

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY
ORGANISATIONS
2 DECEMBER 2020

(Time Not Specified - Time Not Specified)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Marsie Skeete (in the Chair),
Councillor Eloise Bailey, Councillor Omar Bush,
Councillor Joan Henry and Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,

Councillor Allison, Councillor Edith Macauley, Councillor Laxmi
Attawar,
Mr Sivapragasam Shivaranjith, Ms Aman Nathan, Ms Elda
Rouse, Rev. Hannah Neale, Chief Inspector Bob Whitehead, Ms
Marilyn Watkins-Massiah, Ms Stella Akintan, Mr Kaz Obuka,
Rev. E Copeland, Mr Jerry Hall, Ms Seema Shah, Ms Sharon
Scott, Mr Logie Lohendran, Ms Beau Fadahunsi, Ms Felica
Alicia, Raghavi, Mr Abayeh Savage, Mr Fitzroy Dawson, Mr
Jason Charles, Ms Liz Hammond, Ms Evereth Willis, Ms Debbie
Allen, Ms Carol Bruce-Gordon, Ms Grace Oyerinde

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Saleem Sheikh, Mr Slawek Szczepanski, Dr
Arumugaraasah and Mr Islam.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

Cllr Skeete gave an introduction, she has been a councillor for six years and was the
Mayor in 2017/18. She is committed to addressing issues of concern for the BAME
community and working collaboratively to solve them.

The minutes were agreed.

4 STAY WELL IN WINTER 2020 - AMAN NATHAN, PATIENT AND PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT MANAGER (MERTON), NHS SOUTH WEST LONDON
CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP (Agenda Item 4)

Aman Nathan gave an overview of Stay Well in Winter and keeping Warm and Well in Merton.

Q: COVID can be silent, you have to have symptoms to get a test, why are there restrictions?

Q: The egg allergy has put people off getting the vaccine, it was suggested that the publicity should explain more clearly that allergy sufferers may be affected by the vaccination.

A: Aman will take back the queries and report back to the JCC.

Q: People are scared to go their G.P.

A: Community Clinics have been set up to offer vaccinations

Resolved: Aman's presentation to be shared with the councillors.

5 POLICE UPDATE - INSP BOB WHITEHEAD, METROPOLITAN POLICE (Agenda Item 5)

Chief Inspector (CI) Whitehead presented an update on the crime statistics for Merton. Burglaries are down and theft of vehicles have gone up. New officers have been moved from Earlsfield to Wimbledon so the borough has increased resources.

Seema Shah updated the meeting with the Mayor of London's targets for increasing diversity in the police force. The Mayor set targets to increase diversity by 20% by 2024 and 28% by 2030. She gave details of the Outreach Recruitment programme being undertaken by the Police. A 3 year Apprenticeship is being offered and the only entry requirements are grade C GCSE English and Maths. The programme is comprised of an 80:20 split between the class room and placement and is being run by 4 London universities. The salary is £30K per annum.

Q: What plans are there to give support to stop BAME communities being targeted like criminals?

A: The BAME recruits will be given support and assistance.

Q: What is stopping people from joining the Police? What are their fears and the support available?

A: Support will be provided to get qualifications. It is too early to say and assumptions can't be made.

Q: Young Black boys are still getting harassed by the Police, how will the Police change the narrative? Officers need to treat young people with respect.

Q: Details were given of community events that the Police had been invited to but did not attend. It was suggested that the Police needs to use another approach, e.g. using Carnival to do a recruitment drive.

A: The Police do use carnival to recruit, but there is concern about those who get injured.

Q: Is there an upper age limit for the recruitment and selection?

A: The age limit is 57, applications can be made at 17 and applicants may be employed as PCs at 18. There is a target to recruit 40% BAME women and it is a good opportunity for women who are career transitioning.

Q: To what extent will the initiative help to smash gangs and improve the effectiveness of tackling County Lines?

A: These are two huge problems and making improvements in trust through better communication could help to improve matters. Better communication and recruitment and selection will improve trust.

Q: Why has violence against the person gone up so much? What is being done to employ more senior BAME people? A real change is needed from the top down.

A: It depends on how change is quantified. The Police service does need to be more inclusive, there is a working group looking at the top level.

A: The crime statistics are not broken down by BAME categories. The increase in Domestic Violence during the pandemic is part of the reason for the increase in violence against the person.

Q: How can noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour be dealt with?

A: Ward Officers can try to sort out such problems. The Safer Neighbourhood Team and Noise Nuisance Team may also provide support.

Q: What support is there for officers in the line of duty? What is the relationship between the Regulars and Specials? Why do officers move so regularly?

A: The officers move on for promotion or to get experience in a new area. There are 68 staff in Merton and recruitment and retention is being looked at, but for development people move on. You can't make people stay in the same role for too long. Every effort is being made to keep people in roles for some time.

Q: The increase in Domestic Violence is definitely the reason for the increase in violence against the person. Due to the pandemic, the courts have been shut and cases not listed. Wimbledon has a special Domestic Violence court, however, the court is struggling to hear all the cases.

Q: Stop and Search is still a problem and has not eased up for Black people.

A: The Police could do better. If people have concerns they can contact the Stop and Search panel. Body worn camera is also reviewed. It is not always possible to fully explain the reasons for stop and search because the Police have to take control.

Q: What are we doing to stop knife crime and protect people?

A: Stop and Search is the main way of detecting knife carrying – young Black people are 8 times more likely to be a victim of knife crime.

Q: Is there any data on Hate crime and the level of mental health cases?

A: CI Whitehead did not have the data and encouraged representatives to join the borough's Independent Advisory Group (IAG).

Q: Representatives have not heard of the Stop and Search panel, so it needs to be advertised to schools and colleges.

Q: How will the relationship be improved? More interventions could be done to see the Police in a positive light.

Q: What is the percentage retention of BAME Officers?

A: No statistics are available on retention rates. In November 15.3% of PCs are from a BAME background.

6 UPDATE ON THE COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE RESEARCH -
HANNAH NEALE, CHAIR BAME VOICE (Agenda Item 6)

Hannah Neale and Raghavi gave an update on the Covid-19 Resilience research being conducted by BAME Voice.

The council recognised the need to do additional work to better understand the impact of the pandemic on the BAME community and commissioned BAME Voice to conduct research into the lived experience of BAME residents. The aim of the research was also to find a framework to build resilience.

A bottom up approach was used with respondents telling the researcher how they have been affected by the pandemic.

Hannah stressed that in the past BAME community contributed to reports but there had been no recognition of the role they played. She hoped that the findings of the report will be used to contribute to making a positive change. Hannah hoped that in the future the term 'Hard to reach' is no longer used, because it has been the methods previously used to get to the BAME community that was problematic.

The research has identified the issue of council staff feeling hurt because of their experience of bullying and not have the issues that they raise dealt with satisfactorily.

The research has also found that the BAME community is not weak, but in fact there are strong and determined residents, who are angry that they've been the focal point of negative publicity. Many felt stigmatised by media headlines and found them to be upsetting.

Residents want to work with the statutory agencies. The research heard voices that have never been heard before maybe because they have never been approached or were reluctant to give information.

The aim was to search out more voices and challenge the BAME community and the council.

The interviewers were trained in August and included young interviewers. An extensive sample included Taxi and Mini Cab drivers (part of the business cohort). 2 outdoor events were held and 3 Resilience workshops for staff. In homes where English was not the first language, young people explained the issues to older members of the household.

To date the research found that respondents felt that nothing has changed and people want to see a real change.

BAME Voice is represented on some of the partnership board. Hannah congratulated the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for the community medical facilities.

Hannah ended the presentation by thanking Councillors Stephen Alambritis and Edith Macauley for their support.

Q: It is important to get members of the BAME community to attend the JCC and improve attendance levels. Councillors are encouraged to get their constituents involved.

Q: How may the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) keep residents engaged? Is there anything that was heard that could be taken back to the NHS? What do people need from the NHS to work as leaders and connectors?

A: An interim report has been produced and given to Barry Causer in Public Health. Messages are not getting through, e.g. not everyone can access Zoom or Teams. Hannah suggested that simply using a mega-phone in public places could be used as a means of getting messages out to the public.

Q: The story of disproportionality is a problem. The narrative was that it was harder for people to catch. Is data available showing the percentage of Merton's BAME residents affected by the pandemic? The disproportionate impact is not across all regions and the borough. 13% is not disproportionate and should be highlighted. The impact is now shifting to the Caribbean and African communities.

Q: How are the statistics broken down by BAME – the term is not homogenous and the data should reflect the different groups include in the term 'BAME'? BAME organisations need more support to contribute to the research. BAME Voice needs to contact BAME organisations and offer support to gather data from their membership to get more depth. WIFFA would like to assist in the data gathering to get the voice of the Caribbean community heard.

Resolved: Evereth to share the BAME demographics with the JCC.

7 EMPLOYMENT UPDATE - LIZ HAMMOND, INTERIM HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES (Agenda Item 7)

Liz Hammond gave an overview of the measures the council is putting in place to improve the diversity profile and ensure that the organisation is free from any racial bias. She gave an example of the recent recruitment for the Assistant Director of Public Protection, where 30% of applicants were BAME, 30% of longlisted candidates were BAME and 50% were shortlisted. However, the successful applicant is white. The panel members included a senior BAME officer. The council will be implementing initiatives to look internally at itself.

Q: *What was the ethnicity of the panel?*

A: White Male and Female and one BAME officer.

Q: *Have they had Unconscious Bias training?*

A: Liz didn't know if they had Unconscious Bias but they have received Recruitment and Selection training.

Q: *What colour was the BAME officer?*

A: Black.

Resolved: the Liz will get clarity for the next meeting.

Q: *There has been a systematic failing for BAME staff. 34.4% of staff are BAME but only 13.9% were 5% of the top earners in the council. There are no BAME employees earning in excess of £80,000 in the council. There seems to be a ceiling as BAME staff are struggling to progress. BAME staff are needed at all levels and the failings need to be addressed. There needs to be a breakdown of the percentages.*

A: The figures below 10 cannot be reported on as it would potentially identify individuals.

Q: *What action is being taken to retain staff?*

A: BAME staff are being recruited faster, but they are not being retained- often BAME staff leave for career progression. Exit interviews need to be done.

Q: *It is important to provide career progression in the council, staff should not have to go elsewhere.*

Q: *Do you have exit interview data?*

A: There is an exit interview process but staff don't want to do exit interviews.

Q: *Succession planning should be in place, Head Hunting is sending the wrong message.*

Q: *There needs to be succession planning. There are capable people internally.*

A: HR's work plan includes putting talent management in place.

Q: *The council has institutional racism. What percentage of staff have had Unconscious Bias training and what is the plan to roll it out across the council? Creativity gets stunted when there is no diversity. The council needs to look at how it is recruiting – candid honesty is needed.*

A: Not a large number are leaving the council

Councillor Allison, Leader of the council informed the meeting that half of the cabinet are BAME and the council is committed to change. In terms of recruitment the council needs to work to making a change. It is important to get staff reflective of the community.

Q: *How does the local authority ensure the recruitment agency has the same standard for equality and diversity as the council?*

A: The recruitment agency have to give data in their proposals about ethnicity etc.

Q: *is Unconscious Bias mandatory?*

A: Yes.

Q: *There is a 100% record of attaining white candidates at the top. When will that change?*

A: There has been little change in the directors, so there has been little opportunity to appoint BAME staff at the top of the organisation.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 8)

The Census is taking place on 21March 2021 and the JCC is encouraged to promote completing the census.

Concern was expressed about how the BAME data would be used. Beau Fudahunsi informed the meeting that the census is going to be totally digital. Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) is going to have Census centres to assist residents. The centres will be in Pollards Hill, MVSC and Wimbledon.

The meeting finished at 9.50