

## **Meeting of the All Party Assembly Group (APAG) on Ethnic Minority Communities**

Date: Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010  
Venue: Parliament Buildings, Stormont (Room 274)  
Time: 12:30pm

### **Attendees**

#### *Political Representatives:*

Chair - Declan O'Loan MLA (SDLP), Billy Leonard MLA (Sinn Fein), Anna Lo MLA (Alliance Party), Stewart Finn (PUP).

#### *BME Sector Representatives:*

Muhammad Al-Qaryooti (Belfast Islamic Centre), Chris McAfee (NICEM), Helena Macormac (NICEM), Patrick Yu (NICEM), James Holmlund (Baha'i Community), Barry Fitzpatrick (NICEM), Sophie Romantsoff (NICEM), Hanaa Ibrahim (Egyptian Society), Eddis Nicholl (NICEM), Margaret Donaghy (MCRC), Joan McGovern (Barnardos Tuar Ceatha), Paul Yam (Wah Hep Chinese Association), Keting Yan (Mandarin Speakers Association).

Denise Rainey, Uel McMath, Robert Beatty and Laura Marshall (Census Office NISRA)

### **1. Apologies**

#### *Political Representatives:*

Dawn Purvis MLA (PUP).

#### *BME Sector Representatives:*

Edwin Graham (Baha'i Council NI), Katy Radford (Belfast Jewish Community), Ivaylo Cankov (Bulgarian Association NI), Moira McCombe (NICRAS), Roman Vilkovic (Czech and Slovak Association), Eileen Chan Hu (Chinese Welfare Association).

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### **3. Matters arising from the last meeting**

- Membership of the APAG

The meeting heard the secretariat was preparing materials to facilitate the review of APAG membership, participation and achievements. It was agreed this would be discussed at the June meeting of the APAG. Billy Leonard asked what action been taken in relation to the SEEDS group in Derry? It was agreed for the APAG to send a letter asking SEEDS to outline their work in a written submission.

- Crisis fund motion update

The meeting heard the secretariat would follow up with the DUP and UUP to confirm their approach to the motion debate. It was agreed that if there was a positive response from these parties the secretariat would liaise with the Chair and Anna Lo to have the motion placed for debate. It was agreed if the motion was not going ahead the APAG would discuss how to take this issue forward at future meetings. Anna informed the meeting she would be asking a question to the Minister for Finance and Personnel in the Assembly next week on the use of the Migration Impact Fund in Northern Ireland.

- Human Trafficking

Patrick Yu told the meeting he had contacted the NI Human Rights Commission that has formal powers of investigation for those victims of human trafficking. Patrick told the meeting that where cases of human trafficking were identified they could be referred to NI Human Rights Commission. Jim Holmlund asked if it would be possible to have a presentation from the PSNI to get an idea of the wider context? Patrick said the seminar organised by the APAG last year gave a lot of information on this matter and suggested to invite representatives from PSNI and Women's Aid to attend the September meeting to give a refresher on this information.

Margaret said it would be useful if the NIHRC could attend the meeting to establish a clear protocol of referral for suspected human trafficking cases. Billy said it was important to recognise the practicalities on the ground and to look at the broader role of the PSNI rather than just one section of it. It was agreed to discuss this matter further at the September meeting of the APAG.

#### **4. Census 2011 Presentation**

The meeting welcomed Denise Rainey, Robert Beatty, Uel McMath and Laura Marshall from the Census Office. Robert gave the meeting an overview of the census process outlined the main themes of community liaison for the census:

- Awareness of the census,
- Education on the benefits and uses of the Census,
- Language,
- Literacy and assistance
- Accessibility.

Robert told the meeting they planned to use translation guidance booklets and doorstep interpretation when required as well as special enumeration procedures for communal establishments. Robert told the meeting the translation guidance booklets would be available in 15 languages and doorstep interpretation would be available for over 60 languages. Robert outlined there would be online help centre set up to provide assistance with the census as well as contact centres.

Declan asked if the questionnaire itself would be translated and Robert said it would not be translated but the translated guide would have the full list of

questions. Keting Yan asked how these booklets could be distributed through community groups and Uel said the booklets would be available for download from the website and paper copies could be given to community groups as needed.

Declan asked how people will be informed that translated booklets were available? Laura said it was intended to include this information with the pack posted out with the census.

Margaret asked about those people who could not write in English. Robert said that most of the questionnaire is organised in tick boxes and those answers written in a language other than English would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Uel also said that members of the public could ask for an interpreter to accompany a census fieldworker. Billy highlighted the possibility of using social networking websites to assist publicity and Laura said this was something that was being considered.

Anna said it was important ethnic minority organisation are involved and highlighted the possibility of gathering people together at one time as an effective way of reaching communities. Robert told the meeting the process of community liaison has just begun and it was intended to meet with as many groups as possible. Jim said it would be useful to look at what had been done in England, Scotland and Wales in terms of engaging communities.

Patrick said if the translation is more about accessibility, the involvement of the communities is the big challenge. It is important that each organisation get the community involved. It is also important for the census team to consider recruiting ethnic minority workers who will be present on the ground to help individuals.

## **5. OFMDFM Restructuring**

The meeting noted that officials from OFMDFM had presented to the APAG about restructuring earlier this year. The meeting noted there was now more information available on the restructuring following the presentation made to the OFMDFM Committee. It was agreed to ask the new head of the Equality Directory to give a short presentation at the June meeting.

## **6. Group Presentations**

- Wah Hep Chinese Community Association

The Wah Hep Chinese Association was established as an independent organisation in 1999. The group is based in Craigavon, with members coming from Hong Kong, Vietnam and Mainland China.

The aim of the organisation is to unite the Chinese community in the southern area. Wah Hep means “self help” and it is the central value of the organisation and relates to helping the Chinese community to become active members of the wider community through helping each other. The organisation promotes and celebrates Chinese cultures and traditions, works for rights and equality,

for the Chinese community to be active citizens and to be able to make their own choices and decisions and make sure all are treated as equals. The organisation works for unity between different Chinese communities and integration with the wider community.

Wah Hep provides the following services:

- Wah Hep centre which provides vital information to the Chinese and wider community.
- Anti-racial and cultural awareness training.
- Interpretation and health advocacy services.
- A meeting place for the statutory agencies, the wider community and ethnic communities.
- Adult English classes
- Chinese 50+ ageing well group.
- A Chinese library facility
- Host of traditional cultural festival
- Chinese schools, after school clubs and youth club.
- Home visits for most needy and vulnerable elderly members of the Chinese community.
- Workshops and clinics concerning statutory services.
- Mother and toddler group.

The organisation has received funding from the OFMDFM to support Asian-Muslim individuals and is also involved in the Belong project.

- Mandarin Speakers Association

The Mandarin Speakers Association was set up in 2000, with most of its members coming from Mainland China and Hong Kong. The organisation is working towards the promotion of Chinese culture and the integration into the wider community. Mandarin Speakers Association also works for equity of treatment and to promote tolerance and good community relations. They provide the community with support and advocacy, organise English classes, women's group activities, offer anti-racism seminars and other trainings to their members. The organisation also works with the Chinese Embassy to facilitate a visa and passport service. The Mandarin Speakers Association also holds cultural events for Chinese New Year, works on arts projects in schools and participates to local events like the Queen's Film Festival. The main issue currently facing the organisation is a lack of funding.

The organisation has office rentals costs to cover and already asked the landlord to reduce the rent. Two members of staff who were funded by the Arts Council recently had to leave.

Anna asked if the organisation considered working with other groups such as the Chinese Welfare Association. It was answered that yes.

## **7. AOB**

- The meeting thanked Chris McAfee for his work in providing secretariat for the group.
- Paul Yam thanked members of the group for their help over the years as he was recently awarded an MBE.

## **8. Date of the next meeting**

Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2010, 12pm for 12:30 start (lunch to be provided)  
Venue: Room 144, Parliament Buildings, Stormont