael Laverder, Conservative Leader. The theme was **'untold stories of the individuals affected by the holocaust and genocides in modern times'**. Children from Raynham Primary School and Oasis Academy gave outstanding performances. Faith leaders gave readings and there were songs from the Connaught Opera. Ms Bhatia and Mrs Dungate were there to represent EREC.



Fairness for All Enfield Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme Annual Report 2010

Find out how the Council has tackled inequality in the borough and about their plans for future work to ensure people in Enfield do not suffer any form of discrimination and have equal access to all its services.

The LBE aims are to reduce inequality, discrimination, harassment and victimisation, whilst promoting diversity amongst all communities in Enfield.

The report is available on the Council's website. For further information or to give your views, please contact Martin Garnar, Equalities Officer, Corporate Improvement Division on 020 8379 3113 or email martin.garnar@enfield.gov.uk

EHRC NEWS

Trevor Phillips, Chair of the EHRC, gave a speech on 8th February at the Policy Exchange on "the future of the Commission and why equality and human rights are essential to economic recovery"

Mr Phillips said that the EHRC would take a more systemic and preventive course and felt that the factors that will most drive discrimination and disadvantage over the next five years were: how our country manages the economy; the reductions in public spending; and the change in relationship between state and citizen.

He stated that the Commission were restructuring in order to focus on their mission and had already announced substantial staff cuts, aiming to spend less on their own bureaucracy, and more on ensuring that government and business act according to the highest standards of equality and human rights.

Mr Phillips continued to say that the Commission had also launched a formal assessment of the October Spending Review's effects on social groupings protected under equality laws to ensure that the review and the cuts that follow do not fall disproportionately on already disadvantaged social groupings.

Mr Phillips concluded his speech by saying, ***"In the next few years we will be focused on one thing above all - bringing about an inclusive recovery and showing that equality and human rights, far from being an expensive luxury, are essential to our sustained prosperity."***

You can read or listen to his speech on the EHRC website at www.equalityhumanrights.com

EHRC Helpline service for information on discrimination and human rights issues (phone and correspondence service only) - **0845 604 6610** - England main number.

Contact us:

Enfield Racial Equality Council

Community House

311 Fore Street

Edmonton

London, N9 0PZ

Phone: 020 8373 6271/2

Fax: 020 8373 6281

Email: info@enfieldrec.org.uk

Web: www.enfieldrec.org.uk



EREC Membership

If you support the work of EREC, then why not join us as a member. Membership is free and is open to individuals who live or work in Enfield and to organisations operating in Enfield, who are committed to furthering our work.

We welcome your comments about this newsletter. If you would like us to include information or an article in our next edition please contact us.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Enfield Racial Equality Council. EREC cannot take responsibility for information or articles submitted for inclusion in the newsletter.

Challenging Racism and Promoting Racial Equality within the London Borough of Enfield

If your EREC membership is due to expire

you will shortly be receiving forms for renewal. Please complete and return by 12th April to ensure that you will be able to vote and stand for election at our forthcoming Annual General Meeting in July (further info to follow).

If you are not currently an EREC member and would like details about how to join us, we would be very happy to hear from you. Please ring Sue Solomon on 020 8373 6272. Membership is **free** and also entitles you to automatic membership of our Strategic Race & Equalities Forum.

Enfield African Association

Founded in 1985, to render welfare and social services voluntarily to Africans, resident or working in the London Borough of Enfield, including:

- Assistance and Advice
- Representing parents seeking admission to Enfield Schools for their children
- Attending disciplinary tribunals with Enfield parents and educational tribunals on behalf of their children
- Visiting/ministering to elderly and frail African members of the Society

For membership, please apply to the General Secretary, Enfield African Association at Room 4, Community House, 311 Fore Street, Edmonton, London, N9 0PZ

Enfield Trading Standards Presents:

Ma Kelly's Doorstep production by the Attic Theatre Company

Free doorstep crime theatre workshop for the over 50s

The event will address the issue of doorstep crime and aims to empower you with the knowledge and confidence to contract with tradesmen and advise what to do if things go wrong

Monday 14th March 2011
1.30pm – 3.30pm

at Enfield Council, Conference Room, Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield, EN1 3XH

British Afghan Women's Society Celebrate their 10th Anniversary

20 minute documentary film chronicling their journey as a charity over the past 10 years

Wednesday 16th March
1.30pm – 2.30pm
Community House