RACE EQUALITY FORUM (REF)
ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON

30\textsuperscript{TH} JUNE 2004

\textbf{Present:}

- Mahmoud Patel \textit{REF}
- Brenda Yearwood \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Gillian Skinner \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Councillor Mary Smith \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Howard Francis \textit{GEMBA}
- Jon Ellard \textit{Business Link}
- Pauline Reynolds \textit{Gloucestershire Afro-Caribbean Association}
- Carol Francis \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Martin Wallace
- Paul Mathurin \textit{LSP}
- Alexandra MacRae \textit{GlosRec}
- Leah Bird \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Nojrjahan Rahman \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Patience Tsakpo \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Peter Munisamy
- Lauretta Sadler
- Councillor Harjit Gill \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Mohammed Patel \textit{I.A.G}
- Mr Khalil Badait \textit{Rising Star Youth Club}
- Ebrahim Moosajee
- Suleman Moosajee
- Ayoob Moolla
- Councillor Steve McHale \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- A Patel
- Nunu Miah
- Bodrul Islam
- Mrs Mei Ling Howard \textit{Gloucestershire Chinese Community}
- Farook Bhaiyat
- Rupert Redway \textit{Careers Gloucestershire}
- Farooq Ahmed
- Zareen Ahmed
- Patrick Simpson \textit{The Trust Centre}
- Lauretta Bert
- Sol Herradura
- Ahmed Bham \textit{REF, GRIG}
- Ahmed Goga

\textbf{Apologies:}

- Councillor Andrew Gravells \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Adele Owen \textit{GARAS}
- Mohamed Ginwalla \textit{QUEST}
- Councillor Bhaimia \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- Jacqui Douglas \textit{Gloucester City Council}
- PC Jan Nichols
- Jonathan Trigg
- PC Jan Nichols
- Police
Welcome

The Chair of Race Equality Forum, Mahmmond Patel, welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

‘Moving Forward’

Presentation by Ahmed Goga, Head of Skills at the Learning & Skills Council. The Presentation highlighted the following issues/points:

- BME Communities have been in Gloucester for 50 years, they have helped to build Gloucester.
- People have put a lot of work into getting us to the position we are in today. People like Patience Tsakpo and Paul Mathurin, people who have had to face pressures and barriers along the way.
- Well-known establishments lack the knowledge and awareness of different cultural needs - there is a need for staff to be more aware.
- The BME community has lost its direction and voice.
- The younger generations are in danger of forgetting what BME people have been through.
- Where are our BME role models?
- The press and media do not help matters, they make BME people out to be spongers.
- The ‘voice’ of Gloucestershire, our local newspaper, featured 3 big stories recently relating to the BME communities, e.g. Muslim schools/Roshni story. The way the stories were reported involved them being selective about what they used, in one case the facts were wrong, and there was also a contradiction within the story.
- The Citizen ask for feedback/comments but no one from the community wrote to give their support for Roshni.
- If we are to move forward we must use pen and paper, speak up, use our hearts. If the BME community had a voice and a heart it would challenge stories like this.
- Participation can make a difference, nothing will change if we just sit on the sidelines and moan.
- Groups, like REF, are crying out for local BME representation.
- Gloucester has a fast growing population, each regeneration initiative brings new opportunities – BME communities should be leading the way, not sitting on sidelines.

Comments from the floor

- There is an exodus of young talented BME people in Gloucester leaving because there are no opportunities and because of racism. What is going to be done about it?
- The community should be identifying achievers, mentors, in relation to education.
- Parent Governors can have an impact, at this level it can make a difference. BME parents should become more involved, they should become Governors.
- It was commented that each of us are role models for our children – parents should talk to teachers.
- It was commented that the Citizen are only interested in selling newspapers. GlosRec met with Roshni and the Citizen regarding the story mentioned earlier, it still went to front page, was biased and sensational.
- The Filipino community has experienced a lack of involvement. The community is expanding because of the nursing population, it is difficult to get people involved in community interests.
- Ahmed commented that there would be resource issues over the next 10 years, as public funds become tighter. Those community groups that are organised will be the ones that get
heard, they will be the ones who receive information, can influence public policy and discuss issues.

Presentation by elected members

Elected BME Councillors were invited to share experiences/aspirations. Before REF the City did not have any BME Councillors, now it has 3.

Councillor H Gill
Councillor Gill highlighted the following points:

- Cllr. Gill highlighted his background, as a young Indian, coming to Gloucester.
- Before becoming a Councillor he was a member of REF.
- REF has many achievements including the Action for a Fairer Gloucestershire initiative.
- He highlighted the need to get young people involved in REF and other groups.
- Cllr. Gill also suggested REF set up regular meetings with the Citizen, something that took place regularly sometime ago.

Councillor Francis

- Cllr. Francis highlighted her experience growing up in Britain and Gloucester.
- Racism in Britain has changed, from overt to covert.
- Getting people to change takes generations.
- People can get involved, become a member of a party – you don’t have to become a Councillor.
- People should not give up, we need to keep moving forward, people need to get involved.
- Cllr. Francis commented that the same faces are seen over and over again at meetings like these, more people should get involved, if they did it would be less demanding on everyone’s time.

Elections of Community Representatives on REF

Election were being held for the following community representative places:

- 2 places for African Caribbean community
- 2 places for other communities (e.g. Ukrainian, Filipino, Irish, etc)

Nominations were received from the following people:

**African Caribbean**
Mrs L Bert
Pauline Reynolds

**Other Communities**
Sol Herradura (Filipino Community)
Mr Khan (Pakistan Community)

People duly elected were:

- Mrs L Bert
- Pauline Reynolds
- Sol Herradura
The Forum did not elect Mr Khan. It was felt that the Pakistani community should be represented under the Asian category, as outlined in the Forum’s Terms of Reference.

It was suggested Mr Khan be invited to put his name forward for co-option.

**Annual Report Back to the community.**

The chair of REF, Mahmoud Patel presented the report back to the community 2004 (attached). Mahmoud Patel highlighted some of the Forum’s achievements over the last 12 months, which included:

- Ongoing work to support the development of a Sheltered Housing Scheme for Chinese Elders. The scheme has now received funding for the period of 7 years.
- REF made significant contributions to the development of the Council’s Race Equality Scheme and hosted its launch in January 2004.
- Working with the Council on the Generic Equality Standard to mainstream equalities in all aspects of the Council’s activities.
- The Review of the Race Equality Forum, (which continues to be a priority area over the coming months)

Mahmoud outlined the proposal in relation to the review process and the ‘new’ REF. This included a new membership structure, which moves away from the ethnic categories, and a role which is one of **scrutiny** rather than **consultation**. This proposal will be discussed further and will go to the new Council administration in the next few months.

**Comments & Future work**

- It was commented that REF has always had a scrutiny role and no matter what changes it makes, it will always have one.
- It was commented that REF needs to encourage the Council to consider race implications on reports outlining all policies/procedures.
- Patience Tsakpo responded to say that the Council is looking at this as part of its work on the Generic Equality Standard for Local Government.
- It was commented that there needs to be more involvement from communities during consultation. There should be more BME people willing to give up their time to sit on boards and to influence and challenge.
- A challenge was made inviting everyone present to attend 4 consultation meetings in the coming year.
- REF needs to home in on current local issues within its work programme.
- REF’s structure needs to be agreed quickly so that it can get on with making a difference.

**Any Other Business**

Howard Francis, GEMBA, highlighted a survey on local BME businesses that is currently taking place.

**Close**
Race Equality Forum

Annual Report to the Community

Wednesday 30\textsuperscript{th} June 2004
1.0 **Background**

1.1 The Race Equality Forum (REF) of Gloucester City Council consists of elected members and representatives of minority ethnic people elected at a public meeting to represent minority ethnic communities in the city.

1.2 The Forum exists to advise and support the city council to adopt policies and procedures aimed at securing racial equality across all functions for minority ethnic people. This role is all the more crucial in light of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 which requires the Council to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

1.3 Once every year in the spring, the Forum reports on its activities to the community and takes comments and suggestions to the council. These suggestions are built into concrete proposals and work plans, which ultimately form part of the council’s policy, procedure and service plan.

1.4 The Forum meets normally about four times a year. Meetings are open to the general public to attend to raise issues of concern to them.

1.5 *If you are interested and wish to be part of the Forum, we encourage you to put your name forward for election if you have not already done so.*

2.0 **Information**

2.1 The Race Equality Forum was set up in 1990 with a constitution and terms of reference agreed between elected representatives and members (see attached).

2.2 Since inception the Forum has been at the forefront of racial equality in the City, supporting and encouraging the Council to initiate, develop and promote good practice all around.

2.3 The following are some areas in which REF has played a key role in the past:

- The setting up of Tapestry - the translation and interpreting service and its continuous development which now include provision of language support in 42 languages.

- Established legitimate and sustained links between the City Council and the black and other ethnic minority communities.

- Involved in the Barton and Tredworth Development initiative to secure a favourable impact and outcome of regeneration activities on small minority ethnic businesses in the area.

- Campaigned and led the development of the Wheatstone Road Sheltered Housing for African-Caribbean elderly –St.
Catherine’s Court.

- Been party to the discussions on the future consultative arrangements aimed at ensuring that community partnerships are encouraged and that the community is actively involved in the council’s decision making process.

- Initiated in the development of the council’s Millennium Legacy initiative, Action for a Fairer Gloucester.

- Developed links with Haringey Council’s Ethnic Minorities Joint Consultative Committee on the recommendations of the late honourable Dr Bernie Grant, MP for the London Borough of Haringey.

- Liaised with the Citizen Newspaper and encouraged the paper to sign up to the Action for a Fairer Gloucester initiative.

- Contributed to the review of the Gloucester Law Centre, which lead to the reconstitution of the Centre. The Forum is involved in the ongoing review of restructuring and staffing.

- Held meetings with representatives from the Severn NHS Trust and Gloucestershire Constabulary to address the under-representation of minority ethnic people in both organisations. Explored ways in which they can attract and retain minority ethnic employees.

- Supported the implementation of monitoring of access to improvement grants.

- Continuously contributed to the Council’s equal opportunities report.

3.0 Work Programme over the last 12 months

3.1 The Forum has focused on a number of areas in the last twelve months, including:

- Ongoing work to support the development of a Sheltered Housing Scheme for Chinese Elders. The scheme has now received funding for a period of 7 years.

- Reviewed ethnic monitoring data in relation to housing applications.

- Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 the Council was required to produce a Race Equality Scheme. REF made significant contributions to the development of the Council’s Scheme and hosted the launch event in January 2004.
• Had a presentation on the role of Local Strategic Partnership and how REF can ensure the partnership considers the needs of minority ethnic people.

• Received information on the Generic Equality Standard, which aims to mainstream equalities in all aspects of the Council’s activities, and is represented on the Council’s Generic Equality Standard Steering Group.

Over the last 12 months a key area of work has been the **Review of the Race Equality Forum**.

A general review of Council Forum was undertaken in 2001. This review highlighted the need to refocus the Race Equality Forum’s objectives.

In response to this the Race Equality Forum set up a working group to take the review process forward.

During working party and wider discussions the main thrust has been that:

• REF, as it stands, does not fully represent the Black and Minority Ethnic community in Gloucester and therefore on its own cannot be used as a consultative forum.

• Work needs to be undertaken to encourage wider representation from the community at the same time forging links with other groups/forums within the community e.g. Linking Communities, that are better placed to carry out consultative work, which REF can link into.

• REF is well positioned to play a key role in ensuring that the City Council meets its duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, namely;

  - Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
  - Promote equal opportunities
  - Promote good relations between people from different racial groups.
  - By agreeing, monitoring and reviewing the Council’s Race Equality Scheme.

Discussions continue and the Forum is currently working on a proposal for new terms of reference with the Council.

**4.0 Work Programme for the next 12 Months**

4.1 To complete the review of the Race Equality Forum.

4.2 To monitor the Council’s progress in implementing the Race Equality Scheme during 2004.
4.3 To pick up views and issues from the community at the Annual Public Meeting and feed these into a work programme.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The Forum has developed over the years into an effective avenue for access to the decision-making that affects the lives of people in Gloucester. Its role continues to develop in the light of changes such as the introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

5.2 The Race Equality Forum exists to promote the interests of minority ethnic communities across the city and to give voice to people who are excluded from active participation in the social and political life of the area by virtue of cultural and linguistic barriers.

5.3 Although much has been achieved, more work remains to be done in order to achieve a fairer society for the people of Gloucester. The Forum's effectiveness depends on the communities' active involvement and interest in the process.

Date of next Race Equality Forum Meeting – 1st September 7:15pm at North Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester.
That the City Council appoint a Race Equality Forum with the following constitution and terms of reference:

1. The Forum to comprise Members of the Council, a representative of the Gloucestershire Racial Equality Council and representatives of the Ethnic minorities, all with full voting powers and the rights to be Chair and Vice Chair.

2. Eleven Members of the Council be appointed as representatives on the Race Equality Forum at the nomination of the City Council such nominations to be made annually and to reflect the political balance of the Council.

3. The proceedings and recommendations of the Forum be reported to the Cabinet for information and approval.

4. Administrative support for the Forum be provided by the Council.

5. That the Forum shall comprise (initially):
   (i) Councillors appointed as in 2 above
   (ii) Twelve individuals nominated to represent the Ethnic minority community in the City.

   In respect of the 12 individuals nominated to represent the Ethnic minority community in the City, these be appointed at an annual public meeting to be held for this purpose. The Head of Corporate Personnel Services will arrange this meeting, including the preparation of a Public Notice and at the meeting the relevant number of representatives be appointed by the ethnic minority community representatives attending.

6. In respect of the individuals elected to represent the Ethnic minority community in the City these be appointed in Spring each year and may hold office for up to two years.

7. In making arrangements for the election of representatives of the ethnic minority community regard shall be held to the differing ethnic communities in the City. Normally 12 individuals, as follows:-
   4 African Caribbean’s, 4 Asians, 2 Chinese and 2 others, ideally 50% or at least a minimum of one woman from each category.

8. That the Forum shall be entitled to co-opt additional representatives onto the Forum with full voting rights to reflect the ethnic composition of the community.

9. That the quorum for the Forum be 8 members of the Forum or one third of the membership whichever is greater.

10. That the Forum shall play an advisory role to the City Council on matters relating to good race relations practice in delivery of Council services to those sections of the community.
who are disadvantaged as a result of race, colour or language and recommend actions which the Council could take:

a. To eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

b. To increase awareness within the ethnic minority community of public services and facilities provided by the City Council and other public bodies and authorities.

c. To encourage the use of those services and facilities by the ethnic minority community including where necessary adaptation or special provision to meet identified needs.

d. To provide opportunities for the views of the ethnic minority community to be taken into account by the City Council on all matters which directly or indirectly impact upon the ethnic minority community.

e. To identify training or skills needs within the ethnic minority community and to assist in the establishment of necessary courses to meet those needs.

f. To otherwise meet the identified needs of the ethnic minority community within the City.

11. The Forum shall also periodically review the Council's Equal Opportunities policy and report thereon to the Personnel and Organisation Development Committee in relation to any proposed amendments to the Policy.

12. All members of the Forum be entitled to include items on the Agenda of the Forum by giving not less than 14 days' notice to the Head of Democratic Services prior to the next meeting of the Forum.