

Commonwealth Area Focussed Association Meeting

Committee Room 2, Council House

27th January 2014, 17.30 -19.00

Attendees

Mike Murray	BCC (European and International Affairs)
Heather Law	BCC (European and International Affairs)
Keith Stokes-Smith	Honorary Consul for Lithuania (elected chair)
Ness Cole	BCC (Youth Service)
Wade Lyn	Consul General for Jamaica
Sue Twells	BCC (Education)
Steve Ball	Birmingham Rep
Lloyd Broad	BCC (European and International Affairs)
Faisal Ahmed	Assistant High Commissioner for Bangladesh

Apologies

Piali Ray	Sampad
Mashuq Ally	BCC (Equalities)
Falilatou Issa	Operation Black Vote
Subhash Rajani	BCC (Development)
Alastair Little	Conservative MEP
Paul Noon	UKTI
Avi Lasarow	South Africa Honorary Consul
Jonathan Webber	Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
John Kirk	BCU
Cortina Butler	British Council

1. Apologies

- Apologies were given for those who weren't able to attend.

2. Introductions

- The group welcomed the new group members: Wade Lyn, Faisal Ahmed and Steve Ball.

3. Actions since last meeting

Chair

- Met with Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) today to see where we can add value particularly in Commonwealth countries. Keith made an offer to present the work of the group to PWC's client base.
- Has spoken with two law firms, but reported no commitment to further engagement.
- Has contacted Aston University and there will be a representative present at the next Commonwealth (CW).
- Will get in touch with three other Birmingham universities and encourage their participation at the next meeting.
- Has written to the Honorary Consuls for: South Africa; Bangladesh; Jamaica; India and Cyprus
- Has written to the High Commissioners in London and this is on-going.

ACTION: KSS to contact High Commissioners in London.

4. Updates from members

Faisal Ahmed:

- Keen to promote the interests of the Bangladeshi community in Birmingham.
- Keen to increase the participation of the same community in political life.
- There are approximately 80,000 Bangladeshis in Birmingham unofficially. Official statistics note there are about 40,000.

- Biman Bangladesh airlines will operate a direct flight from Birmingham to Dhaka.
- Has access to art works from London based arts centre which could be put on display in an appropriate venue yet to be identified in Birmingham.

Wade Lyn:

- Keen to promote social cohesion, create jobs and build import/export opportunities.
- Sending a delegation to Jamaica in April 2014 for a large food fair where various countries will exhibit.

Ness Cole:

- Used to have link with Johannesburg and would like to reinvigorate that link.
- An area of mutual interest could be young people and knife crime. We could share good practice on this.
- The youth service is currently undergoing a restructure and it will be even more devolved than its current status.
- Ness is leaving the service and our contact for future activity will be Mark Shaw.

Steve Ball:

- Now that Arts Fest has been wound down, the Birmingham Arts Partnership are committed to host a large scale event in 2015 to coincide with the rugby world cup. This may involve a link up with other global arts organisations. There is a commitment to focussing on outdoor arts as this is an area we could do better in. Public lighting is also an area where improvements could be made.

Sue Twells:

- Schools in districts contain the next generation plus bring access to parents with world-wide connections.
- There are 40+ nationalities in schools and this presents a huge pool of opportunity.

- We can engage with the Birmingham Education Partnership which is led by Head Teachers, with the local authority, museum and Birmingham music service as partners.
- Schools could host the paintings.

Mike Murray

- The Johannesburg collaboration is focussing on: city management; social cohesion; place based deprivation where expertise resides in Johannesburg.
- There is an opportunity for the group to work towards in September 2015 – Commonwealth and Local Government Forum (CLGF), Delhi meeting, have a slot in their biannual meeting (attended by heads of state; city mayors and other dignitaries) to highlight Birmingham’s contribution to the agenda. Their primary focus is: how we can improve services for youth and disadvantaged people.

5. Website update

The proposed launch of the website will take place at the end of February. This is an opportunity for everyone to promote their latest news and events and help us join up activity happening across the city.

ACTION: Please email: distinctly@birmingham.gov.uk with your contributions

1. Event name
2. Event date
3. Event description
4. Contact name, organisation, telephone number and/or e-mail address
5. Any related documents e.g. flyers
6. Pictures (including a very short description of what can be seen in it; author (whoever has the rights on that picture e.g. the photographer and whether we need to give credit) → Please note that the person who is providing the picture needs to have all the rights to allow us to distribute the picture).

News:

1. An article (150-400 words)
2. Pictures (see above)
3. A note whether the author’s name is to be mentioned

Videos can also be uploaded with a short description provided

6. Mind mapping – how to capitalise on opportunities

Agreement by the group to have four distinct areas of activity:

- Education
- Community/faith issues
- Trade/business
- Culture, Arts and Sport

ACTION Steve Ball agreed to take forward the cultural agenda of the group with Birmingham Arts Partnership.

ACTION Mike Murray to discuss how to take forward the trade/business agenda with Jonathan Webber at the Chamber.

Education: encompasses schools; HE and FE/skills development. We should identify who has access to more than one of these. Cllr Bridget Jones is keen to progress the schools agenda. Jo Andrews, BCU may be able to help on this.

7. Date of next meeting

In a month's time in the subgroups

8. Any other business

None