

# BME Forum Review

## Executive Summary

5

September 2021



**WOKINGHAM**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Agenda Item 45.

The Wokingham Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Forum is an independent forum that the council has supported since it was formed in 2002 and provides a focal point for people with a Black or minority ethnic heritage

In September 2020, the Chair of the BME Forum resigned.

Deputy Chair of the BME Forum made a commitment that the Council would find and fund an independent facilitator to listen to the views of the BME Forum and other stakeholders and develop options for the BME Forum to consider about its work in the future.

The Council commissioned Judeline Nicholas Associates (JNA) to conduct this review. JNA has track record of working with a wide range of diverse organisations including public and voluntary sector organisations and private companies both in the UK and abroad

BME Forum members and people who have recently engaged with the forum were invited to participate in one-to-one discussions with JNA to share their thoughts and experiences about the work of the BME Forum.

Following a series of focus group discussions and research carried out by the consultants, a final version of the findings and recommendations were presented to the Council in July 2021.

It is clear from the review that there is a passion in the borough for the forum to succeed within our communities.

The review identified a number of achievements the forum has delivered, including better information on specific crime and policing incidents, protecting the health and wellbeing of Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, advocacy, inclusion and empowerment for black and minority ethnic communities and celebrating Black History Month.

The report perceived a lack of a clearly defined identity for the BME Forum from those who took part in the review. It has always been the intention of the Council that the forum is an autonomous, and independent, critical friend to the Local Authority. However, current structure and practices have confused this ambition.

BME Forum to help engage in mentoring and coaching to build greater capacity that will enable it to steer its own course and make independent decisions about its future.

To evolve the BME Forum into an umbrella/ independent organisation that seeks to progress equality and build capacity in our ethnic minority communities.

BME Forum work with external organisations to help develop new and evolving structures and guiding principles that are more compatible with changing communities.

Research into other Local Authorities in the region and with those of recognised best practice indicates that councils use a range of different models when working with ethnic minority communities. Most do not have a bespoke BME forum. Of the other models used, they can be broadly grouped into three approaches

Local Authority led

VCS led

Blended VCS/Local Authority approach

VCS led approaches 'hand over' and build capacity within ethnic minorities through either umbrella groups or community groups with varying levels of funding from the local authority and wider sources.

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This approach encourages greater levels of intersectionality. Blended models tend to see a greater level of collaboration between the Local Authority and the VCS with a greater level of financial support

We are also seeing some authorities choosing to not have a specific group for ethnicity and race as a stand-alone group but align this more to projects or funding for activities in the area.

This Research was completed and run along side the independent review and supports the recommendations of the report completed by Judeline associates

## Next Steps

The council welcomes the development of such a model that will help to foster a greater independence & a conversational approach between the council and all its ethnic minority communities through the BME Forum. To enable this to happen the following actions are proposed

Share the report with BME Forum members, those who took part in the review and stakeholders

Engage VCS (Involve) to help and support the BME forum move from current position to an independent organisation

Support with Forum members and Involve to set up first BME Forum meeting

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