

Full Council – 16 July 2020

Questions from the Public

1 Kiki Banjoko to Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

During the Covid-19 pandemic the national media have reported an increase in Xenophobia in the Asian Community. Also we are aware of recent events in America and the overwhelming support for the Black Lives Matter campaign. How does the Council plan to continue to educate people about hate crime/racism within the community? At a local level are there any plans to address these issues and/or support national campaigns?

Reply from Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

Thank you for your question and I am pleased that you have the opportunity to put it forward at this council meeting in front of all of us. I would also like to thank Harlow Youth Council for work they have done during this terrible period of lock down both on mental health and the BLM campaign.

As you will know, October is Black History Month and the Council are keen to support the black community in Harlow by holding an event which will celebrate the rich diversity that our town has to offer. Having met with organisers this week I am keen to involve youth councillors in this event.

On the wider issue of xenophobia, sadly we know that this sort of discrimination exists in the world and we would be naive to think it only exists in the US. In the UK we have seen vile comments directed towards the Asian community, and in particular the Chinese community, with regards to Covid-19. As the new Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing I want to speak to as many members of our community as possible. Having already met, alongside Councillor Mason, with Rabbi Irit, I am also hoping to organise meetings with the Chinese community and other faith and cultural groups over the coming months, albeit virtually.

Hate Crime continues to be a priority for the Safer Harlow Partnership and the Council leads on a multi-agency working group to raise awareness of the impact of Hate Crime on both individuals and the wider community. I am pleased to hear that there are plans for the Youth Council to be represented at the Hate Crime subgroup to ensure that young people's views on the topic can be heard and taken into consideration.

Supplementary question from Kiki Banjoko:

What additional support will be provided for Black History Month?

Reply to supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

The Council is looking to be even more involved in Black History Month than it has been. I want to continue engaging with Youth Council on this matter and welcome further ideas on how to increase the Council's involvement

2 Leslie Appiah to Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

On a local level how do you plan to support young people to catch up with the education they have missed during lockdown. Lots of young people are concerned that they will not be returning to school until September and feel they will be under lots of pressure to catch up ready for exams.

Reply from Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

As a teacher myself I recognise the stress and anxiety caused by this terrible period, for young people, many of whom will have suffered a bereavement, the loss of a family member or of friends. I am pleased that Harlow Council are looking in to a program of activities for young people over the summer period but must emphasise that this should not just be a catch up of academic skills but instead an opportunity for young people to take part in art and cultural activities in a safe and inclusive environment.

We feel confident that schools will have robust plans in place to assist students to catch up on missed learning opportunities. If children and young people have concerns about their studies they should speak to their parents and/or school staff at the earliest opportunity. The Council is working with partners through the Early Help and Start Well subgroup of the Health and Wellbeing Board to identify opportunities for new initiatives that will support children and young people's emotional wellbeing as they return to school. We are also leading on an initiative to help provide devices and connectivity to assist students to access learning opportunities at home.