



Kirklees
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review

Report on

The Future Celebration of International Woman's Day in Kirklees

November 2001

Kirklees Metropolitan Council

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel was established by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 17 July 2001, following discussions at the first meeting of Kirklees Women's Network on 28 June 2001. The Women's Network was concerned that the co-ordination and funding arrangements for festival celebrations has become confused and problematic, leading to concerns about the future management of the International Women's Day Festival within Kirklees.

1.2 Members of the Panel

Councillor Maggie Blanshard (Chair)
Councillor Anne Raistrick

1.3 Co-opted Representatives

Mrs Phyllis Wright
Mrs Ruksana Mahmood
Ms Imelda Marsden

1.4 Lead Officer

Ms Celia Sweeney (Principal Equal Opportunities Officer, Education and Community Services Resources Group)

1.5 Committee Administrator

Penny Bunker, Tel. 01484 221708

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 The terms of reference agreed by the Scrutiny Committee were as follows:-

- * To assess the benefits enjoyed by the people of Kirklees from past celebrations of International Women's Day.
- * To make recommendations to the Council as to the future of the International Women's Day Celebrations.

3. MEETINGS

3.1 The Panel held three formal meetings between August and October 2001. Details of the meetings were as follows:-

3.2 Friday 31 August 2001 - Meeting with invited Council Services to discuss past and current arrangements and issues regarding the co-ordination and funding of International Women's Day Celebrations.

3.3 Friday 14 September 2001 - Meeting with representatives of Community Groups and members of the public to discuss their experiences and benefits gained from International Women's Day and any issues of concern for community groups about the current organisation of International Women's Day festivities.

3.4 Friday 12 October 2001 - Meeting of the Panel to discuss information/evidence gathered to date and form preliminary conclusions/recommendations.

4. **INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE**

4.1 **Background to the Celebration of International Women's Day**

The Panel received information on the historic reasons for the celebration of International Women's Day. International Women's Day had started as part of activities by the New York City Social Democratic Society in 1908. On 8 March 1908, women marched through New York City demanding shorter working hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labour. In 1910, at the Socialist International Conference, Clara Zetkin, a German Socialist proposed an International Day to mark the American women's struggle. This declaration had an impact and on 8 March 1911 International Women's Day was marked for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland.

4.2 Since the early days of International Women's Day, the festival has assumed a new global dimension for women and in December 1977, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. The United Nations General Assembly cited two reasons for having a Women's Day Celebration:-

- * To recognise the fact that peace and social progress require the active participation and equality of women.
- * To acknowledge the contribution of women to international peace and security.

4.3 The Panel supported the reasons for the initial introduction of International Women's Day and recognised that there continued to be women's issues that needed to be raised and highlighted today. Hence, the celebration of International Women's Day at the present time gave women the opportunity to do the following:-

- * To put women's issues onto society's agenda.
- * To influence public opinion.
- * To assert women's rights and entitlements.
- * To demand legal, social, economic and political change.
- * To celebrate acts of courage and determination by individual women.
- * To unite at a local and international level to empower women.
- * To have fun in the process.

5. **EVIDENCE FROM COUNCIL SERVICES**

5.1 At the first formal meeting of the Panel, the Panel discussed information on the past management of funding, community support and co-ordination of International Women's Day with the following Officers:-

Tony Gerrard, Acting Human Resources Adviser/Head of Resources
Andrew Millea, Social Services (Community Liaison) Funding and Development
Officer

Jane Fowden, Community Development Services - Community Worker

Jonathan Drake, Head of Cultural Services

Glenis Burgis, Principal Arts Officer, Cultural Services

Marcia Layne, Arts Officer, Cultural Services

- 5.2 In addition the Panel received a written submission from Catherine Putz, former Community Forum Officer within the Human Resources Strategy Unit.
- 5.3 In discussing the celebration of International Women's Day, with Council Officers, the Panel noted the following information:-
- * During the early celebration of International Women's Day within Kirklees, events were co-ordinated through the Equal Opportunities Unit. There was a dedicated Equal Opportunities Officer for Women's Issues and a Co-ordinator's post was created to support the organisation of the Festival. At one point the post had been filled on a secondment basis (for six months) and had been supported by a voluntary sector worker. In more recent years, Catherine Putz and Aisha Rawat, former Community Forum Officers based in the Human Resources Strategy Unit, had become involved in the co-ordination of the Festival. Most recently Cultural Services had co-ordinated the use of funding from the Human Resources Strategy Unit, to employ consultants to produce the Festival brochure and publicity detailing all events to be held as part of the celebrations.
 - * Funding for community events, as part of the Festival, came from a number of sources within the Council including Community Development Services (Community Support Service), Social Services (Community Liaison) and the Human Resources Strategy Unit. Each fund had its own set of criteria and closing date for applications. Council Services acknowledged that budgets for such funding were vulnerable as they were not ring fenced and were determined year on year according to Service/Council priorities. The Panel felt that in order to involve new Groups, a less bureaucratic grants process was required, including a central point of contact for information. Council Officers emphasised the need to get organisations involved early in the planning process with grant deadlines of December for the Festival in the following March. Council Officers were concerned that there was a lack of understanding about how long it took to organise a successful event.
 - * Written evidence suggested that there should be a specific amount earmarked for the Festival for community events and a few high profile events. Individual Services and larger voluntary organisations could be encouraged to contribute match funding and/or other support, although this should not be required from small community groups.
 - * A number of Officers recommended that co-ordination of the Festival should be included in an Officer's job description. It was suggested that this person would liaise with contacts in other Services as well as act as a key contact for community organisations.
 - * Officers suggested that consideration should also be given to the organisation of other similar festivals, including the International Day for Disabled People.

- * Whilst the function of the Scrutiny Panel was to tease out these very issues for consideration, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge at the outset the success of previous festivals and the commitment which exists from Officers across the Council within their various roles.

5.4 Council Services had found International Women's Day to be an effective way of energising community groups and there was an element of community capacity building as a result of the Festival. It was felt that this outcome from the International Women's Day Festival was a good example of the local government modernisation agenda in action and indicated the potential for expanding the developing this approach with communities.

5.5 However, there were ongoing issues regarding the co-ordination of the Festival and the funding arrangements to support events.

6. INFORMATION FROM NEIGHBOURING COUNCILS

6.1 As part of their considerations, the Ad Hoc Panel had felt it appropriate to consult with neighbouring Councils to ascertain the level of support offered to International Women's Day celebrations. Findings indicated that support varied greatly, however, the Panel noted that a number of neighbouring Councils had dedicated, mainstream funding and Officers with responsibility for the co-ordination of the festival.

6.2 Councils with strong community involvement, such as Manchester, use the festival as an opportunity to reach and consult with local residents. Whilst others, such as Leeds, use the festival to identify particular themes and target groups, e.g., work with young women.

7. EVIDENCE FROM COMMUNITY GROUPS/MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

7.1 At the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Panel, Members met with representatives of the following Groups:-

University of Huddersfield
Batley Women's Forum
FE-MAIL
Khandaani Dhek-Bhal Project
Kirklees Domestic Violence Forum
Indian Muslim Welfare Society

7.2 In addition, written submissions were received from Harriet Tubman, Development Agency; Susan Taylor, Books; Colne Valley Trust and members of the public. Officers from Leisure Development, Building Services and the Community Development Service also advised the Panel on projects undertaken with local women. Indeed, Leisure Services staff indicated that they saw the festival as a way of testing out activities which women traditionally did not participate in and therefore helped to expand women's horizons in relation to sport, e.g., dragon-boat racing and mountain biking were quoted. Building Services also subscribed to this view and indicated that for 2002 they would be looking at ways of promoting Building Services and the various trades as employment opportunities for women. As part of the meeting with community representatives, the Panel viewed a video of a previous International Women's Day celebration which had been produced as a project by a group of young female students. The video illustrated activities organised as part of

the 1993 festival and those community representatives present commented on how effective the co-ordination had been at that time and the significant difference it had made to the celebrations.

- 7.3 The Panel posed the question that if the International Women's Day Festival did not exist would the achievements of community groups have been reached by other means? Community representatives responded by illustrating how International Women's Day had been used to focus on women's achievements and launch specific projects, such as the Fe-mail Website and the House into a Home project. The House into a Home project had involved Kirklees Housing Services and the Domestic Violence Forum and had raised the national profile of Kirklees Council, as the project had been a runner up in the National Housing Awards. Representatives from the Indian Muslim Welfare Society highlighted the opportunities afforded by International Women's Day celebrations for women within the Asian community who would not otherwise have been able to attend such events. The IMWS had offered taster sessions for women who were considering going into business and as a direct result three women had started up their own businesses.
- 7.4 The Panel felt that these projects provided examples of the ways in which the International Women's Day Festival can contribute to Kirklees Metropolitan Council's strategic aims around healthy living, community safety, employment and the economy. It also provided scope for the outcomes of festival events and activities to influence and impact on Council practice.
- 7.5 Community representatives highlighted the potential for the International Women's Day Festival to be used as a means of raising the profile of Kirklees as a district. For example, Huddersfield University, Department of Music sought to engage female musicians, of national repute, to stage larger events as part of the Women's Day celebrations.
- 7.6 The areas that community representatives identified as the most problematic were that of co-ordination and funding. Community representatives wished to see a central co-ordinator within the Council for International Women's Day celebrations. This person would be their contact for questions regarding funding, publicity and any advice about arrangements for community events.
- 7.7 Community organisations had found the funding arrangements within the Council to be confusing, given that the criteria within each Service area differed and there were varying deadlines for applications.

8. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE

- 8.1 In considering the evidence received, the Ad Hoc Panel looked to answer the following questions:-
- 8.2 *Is there clear evidence and grounds for the continued celebration of International Women's Day in Kirklees?*
- 8.3 The Panel agreed that they had received clear evidence for the continuation of the celebration of International Women's Day in Kirklees. Despite concerns, all those who had presented evidence to the Panel, both Council Officers and community representatives, had supported the continued celebration of International Women's Day in Kirklees.

- 8.4 The festival promoted development opportunities and the Panel acknowledged that organised events can lead to community engagement and community capacity building in line with the modernisation agenda for local government. The festival also provided an environment for women to access and experience things that they would otherwise not have had the opportunity to do, for example, the Asian Women's Into Business project.
- 8.5 International Women's Day celebrations provided a launch pad for new initiatives, both those organised within the community, for example, Fe-mail, and those organised by Council Services, e.g. Leisure and Recreation and Cultural Services. International Women's Day also provided a means of promoting at a national level, work currently being undertaken within Kirklees, for example, the House to a Home project.
- 8.6 The International Women's Day celebrations also offered the opportunity for Council Services to consult with the different communities of women within Kirklees, to inform and shape Council service provision and priorities, in line with the requirements of Best Value.
- 8.7 *Should the Council maintain a lead role in future festivals?*
- 8.8 The Panel heard evidence on the variety of ways in which the Council had been involved in the co-ordination of previous celebrations. It was clear that the co-ordination of celebrations had started to "drift" in recent years because there was no delegated budget, no central co-ordinator and no "home" service which had overall responsibility.
- 8.9 The Panel felt that as part of the Council's remit of community leadership, the Council should seek to establish a co-ordinator role, possibly giving consideration to other equalities festivals (as part of a co-ordinators remit) and aim to work with the Council's partner agencies, for example, the Health Authority, to match fund events for the celebration of International Women's Day. The co-ordinator would work with other Council services and community organisations to develop the festival as well as have a central role in the areas of publicity and funding. The Panel felt that the Co-ordinator's position would be most appropriately located within the new Community Support Service, although it was acknowledged that CSS resources were already extremely stretched, particularly with the introduction of the Area Committees Structure.
- 8.10 *What other issues need to be addressed?*
- 8.11 From the evidence received, the Panel felt there was a strong need to refocus the festival, in particular by establishing clear aims and objectives for the celebrations. This could allow the Council to identify particular themes which may support the overall strategy of the Council, or take account of the national agenda in respect of women's issues or highlight a particular local issue of importance and significance for women in Kirklees.
- 8.12 The Panel also felt that greater emphasis should be put on the international aspect of celebrations. This could be celebrated on two levels, firstly through the cultural diversity of communities within Kirklees and secondly through the development of existing international links, such as previous housing links with Russian women. It

was felt that opportunities could exist for development with the twin towns as well as their being potential for larger scale events.

- 8.13 The Panel had heard evidence from Council Services that funding was variable, depending on Council and Service priorities. Community organisations had expressed frustration at having to bid into a number of different pots, each with their own criteria and deadlines, instead of being able to access one central pot. The Panel recommended that in future funding for festival events should be from one centralised pot and that consideration should be given, as part of the budget process, to the allocation of mainstream funding to support the International Women's Day celebrations.
- 8.14 The Panel was disappointed at the lack of effective evaluation and monitoring of events organised by both the Community and the Council. It was felt strongly that there was an urgent need to address this in the future organisation and planning of the celebrations. It was agreed that including a section at the beginning of each festival brochure, on the outcome of the previous year's events, would be a beneficial feedback mechanism.

9. **CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The Panel concluded that there was evidence of benefits gained by the people of Kirklees from past celebrations of International Women's Day and therefore it is recommended that International Women's Day continues to be celebrated in Kirklees.
- 9.2 The Scrutiny Panel recognises that at this stage it is still important for the Council to have a central role and be the champion for the International Women's Day Festival. However, it is recommended that the Council work towards sharing responsibilities with partners in other agencies, and building capacity within the community to be responsible for managing the festival.
- 9.3 To support this recommendation, the Scrutiny Panel feels that it is essential for the International Women's Day festival to have a corporate dedicated budget, together with an Officer who would have responsibility for the co-ordination of the festival. The Panel suggests that the most appropriate location for the co-ordinator is within the Community Support Service.
- 9.4 The Panel strongly recommends that monitoring and evaluation should be a core element for future International Women's Day celebrations. It was recognised over the course of the Scrutiny deliberations, that evaluation and feedback from the International Women's Day Festival could make a contribution to the Council's overall strategy on issues of health, community safety, employment and economy. The responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the festival should lie with the co-ordinator.