

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY FORUM
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH 2019**

COUNCILLORS

- PRESENT** Susan Erbil, Ahmet Hasan and Hass Yusuf (Chair)
- ABSENT** Sinan Boztas, Mustafa Cetinkaya and Alessandro Georgiou
- OFFICERS:** Andy Ellis, Governance & Scrutiny Officer
Stacey Gilmour, Governance & Scrutiny Secretary

- Also Attending:** Julie Pal, CEO, CommUNITY Barnet
Tola Kolawole, Head of Wellbeing, CommUNITY Barnet
Angela Greaves, Enfield Connections Programme Manager
Louisa Boon, BSL Interpreter
Nana Yaa Badu, BSL Interpreter
Naomi Cherubin, Hands on Signer
Bibi DaLacey-Mould, Hands on Signer
Approximately 25 members of the public

**1
WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

Councillor Yusef welcomed all Councillors, attendees and speakers to the meeting. The BSL Interpreters and Hands on Signers were introduced.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mustafa Cetinkaya.

**2
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

**3
UPDATE FROM COMMUNITY BARNET**

RECEIVED an update from Tola Kolawole, Head of Wellbeing, CommUNITY Barnet on progress of the service to date.

NOTED:

- (i) Communication with Dial a Ride can be made via email, SMS and a small amount via RNID text.
- (ii) Deaf Awareness training will take place on 2nd April 2019 for all staff and volunteers that deliver Enfield Connection Services. This training will be provided by ENDIG and had been arranged and advertised via Simone at the Deaf Project.

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- (iii) As agreed at the last meeting of the Deaf Community Forum in December 2018, Tola and Angela met with Mary White on 17th January 2019 to discuss the various issues that had been raised at the Forum and how these could be addressed.
- (iv) Conversations had also been held with the Jewish Deaf Association and ideas and suggestions for good practice and partnership working with Enfield Disability Action (EDA) and Enfield Connections had been discussed. Conversations were also ongoing with the Sensory Impairment Team to look at better partnership working with them.

Following Tola's update the following questions and discussions took place:

- Following discussions held at the last meeting of the Forum Councillor Susan Erbil had met with Doug Wilson, Head of Strategy & Service Development, HHASC to seek some information and answers on the decision to award the contract to CommUNITY Barnet. Doug updated Councillor Erbil on some of the issues that had been present with the original contract with EDA and advised her on the procurement and bidding process which led to CommUNITY Barnet being awarded the 'Lot 6 Increased & Improved Information & Advice Contract'
- It had been felt that the existing service provided by the Deaf Project/EDA did not encourage independency and service users were therefore becoming too reliant on them. Enfield Connections provide a huge range of services which help to create independency rather than dependency on one service user.
- The current contract with CommUNITY Barnet is for a seven-year period. If, however it is deemed that the service provided is not adequate there is a three-year break clause within the seven years, then every two years thereafter, therefore allowing continual checks and reviews to take place.
- Julie Pal, Chief Executive, CommUNITY Barnet said that they are aware that the EDA are the Borough's disabilities experts and as such she hopes to commission the EDA to continue to deliver a service to the community.
- To date they have commissioned the EDA to continue to provide the Deaf Drop-In Service. There have been no changes to this service, it even has the same worker, yet it has only been used by nine deaf clients. Similarly, the various other services provided by Enfield Connections have only been used by a total of twenty-four deaf clients.
- When organising the drop-in services, the agreement was that the EDA would advertise them as they know the deaf community well, have great contacts and have the in-roads to engage with the community.
- Enfield Connections are very happy to be able to work in partnership with ENDIG on the upcoming Deaf Awareness training on 2nd April 2019 and will be looking to continue this work with them by arranging further training dates.
- Simone Rickard, EDA had worked with the deaf community for many years now and had also attended lots of the Forum meetings and was very disappointed that Enfield Council still do not seem to understand the problems faced by the deaf community. Many profoundly deaf

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people do not have the literacy skills required to access the many great organisations and services available so are continually at a disadvantage.

- She was also very disappointed with the answers given to Councillor Erbil's questions put to Doug Wilson. To say that the deaf community are 'babied' and too reliant on one service user is an insult. They cannot go anywhere else. The Deaf project is the only place they can go to and get seen straight away.
- Mary White went on to say that the Deaf Community Forum was originally set up as the deaf community could not attend the usual residents' Ward Forums as Enfield Council would not fund interpreters to be present at these meetings. The Deaf Community Forum meetings have now become a platform to champion the cause in an attempt that Councillors and Enfield Council recognise the challenges and stresses faced by the community due to the changes to the service provided.
- The general feeling of the deaf community was that as key service users they had not been listened to and consulted with and their voices had not been heard. They felt that just because they need different systems of communication it does not mean that they are 'babied' and again found it very insulting to be referred to in such a way. The deaf community felt that they are being totally failed by the council and the services they provide.
- Concerns were raised over the lack of services available to the deaf/blind community as Enfield Connections were not equipped to deal with this need. Enfield Council had promised the deaf community a like for like service when awarding the new contract to CommUNITY Barnet but unfortunately this was not the case, how could it be when no one at CommUNITY Barnet is trained in BSL? It was felt that the awarding of the contract had been based on cost alone and the needs of the deaf community had not been considered. The deaf community just want access to services like everyone else, but this is not happening.
- Julie Pal explained that CommUNITY Barnet had been awarded one of six contracts put out to transform access to the voluntary sector. The Council wanted increased and improved information and advice; to broaden ways that people can access information to make different life choices if they wished to. We have teamed up with ENDIG and used them as our channel to reach out to people through this trusted organisation.
- The Deaf Project Service had been excellent, and it was felt that you would not get a more cost-effective service than this. To try and get a service up and running to match what had previously been in place is never going to happen as this would involve Deaf Awareness and BSL training for all staff, partners and volunteers which would involve huge costs.
- The Chair said that unfortunately cost does come into any decision as the Council has had to make £80m of savings whilst continuing to do its best to provide services to all residents in Enfield. He emphasised that cuts had not been made from only one service centre and some very

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difficult decisions had been made relating to funding cuts across all council services.

- The Chair encouraged the deaf community to give CommUNITY Barnet a chance and to make better use of the services provided. In the meantime, the Chair assured everyone that himself and his fellow Councillors on the Forum would go away and hold conversations with senior council officers to address all the issues/concerns raised in an attempt to get some positive outcomes for the community.
- Frustrations were raised regarding the Citizen Advice Service. It was not provided by Enfield Connections and did not meet the needs of the deaf community. Angela advised that the service provided by CAB through the Deaf Project is commissioned by Enfield Connections therefore it was not correct to say that they did not provide the service. Mary explained that the service provided now was only once a month as opposed to 3/4 times per weeks previously. Also, Enfield Connections are having to fund an interpreter for these sessions so again this has not proven cost effective. Enfield Connections have not therefore complimented the service which was already in place in Enfield.
- Simone commented that it was very important for all Election information, policies, manifestos etc to be available in BSL as it is crucial for the deaf community to be fully informed when voting. The Chair and Members agreed the importance of this issue and would feed this back accordingly.
- In conclusion Julie said that CommUNITY Barnet potentially has a long relationship with the deaf community, and it would be nice to see at the end of three years (first part of contract) a real difference. She will take away from today the importance of raising understanding amongst the hearing community of the issues and challenges faced on a daily basis by the deaf community.
- The Chair thanked the deaf community for expressing their views so well and assured them once again that all the issues raised tonight would be fed back to senior council officers to ensure they were aware of the feelings of the deaf community.

4

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2018

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2018 subject to the following amendment:

Minute No:4 Update from Community Barnet- Page 4, Bullet Point:3

Should read:

The Chair, Councillor Georgiou advised the audience that the decision had now been made to award Lot 6, Increased & Improved Information & Advice Contract to CommUNITY Barnet. Once the contract expires all the points/concerns raised tonight can be argued again, but at the moment there is nothing legally that can be done to change the situation. For now, however

we all need to fight to ensure that the services provided are the best they can be.

5 FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The following items were suggested for future meetings:

- Further update and feedback from CommUNITY Barnet on the service to date.

6 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED that the dates of future meetings will be agreed at the meeting of Annual Council on 8 May 2019.

Everyone agreed that they very much wanted the Deaf Community Forum to continue as it was very important for the Deaf Community to have these meetings where they could discuss their issues and concerns with Councillors as well as hear about Council business etc. with Interpreters present.