

WREC AGM Five Monthly Report, July 2007 and CEHR update

Contributed by WiltsREC Staff
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Click through to read our previous Chairman's report, our Treasurer's report and a detailed summary of the EHRC's latest activities.

Chairman's ReportThe last year has been busy, challenging and successful. Also the unexpected departure of our previous Director Joe Sang in November created both difficulties and opportunities. Because the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) no longer funds Director posts, we have not as yet been able to appoint a Director and so instead the staff team have become more efficient and versatile. We were however able to support them by employing an extra worker for two days per week. The departure of Joe Sang has however allowed WREC to review and improve the way it works with clients. Management, supervision and monitoring systems are much improved and I am confident that our current statistics are rigorous and testable. Communication, attendance at meetings and contact with stakeholders has also improved. Governance is better and the relationship between Trustees (Executive Committee) and staff is good. We would like to thank all members and stakeholders who participated in meetings arranged with Imagine Consulting. Imagine will be presenting their WREC Development Plan and Report to a meeting of the Joint Funders on 20th July and we will keep you as fully informed of their recommendations as we can. Another key event that will affect all our futures is the establishment of the Commission for Equalities and Human Rights (CEHR) in October 2007. It will be a single body underpinning legislation on race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age and human rights. The government has said that individuals will have easier access to help and support and that businesses will have access to improved advice and information. In response to this new climate many RECs, us included, are considering the possibility of becoming a Diversity Council, improving their partnership working or thinking of merging with other diversity organisations. Finally I would like to thank all staff, trustees, member, funders and stakeholders for supporting the vital work that WREC does so well and ask you to consider joining us as a member or trustee if you have not already done so. Stephen Carey FCIPD Treasurer's Report 2006/2007 was a difficult year financially. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) withdrew its funding of the Director's post, approximately £35,000 and we were only able to secure £20,000 specific contract work from the CRE to replace it. Fortunately we had managed to build up our reserves in anticipation of the loss of funding of the Director's post. During the year the Director left the organisation and although this reduced our costs it did mean that plans to generate additional income were put on hold. The out-turn of the year shows a reduction in our reserves of £24,697 to closing reserves of £50,438. Salisbury District Council decided to withdraw from the Joint Service Level Agreement (SLA) which means a reduction in funding of £7,000 in 2007/2008 from the Joint Funders (WCC, WPCT and the District Councils). Our current SLA expires on 31/3/2008 and we are presently in negotiation with our Joint Funders on our future funding needs. We also have a number of other smaller SLAs and contracts with other bodies such as the Wiltshire Police which finance other aspects of our vital work. Douglas Ross M.A. C.A. Acting Directors Report Since November 2006 the following interim structure has been in place: Abdel Boutarfas - Acting Director/Racial Equality Officer
 Carl Davis - Racial Equality Officer/Community Care Worker
 Simon Bees - Gypsy Traveller/ Community Care Worker
 Vivien Maidment remains as our Office Manager. On behalf of all the staff, we would like to express our appreciation of our Chairman and the executive committee. The new executive committee chaired by Stephen Carey have taken major steps to facilitate the many changes made, and they have taken part in many funders' meetings. Many changes have been implemented to improve Wiltshire Racial Equality Councils working practices, procedures and policies. This is a process that will naturally take time to embed into the natural workings of the organisation but has started a perpetual self improving cycle that has already reaped plenty of benefits.

As an organisation through the South West Racial Equality Council Network (SWRECN) we worked closer, and continue to work with other Racial Equality Councils to share good practice and offer mutual support, creating a symbiotic relationship that has been fortified by the emergence of the Commission of Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) that becomes fully functional in October 2007. The SWRECN is now the Regional lead on race and plans to work closely with the CEHR. The main achievements are listed below and could only have been achieved with the commitment of the team and co-operation and assistance from partnership organisations. Several projects stand out: Music Project

I would like to thank Richard Martin, and Sandra Roberts from Wiltshire Youth Services for working with Wiltshire Racial Equality Council to get young people to write, sing and create a music CD about their experiences and feelings of living in rural Wiltshire. It has been a really positive experience for all, especially the young people that took part in the music activities. Football Project

WREC instigated the CRE initiative around football, by starting 5-a-Side matches for all ethnic groups to create a climate where cohesion between different Ethnic Groups can flourish, the key points are as follows;

- Ethnic mix, Bangladeshi, Afro Caribbean, Moroccan, White British and Turkish
- 5-A-Side Football sessions split in two, first session for younger players, second session for older players
- Players from both sessions are to be encouraged to participate in a team to play against a Wiltshire Police Team
- Member of the older team are encouraged to join a prize winning tournament

Wiltshire Racial Equality Council
 Women's ESOL Group

The WREC Women's Group has been running since 2005 with the help of funding from Community Foundation

and Awards For All. We have a core group of up to Fourteen learners who attend on a regular basis. The group currently consists of four Bangladeshi, three Moroccan, three Turkish, one Indian, one Guatemalan and two Polish learners. We meet twice weekly at the Holy Trinity Church; a crèche is provided in the main body of the building and the classes take place in a room next door. Depending on who is attending we have up to eight children using the crèche facility. The group is mixed level, although with the exception of our Guatemalan learner who is Level One, the majority of the learners are at Entry Level One and Two. The group serves an important social function as well. For many of the learners the class provides an opportunity to make friends and chat in English. Members of the group often meet at each others houses for lunch and Farzana Saker who is a member of the West Wiltshire Inter-Faith Group organises a monthly “ladies lunch’ at the venue. The group have all said that they enjoy coming to the class and the fact that some of them have been attending for two years seems to bear this out.

Gypsy Traveller Work The oldest and perhaps most neglected Black and minority Ethnic communities are the Gypsy traveller communities whose way of life are often neglected, misunderstood, ignored and shunned by many willingly or unwittingly. 20% of our work is made up of G&T communities, so engagement has increased and we imagine this will increase. We envisage as our profile continues to grow and improve our engagement with the migrant communities will also grow. The British Moroccan Association created with the help of our local MP Andrew Murrison. This is a very new Association made up of bona fide British Moroccan Community groups throughout the United Kingdom with common interest disregarding any political and religious affiliations. The group aims to assist in any way possible to improve community relations and cohesion in the United Kingdom especially at times where there is an increase of Islamophobia. This group has given rise and justification for the creation of a national BME group made up of as many BME communities as possible to positively engage in the democratic process by collectively voicing their concerns to their MP’s. This will no doubt be a useful tool for all, especially young people who may feel they have been silenced and their voices cannot be heard. By providing such a service this will undoubtedly reduce the risk of young people becoming radicalised as democracy can be used as a tool to voice and debate their concerns affecting their opportunities and threats. This now opens the gate to creating a National BME group to meet with MPs to highlight their issues of concern. Finally a list of this year's achievements:

- All policies updated and compared with those of 2 other Racial Equality Councils,
- Staff administration has improved, for example attendance register kept, appraisals carried out on time, service user rights and responsibilities leaflet, and customer satisfaction forms,
- Drop-ins in Salisbury, Kennet, North Wilts and West Wilts,
- Drop in leaflet translated into Polish,
- Active roles in migrant workers forum in West Wilts and Kennet Areas,
- Update Training provided to staff on equality and diversity,
- Improved Equality and Diversity training Programme developed to deliver training on all six strands of equality,
- Liaisons achieved between existing partners and stakeholders,
- Helped Wiltshire County Council to consult with BME communities and review their Race Equality policy, Disability, Equality policy, Gender Equality policy and BME Community Care Policy,
- Playing a major part in the development of South West Regional Equality Council Network,
- Hosting and promoting First Black History Month Meeting for events planned in October 2007,
- Maintained good working relationships with Gypsy Traveller communities,
- Established police gypsy traveller forum to help advice on gypsy traveller site policing methods,
- Supported REAG Racial Equality Action Group meeting with Police,
- Supporting Police Stop and Search awareness campaign,
- Supported Police Authority to encourage BME individuals to join established Independent Advisory Group (IAG),
- meetings and as IAG Advisors,
- Worked with the following BME community groups: Afro Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Moroccan, Portuguese, and Polish Communities,
- Assisted funding applications for the Bangladeshi, Chinese, Moroccan Community Groups and West Wilts Community Group,
- Supported and assisted Chippenham Coffee Club,
- Facilitated some Mosque visits by Arab TV station and MPs,
- Assisted the English language classes for Women and pre-school English lessons for children under school age. Also supported schools to provide additional English classes to children who do not have English as their first language,
- Physical and Mental Health support for BME communities,
- Advocacy/complaint aid advice to BME individuals,
- Involved professional footballer Sam Allison to coach BME football for all ages. This generated a lot of general well being and good health, community bonding experiences, and enjoyment for all involved. Future events are planned pending funding outcomes to involve football tournaments and encouraging 2 people to train as football coaches,
- Worked with Wiltshire Youth Services to help young people to write a song and create music and then produce a CD on young people’s experiences of living in rural Wiltshire,
- Helped to facilitate Town Council and Wessex Chamber of Commerce 4 day visit to the Trowbridge Twinned Town of Oujda and community groups, the Museum and Chamber of Commerce,
- Formation of British Moroccan Association that meets in The House of Commons to discuss issues of concern with MPs,
- Now Working with Black Development Agency to form a National BME Organisation to meet MPs,
- Encourage BME individuals to register to vote, especially the Polish Community - not because the Government tell us

to, but rather we need the political clout to vote in or out politicians, black or white, who will listen and serve our communities. Finally I would like to thank everyone that has helped WREC during a difficult year, especially the staff team – Carl Davis, Simon Bees, Vivien Maidment, Isadora Perkins, Charlotte Schwartz and Mary Oketcho Dicks for their hard work and dedication to the organisation. Abdelkader Boutarfes BSc

Acting Director

CEHR Update

-----The CEHR kicks off in October 2007 incorporating the CRE, DRC and EOC. Wiltshire REC will be working in partnership with other agencies to ensure Wiltshire is covered by as many of the the six strands of equality as possible. Wiltshire Racial Equality Council is always willing and prepared to work in partnership with all statutory organisations and sees training as a possible good business proposition for the future. We will also be working to improve our interaction with local authorities and companies in the area of policy development. Wiltshire Racial Equality council has been involved in the following issues racial discrimination, social isolation, immigration, benefits, employment issues, police interaction, social facilities, community faith issues, health, environmental issues, education for women and children from BME backgrounds and the new migrant communities. This month we have the following active case

files:• Kennet 0 files open

• North Wilts 7 files open

• West wilts 24 open

• South Wilts 13 open And during this period the following communities have been served:• Kennet, we have supported the Fijians, Polish migrants, and South East Asian Communities. • North Wilts, we have supported the Afro Caribbean, Chinese, Gypsy traveller, North Africans, South East Asians, Turkish, Portuguese.• West Wilts, African, Afro Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Fijian, Gypsy Traveller, Jordanian, Jewish Community, Moroccan, South East Asian, and Turkish , Welsh, White British Communities.• South Wiltshire, we have supported the African, Afro Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Gypsy Traveller, Philippines and Turkish Communities.