

Commonwealth Area Focussed Association Meeting

Committee Room 2, Council House

25th November 2013, 17.30 -18.30

Attendees

Mike Murray	BCC (opening chair)
Heather Law	BCC
Derek Douglas	Commonwealth Diaspora
Keith Stokes-Smith	Honorary Consul for Lithuania (elected chair)
Falilatou Issa	Operation Black Vote
Winifred Agogo	Operation Black Vote
Subhash Rajani	BCC (Development)
Ness Cole	BCC (Youth Service)

Apologies

Clayton Shaw	Sampad
Piali Ray	Sampad
Mashuq Ally	BCC (Equalities)

1. Role / purpose of the Commonwealth Association

Agreement: Group agreed the Commonwealth mission statement:

“To promote and develop local government, business, education, cultural and other activity of mutual benefit between the people and organisations of Birmingham and counterparts within the Commonwealth.”

- Sir Albert Bore charged the European and International Affairs team with delivering the European and International strategy and joining up international activity in the city.
- Group expressed a desire to increase and draw benefit from activity between Birmingham and the Commonwealth.

2. Membership

- Group agreed that a broader range of sectors should be represented at the association.
- Group agreed that Birmingham's citizens heritage perspective should be reflected in the activity of the group.

ACTION: Mike to invite management consultants (business and universities) with Commonwealth country connections to future meetings. Take out and put on agenda of next meeting

3. Appointment of Chair/governance/frequency of meetings

Chair

- Group endorsed the appointment of Keith Stokes Smith, Honorary Consul for Lithuania. As immediate past President of the Birmingham Consular Association, Keith can draw on connections with trade bodies, MPs, MEPs, Higher Education Institutions and the Police to enhance the work of the group.

Governance

- The group agreed that rigid governance arrangements would not be appropriate and a more flexible approach would benefit the association.
- Task and finish groups (sub committees) may be appropriate for discreet pieces of association activity.

Frequency of meetings

- Group agreed that the frequency of meetings would be dependent upon the task in hand. Perhaps we should diarise them ?

4. Updates from members/ setting of priorities

Members updated the group on the activity they are pursuing in relation to the Commonwealth

- Derek Douglas presented the work of the Commonwealth-diaspora.org (see attached paper).
- Falilatou Issa, represents Operation Black Vote and chairs 'Birmingham Empowerment and Training in the City' helping women from BME communities engage socially outside their homes.

- Winifred Agogo, a trained lawyer, represents Operation Black Vote and works with many different organisations across the city including: Citizens Advice, Birmingham City Council's Democratic and Legal services, Wilson Stuart Sports Academy where she helped develop equality and diversity policies for the school, plus work with Birmingham's Councillors.
- Ness Cole, Birmingham City Council, works for East Birmingham Youth Service. The service is for 13-19 year olds and has a particular focus on 'NEETS' (not in education, employment or training) providing non-formal education outside school hours. Activity has included activity including youth exchanges with Johannesburg, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Activity by the service is keen to bring people together from different heritage backgrounds.
- Subhash Rajani, Birmingham City Council, Development, employment team. The city has a big focus on youth unemployment at the moment. BCC, Jobcentre Plus and the National Apprenticeship Service have secured £2 million to invest; encouraging employers to take on young people.
- Mike Murray, Birmingham City Council outlined his work on the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and Commonwealth Inclusive Cities network, plus highlighted Birmingham's work with Johannesburg (see attached paper).

ACTION: Group to produce a half page description of activity they are currently undertaking in relation to the Commonwealth, so synergies can be identified and the future direction of activity considered.

5. Distinctly Birminghamⁱ portal

- The Distinctly Birmingham portal/website will be ready in the New Year. It will help publicise the work of the association, publicise events/ activity having a Commonwealth focus as well as house all documents from our meetings and note contact details.

6. Date of next meeting/ venue?

The next meeting will be 27th January at 17.30hrs.

ⁱ Distinctly Birmingham is the branding for the European and International Strategy for Birmingham 2013-2016.