

All Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities

Date: 11 December 2012

Venue: Room 115, Parliament Buildings

In Attendance:

Political Representatives

Bronwyn McGahan (Sinn Fein), Anna Lo (Alliance), Kate Nicholl (researcher with Anna Lo), Nuala McLernon (political advisor to Bronwyn McGahan)

BME Sector Representatives

Kristyene Boreland (World Wide Women @North Down), Sylvia Ogonda (World Wide Women @ North Down), Johnson Soronnadi (Nigerian Association Northern Ireland), James Holmlund (Baha'i Council for Northern Ireland), Sophie Romantsoff (NICEM), Karen McLaughlin (NICEM), Helena Macormac (NICEM-Secretariat), Elizabeth Nelson (NICEM-Secretariat)

Other Representatives

Paul Gill (Clerk, Committee for Standards and Privileges), Hilary Bogle (Assistant Clerk, Committee for Standards and Privileges)

Apologies

Political Representatives

Danny Kinahan (UUP), David McIlveen (DUP)

BME Sector Representatives

Katy Radford (Belfast Jewish Community), Frances Wong (Oi Yin Women's Group), Phoebe Wong (Oi Yin Women's Group), Paul Yam (Wah Hep Chinese Community Association), Justin Kouame (NICRAS), Eileen Chan-Hu (Chinese Welfare Association), Joan McGovern (Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha)

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting – approved**
- 3. Matters arising from the last meeting**
 - a. Update from meeting of MLAs:**
 - i.** Paul Gill from the Committee for Standards and Privileges introduced himself and said the Chair had requested him to come and give an overview of the rules and regulations regarding membership of APGs. His role as the Clerk of the Standards and Privileges Committee means he is often asked to give advice and clarification to MLAs.
 - ii.** The current rules regarding APGs were agreed in 2010 after consultation with MLAs and existing APGs. They decided to change the structure. Previously there were All Party Groups and All Party Assembly Groups; however new rules state that APGs can only have MLAs as memberships.
 - iii.** Two reasons for this:

1. If third parties are able to be members, it is possible to reach a decision that is not reflective of the majority of MLAs
 2. Assembly can put in place rules for MLAs regarding conduct, but cannot do so for third parties, so could poorly reflect on the integrity of the Assembly
- iv. Third parties can be associated with APGs, and are welcome at the discretion of the MLAs that are members, to come to meetings, provide support, etc. This, however, does not make them 'members' of the APG
1. Helena Macormac mentioned that the Terms of Reference for the APG on Ethnic Minority Communities referred to third parties as 'invitees,' not as members. She asked if these Terms of Reference were discussed at the MLA meeting, and whether or not they complied, as they were drafted by the MLAs from this APG and had been developed and amended in line with regulations over a number of years.
 2. Paul replied that he could comment on the TOR in specific, just on the rules generally for APGs. APGs decide their objective and inform the Standards and Privileges Committee, which regulates APGs to ensure they are not undertaking any commercial enterprises. How the group functions is a matter for itself, within the parameters set for APGs.
 - a. Members must be from 3 designated groupings of the assembly
 - b. Must have a yearly AGM
 - c. Aside from that, S&P not telling APGs how often to meet, what to work on, etc
- v. Anna Lo asked to clarify that membership is only for MLAs, and that third parties can come and go
1. Paul replied that third parties can attend as long as the APG wants them to, they can. The rules are not designed to reduce flexibility but to protect the integrity of the Assembly
- vi. AL mentioned that the issue of invitees has been an issue of concern for this APG from the very beginning. Could Paul suggest any solutions for us? The criteria for 'membership' had been established; but it seems that others think the APG is acting as a 'gatekeeper,' but if we stick to our established criteria for invitees, then some won't be eligible to attend. Should we set these aside and open it to anyone?
1. PG mentioned that he can't suggest anything specifically. It is for the MLA members to decide. Once decided it is not set in stone, but is up to members (MLAs).
- vii. Bronwyn McGahan suggested that the MLAs need to have another meeting to go over this.

- viii. AL asked for a copy of the criteria. She explained this has been a very divisive issue and she welcomed the move by the Chair to focus on MLA membership.
- ix. Michelle Byrne asked if political representatives for MLAs could for on their behalf
 - 1. PG said rules weren't clear on this; however only MLAs can vote, but it is possible that a representative could inform the APG of an MLA's vote. This would be up to the APG itself to regulate.
- x. James Holmlund explained that he agreed with Anna Lo's assessment. He also wanted to draw attention to the long history of this APG and its direct involvement with BME communities. He explained he is happy with the idea of the MLAs taking the lead, but hopes they will continue to place due importance on the APG and on the issues, and for it to remain a priority.

b. Health and Social Care: Transforming Your Care Consultation

- i. Karen McLaughlin explained that health and social care is a big issue which the MLAs will be aware of, and that there are changes coming. The consultation deadline for this particular policy is 15 January. NICVA is holding a roundtable event on the issue on Tuesday 18 December for all to attend. This consultation is based on a review of health and social care, and fits in with the Fit and Well consultation that was out earlier this year. Access to health and social care has been an ongoing issue of note for the APG, and Karen welcomed anyone who wanted to work collaboratively on this issue to get in touch
- ii. BMcG said that she supported KMcL on this issue; it is a big area, and we need local people to shape policy on the issue
- iii. AL asked if there were any major issues in the proposals for BME communities
 - 1. KMcL explained that the proposals don't actually tackle tough issues like access. We know that there will be ongoing and upcoming issues like enforcement of paying for health care for those who are not habitually resident in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission has done some work on this. She also explained that the DHSSPS Minister would soon be issuing guidelines on the issue. We also know that health care will likely be hit by upcoming cuts, and of course new immigration rules impact this area as well. There are concerns that this will combine to discourage people from seeking health care they need, for fear of being asked to pay or being reported to the UKBA
- iv. AL asked if this was something that the APG could submit to
 - 1. BMcG agreed, and the APG could work with KMcL on it

2. AL suggested that KMcL compile a draft of key points on major issues and circulate to MLAs before the next meeting **ACTION POINT**
3. BMcG also suggested that people could send their views to KM for her to incorporate into the consultation, and that she should set a deadline for this as the deadline for the consultation was fast approaching **ACTION POINT**
4. KMcL said she would circulate the draft in the first week of January, before the next APG meeting
5. BMcG suggested it be kept to 2-3 pages. KM said she would highlight key impacts
- v. Sylvia Ogonda drew the APG's attention to page 5 where mental health care was set out, and suggested there should be further clarification on what is meant by early intervention, and what that will look like.
 1. KMcL said that the initial proposals are very broad, and it is difficult to know the specifics at this point. She would be in touch with SO regarding this
 2. SO explained that mental health is a very broad area, and that NI is behind others in provisions. There is no established system here like there is in England and Scotland. There are also funding issues.
- vi. BMcG also mentioned that the changes coming with Welfare Reform will have a significant impact on the BME community, and this is very concerning

c. Human Trafficking Update

- i. HMac explained that the Chatham House rules roundtable in November was a joint initiative of our APG and the APG on Human Trafficking. It was well attended, with DOJ officials and key stakeholders. It was a useful initial conversation, and led to a number of recommendations including the establishment of a specialist lawyer's group and a follow-up session in the new year
- ii. AL echoed that it was a positive event

4. Agency Workers

- a. Motion Debate: HMac explained that in June of this year a motion debate was submitted on the back of the Filipino research and deficiencies in the law around agency workers. It was suggested that the motion be reissued as it appeared to be stalled.
 - i. BMcG indicated this should be followed up on
 - ii. AL asked who originally submitted it
 - iii. HMac explained it was David McIlveen but had cross-party support
- b. Minority Rights Now: Elizabeth Nelson explained that NICEM's policy magazine would be published next week and would focus on agency workers.
- c. UKREN Seminar: HMac explained that the UK Race in Europe Network's role was to raise awareness of the impact of EU legislation

and impact on race information. The seminar would take place on 17 January 2013, and registrations could be sent to EN of the secretariat. It would focus on agency workers as well

- i. AL mentioned that it was good to have NI chosen as a destination; HMac explained the last time this happened was 5-6 years ago

5. AOB

- a. NICRAS Christmas Party Monday 17 December from 5-8 in the City Church, Belfast, all welcome
- b. Eileen Chan Hu passed on that there was a BME Sub Group under the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership which was co-chaired by herself and Paul Yam on a rotating six-monthly basis. She suggested that someone from the group should be asked by the APG to present at a forthcoming meeting. It was decided that the APG would be in touch regarding this **ACTION POINT**
- c. Work on the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ongoing; NICEM was running focus groups and encouraged groups to get involved. There is also a CEDAW blog which can be accessed via our website.
- d. NICEM has published its yearly benchmark of the UK government's progress on the Concluding Observations issued by the CERD committee after its examination last year. Many of the issues highlighted are key ones that the APG has been focusing on and therefore may be interesting and relevant for MLAs and stakeholders alike. This can also be accessed via NICEM's website.

6. Date of Next Meeting

This should be Tuesday 8 January, but the Assembly is not back from Christmas recess, so it was suggested to move this to **Tuesday 15 January** instead