

CAMBRIDGE ETHNIC COMMUNITY FORUM [CECF]

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, 12th November 2024.

Present:

Abatt B, Abigel Tamasi, Aderito Do Nascimento, Agustinho Paulo, Ahmed Adradi, Aida Miralaei, Aisha Rashid, Amina Khatun, Anjali Ratna Kumar, Angie Ridley, Aqeela Ihsan, Ayaz Islam, Azzam Al Kassir, Bhargavi Anand, Cecil Chipendo, Carol Brown-Leonardi, Catherine Kimberley, Clifford Bell, Daniel Ike, Daisy Rogers, Darryl Preston, Dhoyazan Azazi, Divya Ram-Kumar, Divya Vinodkumar, E Medani, Edel Bell, Edward Imhagwe, Eli Lajara, Elisabeth Burleigh, Fahad Hussain, Fahim Ahmed, Farida Khanam, Fathima Begum, Goitseone Thamae, Graham Lewis, Guijie Liu, Hellen Wambui, Hifa El-Sadiq, Hina Fahim, Hsin-Ling Liang, Hothri, Hussein Al-Ali, Ibrahim Rahman, Ila Chandavarkar, Ilma Islam, Irina Morosanu, James Hutchison, Jodie Vaughan, Joy Lamb, Khalid Malik, Lara Moussa, Lata McCaskie, Laxmi Bala, Linda Al Theoloj, Lipi Begum, Luca Leonardi, Lucio Boggio, Luduvina Fernandes, Mariya Begum, Melanie Baker, Miriam Schecter, Mitha Madhu, Mona Abdalla, Mona Mohammed, Nagla Abdur Rahman, Natalia Pinnau Medina, Nathan Chapman, Omnia Ahmed, Piyali, Rachel Bennett, Rafa Medani, Raj Shah, Ranjan Vasudevan, Rebecca Imhagwe, Rebwar Hussein, Reem Assil, Robert Colbert, Ruh Taylor, Safi Adradi, Sarah Assaad, Shahada Begum, Shahida Rahman, Shanaz Malik, Simon Rogers, Sonali Shukla, Steffy, Stephanie Asamoah-Parbi, Surya Kotha, Tom Mackie, Tracy Cripps, Veena, William Parbi, Yan Wang.

Staff:

Eddie Stadnik (CEO), Alla Viktorova (Ukrainian Refugee Services), Almudena Cano (Finance), Louise Tan (Development Services), Ana Maldonado (Refugee Services), (Panna Chowdhury (Race Equality Services), Mahasin Abdullah (Health Services), Nahar Chowdhury (Marketing and Communications), Samuel Budu (CHESS), Shopna Begum (Refugee Services).

Apologies: These were received from Asaduz Zaman Ahmed (CECF Chair, Bangladeshi Welfare and Cultural Association), Abdul Hye (Bangladeshi Welfare and Cultural Association), Beatrice Brown (Integrated Neighbourhood Project Manager East Cambridgeshire, South Integrated Care Partnership Cambridgeshire and Peterborough), Bertha Wilson Njenou, Baiju Thittala (Mayor, Cambridge City Council), Dinah Pounds (Deputy Mayor, Cambridge City Council), Ibrahim Qutab (Healthier You), Pat Ousapoi (Pro Recourse), Peninnah Serrano (CECF Trustee), Sharmin Shahjahan (Deputy Director, Voice4Change England), Sophia Hussain (Infrastructure and Development Officer, Voice4Change England), Qamar Nizam (CECF Trustee)

1. Welcome, minutes and introduction from the Chair

As CECF Chair Asaduz Zaman Ahmed was unable to be at the meeting, another Trustee Cecil Chipendo chaired the AGM and welcomed all. He went through the house rules for fire and pointed out exits and where the toilets were. He welcomed the special guest Daryl Preston, the Police and Crime Commissioner as well as thanked all the stall holders who were present. He said feedback on the AGM was very important to CECF and this could be done by using the QR codes on the wall. There were also some packs on chairs which included a paper copy of the feedback form. He urged all attending to send their feedback.

The minutes of the last AGM on 15th November 2023 were looked at. There were no matters arising and no amendments. The minutes were agreed. Proposed by Cecil Chipendo and seconded by Yan Wang.

2. Police and Crime Commissioner

Daryl Preston, the Police and Crime Commissioner was then asked to give his talk, as he had to leave for another meeting.

He said he would give a brief mention to his background, then touch on the role and finally on police and crime mentioning relevant matters such as community tensions and hate crime.

He was elected to the post in May 2021, and re-elected in May 2024. He is an ex-policeman, which is unusual as most PCCs come from local authorities. He started as a police officer with the MET, 40 years ago and then came to Cambridge 30 years ago. He served for 30 years as both a front line police officer and a senior detective in Homicide and Burglary.

His role involves listening to the concerns of residents. He is responsible for the accountability of the Constabulary and can hire and fire the Chief Constable. He is also responsible for a budget which is focused mainly on the police but does have some other areas.

In order to develop his plan, he conducts surveys and engagement events. Surveys are online and give demographic information. He has also spent time in schools as there is a very different response from young people.

The current plan is about to be published and has the following three areas:

1. Prevent crime from happening through early interventions, for example, youth services
2. Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. He want to see the police responding well in a wide range of cases. Victim care is important including areas that have sometimes been unclear such as in domestic abuse or sexual violence cases.
3. Build confidence in the police. He believes that if we lose the consent and trust from the local community, the police will fail, so this is important. Any Chief Constable must work to this. There are independent scrutiny panels with diverse members such as the one on Stop and Search.

Cambridgeshire is considered one of the safest places in the country but it is important not to take eyes off the ball. Must make sure that processes are still good and work with partners in the third sector but also with individuals in different communities. Hate crime could be an issue – this is any crime that is motivated by hatred for people who have protected characteristics as defined by the 2010 Equality Act. The police will take this very seriously.

The events in August 2024 were appalling – they were not protests, it was organised violence. There were no riots in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. There was excellent work by the Constabulary in partnership with faith groups and other community groups.

Sam said the work was excellent but he was concerned that there were very few Black and Minoritised Ethnic (BME) people on scrutiny panels. Daryl Preston responded by saying it was very important to be involved, to get the right representation for work with the police. He asked the audience to send their names if they were interested. There will be training beforehand. He said there were other volunteering roles such as helping victims of crime.

He was thanked by Cecil for an enlightening talk.

3. Chair report

Cecil covered the report of the Chair which was in CECF's impact report. The main points were:

- The start of an exciting new phase for CECF through successful application to the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF). This enabled the appointment of an Equality Services Advisor who could also help BME people struggling with increases in the cost of living; a Development Officer who could help BME groups and other community development work; a Marketing and Communications Officer to improve CECF communication. There was also funding to help with Refugee Services where the workload of urgent cases continues to increase.
- The receipt of the fund was launched through a press release, which included the Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner and the NLCF Regional Officer Fiona Brice in the photoshoot.

Cecil ended by thanking all Trustees and staff for their work. He also thanked the funders for their investment in CECF. These were Cambridge City Council, Lloyds Bank Foundation, NLCF and the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation

4. Chief Executive Officer report

Eddie said he wanted to start by saying what CECF is all about. Its vision is to see “a world where diverse communities live in harmony and every individual, regardless of race, nationality or ethnic origin, has the opportunity to realise their full potential”. He said that funders like Cambridge City Council, NLCF and Lloyds Bank Foundation had given CECF the ability to take steps towards realising the vision.

Cambridge is a city of diversity. Some see this as a weakness. For CECF it is a strength with lots of untapped potential and the work is to ensure that all have the ability to be a stakeholder.

He said it was very good to see all the people that CECF had worked with in order to enable stakeholders, particularly from Black and Minoritised Ethnic (BME) communities. Without their help, CECF would not have been able to build project work.

The NLCF fund is hugely important in CECF helping BME individuals and communities transform their lives. This complements the work funded by Cambridge City Council.

He briefly touched on the projects, saying there was more detail in the Impact Report which is also on CECF website. The projects were:

- 4.1 Community Capacity Building – helping BME groups develop and providing CECF support for the events they run. This included 39 advice surgeries for 13 groups, covering topics such as fundraising, deciding on the right structure for the group, charity and community interest company registration and developing policies. CECF also ran 4 “lunch and learn” sessions: “Why Equalities Matter”, “The ABC of Business Plans”, “Choosing the Right Structure” and “An Introduction to Digital Fundraising”. The last was run by national BME organisation, Voice4Change England.

CECF ran 8 outreach visits to member groups and supported 4 BME groups with events that they ran. CECF also ran a community consultation to identify needs at the last AGM attended by over 100 people and hosted a civic participation session on what Parliament is and how it functions. The Impact Report also covers CECF work with other voluntary sector and community organisations that helps with representing BME views and interests and with engagement. CECF also serves as a useful bridge connecting people together. For example, connecting CB Mentoring, a BME mentoring organisation, with Kettles Yard youth wellbeing project.

- 4.2 The Equality Service supported 396 beneficiaries with 654 pieces of work, on issues in housing, education, employment, ESOL, access to immigration and healthcare, volunteering and training opportunities, access to domestic violence services, and others. The demand had increased by 27% from the previous year, with 48% of requests for help to do with the cost of living increases or problems with benefits. 22% had to do with a need for help with culturally appropriate food. The service has seen an increase in BME homeless people and supported 12 people who were destitute. This increase led to the creation of a CECF hardship fund for BME people.

Case studies in the Impact Report show the complexity of this work, for example, one person who initially contacted the service because of severe problems with their house and then went on to reveal a sustained campaign of racism with the neighbour, causing psychological problems with a child and financial problems. CECF helped with sorting all, providing a hardship grant for energy costs and free halal food while waiting for benefits to be sorted. CECF also delivered 8 training sessions to six different organisations round Unconscious Bias and Building Multicultural Practice.

- 4.3 Cambridge Human Rights and Equality Support Service [CHESS] provided information, advice, assistance, representation, and advocacy to 41 direct BME beneficiaries and 15 indirect beneficiaries (children of the direct beneficiaries in housing). There were 19 cases to do with employment, 9 with housing, 2 with higher education, 4 concerning family and children, 3 with race discrimination, 2 with neighbourhood disputes, 2 with complaints about racism from the police, 2 with domestic abuse, 1 to do with Personal Independent Payment and 1 that is too complex to classify. Most of service users are from low income families, single parents usually women, and/or have a disability. Without CHESS help the service users would have lost money, or jobs or housing and would have been unable to deal with the corrosive impact of racism. There are

comments in the Impact Report which show how service users feel empowered through CHESS support.

CHESS also participated in the quarterly meetings of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary's Stop & Search, Use of Force Community Panels and the three forces' (Beds, Cambs and Herts) Professional Development Standards' Strategy Group.

- 4.4 Asylum seeker and refugee services helped 353 beneficiaries with 986 pieces of work with significant positive outcomes over a range of 16 key issues including welfare, immigration and accommodation. Asylum seekers and Refugees are among the most economically deprived groups in the city that the CECF assists. Many are denied mainstream benefits, housing and because they are legally unable to work, many are destitute, or require assistance with basic necessities. Many suffer physical and mental health issues and need help to access the right services. On gaining Refugee status or Leave to Remain they face new problems of accessing benefits, housing, work, and with integration. Eddie thanked all those who had generously donated to the Refugee Hardship fund – it was so essential to this service.

Impact was not only in terms of alleviating immediate food, accommodation, or health stresses, but also in enabling future integration, well-being, and satisfactory re-settlement. Our interventions enabled, for example, access to legal support, access to language classes, or employment opportunities: all leading to longer term integrational outcomes for the individuals and families concerned. CECF as the case study in the Impact Report demonstrates is also able to mobilise community support for emergency cases where the person has no recourse to public funds. In the case study it was the Sudanese community that generously helped two people from Sudan.

- 4.5 Ukrainian refugee services started in 2023, in response to the increasing number of enquiries from Ukrainian refugees. Last year, the service helped 286 beneficiaries with 506 pieces of work on 12 key issues; the main issues were to do with welfare and accommodation. Ukrainians who arrived in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine or Family schemes were expected to move into their own accommodation. Although they were given some support towards furniture and white goods, this did not cover all essentials for example floor coverings, irons, vacuum cleaners and microwaves. Those who had arrived under the Family scheme were unable to get any support. CECF worked with other organisations such as Cambridge Aid, Emmaus, Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign and Besom to help with this. The service also helped many secure benefits and provided food and shopping vouchers and Refugee Hardship grants to help with gaps. Other enquiries concerned employment and English language classes.

Eddie thanked all staff: Sam, Ana, Alla, Panna, Nahar and Louise for their superb work in very difficult times. He said CECF was unique in that it delivered services to both BME individuals and organisations. The NLCF Officer said that only 30 organisations did this and they were very impressed with the volume and quality of work carried out by 10 staff and 17 volunteers.

Eddie said that the coming year would bring new opportunities to work well with individuals and communities, showing diversity as strength; building bridges with service providers; building respect and providing equalities and inclusion training. He said that all staff members had a badge so if you want to know more please do ask. He also thanked partners who had stalls: Patients North, Healthwatch, CB Mentoring and the Karim Foundation.

5 Treasurer Report

Almudena, CECF Finance Officer, was asked by Cecil to present the accounts on behalf of the Treasurer and CECF.

Almudena asked attendees to look at page 5 of the accounts which was the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year 2024 25. This showed that total income for the year was £258,101 with £53,926 in unrestricted funds and £204,175 in restricted funds. The total expenditure was £222,856 with £29,090 unrestricted expenditure and £193,766 restricted. This left a balance at the end of the year of £35,245 which after a transfer from unrestricted to restricted was £17,023 unrestricted and £18,222 restricted. Bringing forward the reserves from the previous year, the final balance was £67,830 with £39,914 unrestricted and £27,916 restricted.

Almudena then asked all to look at page 9 which listed all the funders:

- Cambridge City Council with grants for Community Development, Equalities and CHESS as well as other funding for the refugee services and Ukrainian refugee services;
- Cambridge Community Foundation with funds for the Healthier Futures and Reach Out projects;
- Lloyds Bank Foundation with support for core costs;
- National Lottery Community Foundation funds for the Vision Horizon project;

In addition, there were funds from Cambridge Aid towards the costs of rehousing Ukrainian refugees.

Almudena also pointed out page 13 which showed the detail of expenditure, compared with the previous year. She asked if there were any questions. There were none and the accounts were approved. Proposed by Becky Imhagwe and seconded by Cecil Chipendo.

The meeting also approved the appointment of Geoff Mann, as the independent examiner for the following year.

6 Special Resolution

Eddie described the special resolution to amend the CECF constitution. It was to make Board membership clear. It was previously thought that 17 people could be elected at the AGM with room for 3 co-options, but the constitution stipulates that the maximum is 17. The proposed amendment now states that at the AGM only 14 people can be elected, allowing for 3 later co-options. Given that the membership had already agreed that there could be two places for individual members, the proposal amends the previous statement "15 Trustees who are elected from member groups" to "12 Trustees who are elected from member groups".

All member groups were given a voting slip and a show of these slips showed that this amendment was carried unanimously.

7 Elections

The elections were held. Cecil temporarily stood down and Eddie presided over the elections. There was no vote as there were more positions on the Board than people applying. 3 Trustees Qamar Nizam, Shahnaz Malik and Yan Wang stood down as they had done 3 years as Trustees. Eddie thanked them for their sterling service and Yan for her work as Treasurer. He said he was sure that CECF would remain in touch. There were 5 new people applying to join the Board: Reem Assil from Makani Cambridge, Azzam Al Kassir from Makani Cambridge, Edward Imhagwe from Cambridge African Network, Rebecca Imhagwe from Cambridge African Network and Abdul Hye from Bangladeshi Welfare and Cultural Association Cambridge.

They would join the Trustees who remained on the Board: Hsin-Ling Liang from Tzuchi UK, Cecil Chipendo from CB Mentoring, Peninnah Serrano from the Cambridge Jewish Residents Association, Asaduz Zaman Ahmed from Bangladeshi Welfare and Cultural Association Cambridge and Carol Leonardi-Brown who has changed her representation from the Cambridge African Network to the African Caribbean Research Group.

Asaduz Zaman Ahmed was re-appointed as Chair and Azzam Al Kassir was appointed as Treasurer.

8 Other

With the elections, the business part of the meeting was concluded. This was followed by inspiring performance of dance and music from several BME community groups and a delicious dinner provided by Box Café.