

All Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities

Date: Tuesday 13 May 2014

Time: 15.30

Venue: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

In Attendance

Political representatives

Anna Lo (Alliance – Chair), Claire Sugden (Independent), Bronwyn McGahan (Sinn Féin), Chris Lyttle (Alliance), Robin Newton (DUP)

BME sector representatives

Elizabeth Nelson (NICEM-Secretariat), Kristyene Boreland (World Wide Women @ North Down), Maria Lourenco (World Wide Women @ North Down), James Holmlund (Baha'i NI), Patrick Yu (NICEM-Secretariat), Aleksandra Lojek (Belfast Migrant Centre), Helena Macormac (NICEM-Secretariat), Sophie Romantsoff (NICEM-Secretariat), Paul McGlinchey (NICEM)

Other representatives

Andy Moorhead (East Belfast Alternatives), Colin Robinson (Northern Ireland Alternatives),

The Chair welcomed Claire Sugden to her first meeting as a new MLA after the sad passing of David McClarty.

1. Apologies

Nick Cassidy (Omagh Ethnic Community Support Group), Joan McGovern (Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha), Fidelma McCoy (Armagh Traveller's Support Group)

2. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting - approved

3. Matters arising from the last meeting

Racial Equality Strategy: Patrick Yu had spoken to Ken Fraser and updated that no new draft yet on RES; anticipated date as per Ken Fraser from OFMDFM is end of this month or next. Cited racist hate attacks as delay. Chair inquired whether this would not be an impetus to complete sooner. She asked what the timeline for the RES was. PY reported that the Racial Equality Panel had been told end of March at the December meeting. There was a discussion around the changes identified by the Panel at its last meeting and the delay in delivery. Chair asked if members agreed to

write to First and deputy First Ministers to inquire about the progress of the RES. This was agreed **ACTION POINT**.

4. Upsurge in race hate crime

PSNI

Chair welcomed guests from Alternatives and PSNI; Chief Inspector Emma Bond from Policing with the Community and Chief Superintendent Mark McKeown from South and East Belfast. Chair inquired about a taskforce being created to address race hate crime; MMcK explained it wasn't a taskforce per se but additional resources and a specific Operation Reiner, an additional team of detectives.

MMcK indicated there has been an increase of 74 race hate crimes in South and East Belfast (year-end figures); since end of March 215 hate incidents; 88 classified as race hate. B District (South, East and City centre) represents most diverse community in NI and is possible why majority of incidents occur there. Clear investigative strategy; work closely with partners; support for victims. Keen to develop partnership working, particularly through Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. No policing solution to hate crime – PSNI approach with rigour and take seriously, but need to do more with the community; solution lies within community. Looking at best practice, community networks, education; bring these issues to PCSPs.

Emma Bond explained that hate crime has been made a strategic priority for PSNI for 2014; means an added degree of focus and attention, managed on day-to-day level, Chief Superintendent Chris Noble overall responsibility. EB coordinates operational matters with Cheryl Ross. Looking at preventative actions, exploiting available information especially because investigation of these crimes difficult; monitor compliance against objectives. Looking at public confidence and how to build, how to communicate. Mentioned issues around feeding through to the press and how to do that in better partnership with communities. Greater focus within PSNI brings greater degree of accountability and ensures resources go to where greater need is. Currently need within greater Belfast, but not going to lose sight of other areas of Northern Ireland.

Chair agreed that emphasis should be on prevention before incidents. Bronwyn McGahan asked for clarification regarding when it was a priority in Local Policing Plan and NI Policing Board level; EB explained that there are targets within NIPB Policing Board around outcome levels; reviewed on six-monthly basis. BMcG noted that it is also a big issue in Dungannon as well; perhaps less reported upon. Chair asked if there was a target for clearance rate on race hate crime. EB said outcome rate has only been 8.3%; part of the challenge is around investigative lead; this is why we prefer increased attention on prevention. Important to look at all angles as even available figures likely on tip of the iceberg. MMcK explained PSNI aware of underreporting. Schemes available to support victims like cameras for their homes. Working to examine social media for any leads; working with PPS regarding threshold for prosecution on social media statements.

Danny Kinahan asked if PSNI works closely with politicians to encourage reporting. MMcK explained they do work with a number of groups including the local councils. Hope that increase in reporting has been a part of increased confidence. EB mentioned Hate and Signal Crime Officers present in local communities and their role in connecting communities and PSNI and making sure as much information feeds through as possible.

Chair mentioned Advocate Scheme and whether that has encouraged reporting. EB replied that feedback has been very positive around Advocate Scheme; helps inform PSNI preventative efforts and give reassurance and visibility. PSNI have learned from contact with Advocate Scheme. Looking at develop a 'wrap-around' approach to hate crime.

Chair inquired about ACC Will Kerr's assertion that there may be UVF involvement. MMcK responded that there was some intelligence regarding this. Operations in East Belfast targeting organized criminality which have been very successful. Issue of race hate crime much more complex than one organisation's involvement. Not only about education and encouraging community cohesion around host community, but also intra-community friction.

NI Alternatives

Colin Robinson began with background:

- Community safety and restorative justice focus. Crime as broken relationship between victim, perpetrator and local community. Fragmented relations particularly relevant for hate crime
- Encountering same problems with hate crime across Belfast; office in N Belfast dealing with as well. Not reported from other areas in same way
- Working closely with partners about taking a more strategic view of hate crime rather than simply condemning. Society in general must start taking responsibility
- Resources must be available to implement strategy
- Important to note, particularly regarding UVF, that they come from somewhere and could not 'get away with' attacks such as these without some degree of tolerance from within local community. Need to address fears and misconceptions and work with communities

Chair reiterated that promoting community understanding, tolerance, providing environment for host community to see newcomers as their neighbors. A lot of misinformation heightening tensions. Need collective effort from all aspects of society.

Chris Lyttle suggested there is perhaps a bit of both; elements within communities that do require robust responses from law enforcement. Inquired about campaign to connect politicians, communities, etc; create safe vehicle to address these issues. Clear, visible united response needed. Discussion around this. MMcK emphasized

that this must be about community cohesion; long-term efforts. PCSPs may be good vehicle for this. Discussion around this. DK mentioned difficulty in having discussions with those actually behind this; gives an opportunity to discuss needs, concerns and issues and develop responses. CL confirmed that this can be constructive. Discussion around this.

PY drew the APG's attention to NICEM's press release regarding attacks in East Belfast. Similarities to incidents in 2004; no work done with local community when migrants began moving there. Impact of negative reporting and need to 'contain' the media, as reporting of hate crime can in some respects lead to more attacks; this is what occurred in 2004. Need to examine nature of hate crime, it's about prejudice and cuts across different spectrums and nationalities of people. Community responses more important. Need leadership and responsibility from politicians. Need to emphasize strategic thinking and linking with communities, not knee-jerk responses. Cannot be 'outsider' response to community issues, must be communities themselves. High-level and high-profile meetings can drive the issue in the wrong direction.

Andy Moorhead:

- Hurtful for communities and community workers that media have picked up solely on East Belfast, when South and North are statistically higher
- Work very closely with NICEM, particularly Advocates
- Fully support Advocacy project, though it is unfortunately often crisis management after the fact
- East Belfast Ethnic Minority Support Network doing positive work but not in receipt of any resources to deal with responses to attacks
- Very few resources in East Belfast to proactively target opinions and attitudes. Some initiatives have only addressed those who already want to participate, not those who need to hear the message
- Media comments unhelpful and hurtful. Community came together quickly after 1 May attacks to release statement, not picked up by the media but taken forward by Robin Newtown MLA. Serious concerns about the reasoning behind media reports of attacks in East Belfast
- Alternatives schools programs, not targeting individual offenders, but groups of young people who may be developing particular views. Partnership with wide variety of organizations, outreach with ethnic minority individuals. Discussion around historical Irish migration also makes impact. Important to get to young people at a young age.
- Concerns around underreporting; many victims do not want police involved due to fear of repercussions.
- Media often on the scene when there are incidents before community workers and advocates are aware. Coming from social media. This needs to stop; media should not be the first on the scene. Need to find way to address this.
- East Belfast PCSP focusing on hate crime.

- Need to strategically distribute resources; train people and put them on the ground to support this type of work

Chair inquired about resources available to PCSPs; emphasis on working directly with communities; mythbusting. AM mentioned ICTU booklet that focused on mythbusting; there is existing good practice so not a questions of reproducing but of using again.

PY emphasized the resource issue in addressing hate crime. Need long-term strategy with associated resources, from OFMDFM Good Relations and MEDF. Too much blaming going on without the work happening. Again emphasized work must come from the communities. Issues around accessing the funding that is available. Discussion around this.

AM reiterated that there is a willingness within communities to work on the issue, and have been doing so. PY stated this emphasized the difference between short-term and long-term strategies. Chair mentioned that RES should be long-term strategy.

Phoebe Wong (Oi Yin Women's Group) asked about underreporting and what was being done to address this; some local initiatives that have been successful using social media. MMCK mentioned PSNI media strategy that does incorporate social media but will look at this further, particularly in Belfast. Have been doing outreach within the community; for example through Polish Saturday School, churches, etc to encourage reporting. EB explained always seeking good practice on these issues to share amongst branches. Discussion around this. Chair suggested more prosecutions and subsequent convictions might add to community confidence in reporting. EB agreed, and suggested that even where prosecution wasn't possible police should feed back to the victim what the process was and why this outcome happened so they know everything was done.

Aleksandra Lojek explained that HIPA scheme only helps with repair of windows, etc. Cameras are in high demand from victims but resources don't exist to give one to everyone. Advocates aren't as knowledgeable regarding procedures of PSNI; role is very victim-centered, ensuring they feel supported, understood, respected and have a real contact with all statutory bodies and community groups. Crucial for the victim to also be supported by the local communities; wide role for Advocates. Through this, slowly building confidence in PSNI. Can't underestimate or under-appreciate the role of the community workers; victims want to feel they are accepted and supported by their local communities.

Chair thanked the guests for their input. Suggested APG would keep looking at the issue and bring them back to address any progress **ACTION POINT**

DK asked if APG should look at inviting editors of newspapers to something, present to them and work to get them on our side. Chair suggested press might not respond

to attending meeting, suggested drafting a letter to editors outlining concerns
ACTION POINT.

Maria Lourenco inquired about Good Relations Funding and who to approach; CL explained local councils have Good Relations Funding; Chair mentioned OFMDFM as well. Some issues with distribution and administration. Discussion around this.

CL suggested public meetings or public events to further engage with the communities and ensure we're doing everything we can. Chair explained APG can also write to TBUC group regarding funding for initiatives to tackle race hate crime. PY explained there is a lot of administrative delay currently. Chair suggested looking to remit of TBUC and writing letter **ACTION POINT**

CL suggested need to also support a wide range of events, encouraged community groups to apply for funding for these types of initiatives. Need to encourage and support this type of activity. ML mentioned upcoming Africa Week; can get people who want to get involved and attend, but problem is the funding. CL said APG should support this and should also try to do these types of things in areas where incidents are taking place.

PY drew the APG's attention to The Belonging Project Roundtable and exhibition and how it highlights the stories of migrants. Several different outreach activities attached to this. Hope to bring to E Belfast as part of efforts to tackle race hate crime and discuss difficult issues with local communities.

Chair asked if APG would like to issue press statement regarding today's meeting, who met with and actions coming out. Agreed **ACTION POINT**

CL asked about whether others would support Unite Against Hate. PY outlined some of the concerns of some groups about Unite Against Hate, particularly a lack of identified targets and outcomes. It focuses more on networking and asking for support, but does not actually link those groups that are on the ground working, influencing the local people. Money going to activities that do not go to grassroots work. Also concerns around previous procurement process for Unite Against Hate. Need to be very specific and targeted in our responses and resources. CL stated still need a vehicle to communicate with the community. PY suggested it's better to consult with the community on choosing a name and direction for the campaign rather than imposing. If the community doesn't have ownership of efforts they will reject it. CL asked how this might happen. PY explained asking groups like East Belfast Ethnic Minority Support to consult and work locally. CL suggested understanding beyond just those streets. Alojek explained understanding tended to be located in communities where hate crime was not occurring, and did not necessarily connect to working class communities in the same way; same with events. Important to consult them and listen to them, give them the power to decide what happens in their communities. ML also mentioned that too many events associated required participants to pay in and this is not feasible. CL stated the

problem is appropriate engagement rather than name or title of engagement; need widespread attitudinal change. Shocking that people are shocked that racism exists in our society, extends far and wide and we need to not be afraid of stating what the problem is. Take on board feelings around why Unite Against Hate was inadequate; but do need something that connects to everybody. Resources for United Against Hate came from DOJ, PSNI, OFMDFM. PY emphasized can't just be police, CL suggested OFMDFM, discussion around this. Too much top-down work instead of focusing on the community. Emphasis on ability to embrace difference.

DK asked about possibility for NICEM to create brief for politicians to disseminate throughout party, councilors, etc **ACTION POINT**

CL: Serious issues, etc etc local communities; fear of difference; courage to stand up

AL: Problem to address racism because of sectarianism - DISCUSSION

James Holmlund emphasized need to be aware of language when discussing these issues, i.e. don't use language of division (United *Against* Hate).

PW suggested the 'positive approach' aspect should be suggested to be written into the RES.

JH suggested going through OFMDFM Committee