

Round Table Discussions

YOUR VOICE ...

***Community Consultation Event
A New Vision for the Future of the BME Voluntary and
Community Sector in the East Midlands***

Dr. Mohammed P. Aslam MIED

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Vivitas Resourcing

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About Voice East Midlands

Voice East Midlands is a new and exciting addition to the regional framework of the East Midlands. It was originally formed in May 1999, with the encouragement and support of the Home Office, to enable the East Midlands Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Voluntary and Community Sector to influence the regional agenda for the benefit of BME organisations and communities.

The organisation was formally launched in January 2000, with the support of over 150 BME Voluntary and Community Organisations in the East Midlands. By January 2001 it had appointed a Chief Executive. The Chairperson of Voice East Midlands is Mohammed Riasat, who is a former Nottinghamshire County Councillor and a leading advocate for community partnership with the wider voluntary and community sector organisations across the East Midlands. He recently took over from Len Shillingford who had played a vital role in leading Voice East Midlands towards ensuring that BME regional and sub-regional organisations played an influencing role in shaping future collaborative working with the wider voluntary and statutory agencies in the region. Without Len's work in this sector, this consultation event may not have been as successful as it was.

Voice East Midlands - Our strategic objectives are:

- To unlock funding for the BME Voluntary Sector at a regional level
- To increase the effectiveness of the BME Voluntary Sector through capacity building support.
- To be an informed voice on behalf of the BME Voluntary Sector and promote its interests at a regional level.

Voice East Midlands has been fortunate in securing additional funds from the Community Fund and Sport England and are seeking other funds to assist in developing and implementing our ambitious work plan, to build an effective regional BME Voluntary & Community Sector, that is informed by and beneficial to BME organisations.

Voice East Midlands is already making an impact in the East Midlands through working with key regional partners, including:

- East Midlands Development Agency
- Government Office for East Midlands
- East Midlands Regional Assembly
- Community Fund, now The Big Lottery Fund

Nik Trivedi
Acting Chief Executive

12 June 2007

Background on the independent chair for the consultation event

Dr. Mohammed P. Aslam MIED

Dr. Mohammed P. Aslam is an experienced manager at a senior level in the area of community cohesion, equalities & diversity and public policy. Dr Aslam has worked in a multi-regional setting from Staffordshire to Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. He has spent several years working in Eastern Europe on social policy projects advising regional governments and promoting academic institutions to explore current international political trends for development across perceived threats of (soft) terrorism, socio-cultural implications of joining the European Union and looking at issues around Islamophobia, cultural racism and ethnic identity. Dr Aslam has produced several reports in the area of accumulative affects of tackling disadvantage, discrimination and racism. His most recent publications include; *Time Place and Spirit*, which looks at the relationship between regional agencies and local racial equality partnerships. *Facing the Future*, a study that looks at the level of disadvantage, experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities and *Voice of International Students* which identifies serious failures by public authorities and academic institutions in supporting foreign students in Britain. Dr Aslam holds a Certificate in Community and Youth Work from De Montfort University (formally Leicester Polytechnic), MA (International Relations), Post Graduate Certificate in Social Science Research Methods, and a PhD (International Cultural Studies) from Nottingham Trent University.

Dr Aslam currently sits as a government advisor on the National Beacons Advisory Panel at the CLG and heads up their Equalities Diversity Panel. He also for 2007/08 is the Chair for the Beacons theme group on Climate Change.

Dr Aslam works for a niche public/private sector management advisory service (Vivitas Resourcing) where he specialises in the areas of research & evaluation, equalities, diversity & community cohesion, conflict management and employment dispute resolution.

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What is community consultation?

The principle idea that all public, voluntary and community sector organisations should consult local people about the kinds of services and policies that they want is not a new concept. Many public authorities, community organisations and voluntary sector agencies have long believed that consultation helps them to shape and direct policies and services that meet the needs of local communities, and which consequently lead to cost effective delivery of services.

Effective consultation is not easy to achieve. The voluntary and community sector who already are competing for scarce resources and struggle to get to engage effectively with public authorities. Consultees often disagree with one another, so interpreting the results can be tricky. What consultees say must also be balanced with other factors that affect decisions, such as resources and public policy requirements.

Consultation has been defined by us as:

A process of dialogue and inclusive communication that leads to a decision which encourages greater participation and positive engagement

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The notion of consultation being a dialogue implies an ongoing exchange of views and information, rather than a one-off event. Dialogue also implies two or more parties listening to and taking account of one another's views. However, the notion of inclusive communication 'leading to' a decision is important too. The results of consultation are an important part of making decisions.

Local Councils, police authorities and health authorities already have statutory duties to consult the public on a range of issues. The main drivers for this duty are (for example) framed under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. In some cases, this duty to consult has existed for many years – so most of these bodies have some long-standing experience of public consultation.

The wide range of consultation methods in use highlights the spectrum of activities that are referred to as consultation. Some social science commentators emphasise the distinctions between consultation and information-giving, market research and direct user control of services. In practice, however, it is sometimes difficult to make absolutely clear distinctions, and it may be more useful to focus on the idea of a spectrum of consultation methods, from those that are less involving to those that are more involving.

Broadly speaking, the kinds of consultation carried out by public service providers can be divided into two types:

- direct consultation with a sample of people; and
- consultation with delegates, such as area forums, regional agencies, local voluntary organisations or community organisation members, who represent the views of other local people

Direct consultation allows public authorities and regional agencies to find out the views of local people at first-hand. But in this kind of consultation it can be difficult to make consultees feel involved in the decision-making process, or to provide feedback to them on how their views were taken into account. Using delegates who represent the views of

others means that consultees can become more involved in the authority's decision-making processes, but runs the risk those delegates may not truly represent the wider community, or even, in few cases, the groups that have delegated them.

A compromise reached by some authorities is to set up standing panels of volunteers who can become more involved in the decision-making process, but who are not delegated to represent any views other than their own. But even in this model, participants may become too involved in, or knowledgeable about, the authority's processes and thus become progressively less representative of ordinary people.

It is possible for consultation to produce results that do not represent the views of local people as a whole, although this risk can be dealt with effectively if consultation is well planned and executed. The main potential problems are:

- using consultation mechanisms that allow a minority of people to dominate the process;
- not taking steps to ensure that a wide range of people participate; and
- using unrepresentative samples

The key to tackling these problems lies in selecting appropriate consultation tools. There will always be a risk that articulate, well-educated people will be better able to use available consultation mechanisms than other sections of the community. Nonetheless, there is a range of steps that authorities can take to manage this risk. One of the most important is not to rely on methods in which consultees select themselves. Any method that uses a statistically representative sample of the population (or the service user group, where this is appropriate) reduces the likelihood that the loudest voices will be the ones that are heard.

Introduction and methodology

For the purposes of this document, the term BME-VCS refers to all voluntary and community groups and organisations, including faith based organisations and places of religious worship.

Voice East Midlands organised a regional Black and minority ethnic consultation event to look at a new proposed Third Sector infrastructure organisation for the wider voluntary sector, which would also engage with the minority communities across the region.

The event was organised on the 12 June 2007 at the Nottingham Community College, over 50 regional, and sub regional Black and minority ethnic organisations and individuals attended the event from across the East Midlands. Some representatives from the wider voluntary and community sector also attended to participate in this event. (Please see Appendix One for list of delegates registered to attend)

Vivitas were consulted to offer an independent Chair to lead the event and a programme was suggested to the delegates in order to discuss the proposed structure for a single gateway for regional and sub-regional Black and minority ethnic community participation in the wider voluntary sector network.

Although the consultation event was sponsored by Voice East Midlands, it was initiated at the request of the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) and Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM).

Dr Mohammed P. Aslam from Vivitas introduced the event on behalf of the Voice East Midlands and commented that today was a very important landmark for change taking place within the wider voluntary sector movement. The changes that are being considered will create a new relationship and a new kind of partnership with the statutory sector and reshape the manner in which we talk with these agencies in the future.

He argued that we must at all times look at improving the way we do business in the voluntary sector and this is not always a bad thing. We also need to modernise our thinking, our approach and our communication methods in-order to enhance our impact on the work we do.

Dr Aslam commented that before we begin to find fault or weakness in any new structure, let us first of all look for the strength it can offer to the Third sector and to consider how this new idea may increase our participation and access to greater services and resources.

The workshop that led to the Round Table discussions for the delegates were facilitated by four facilitators and led on the four key questions which were enhanced by supplementary discussion points. The facilitators were as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| ▪ Dr. Mohammed Aslam | Vivitas |
| ▪ Milton Crosdale OBE | East Midlands Racial Equality Consortium |
| ▪ Amu Devani | East Midlands Racial Equality Consortium |
| ▪ Nik Travidi | Voice East Midlands |

The Agenda was deliberately kept loose so that delegates were able to consider the wider discussions and to examine in detail the implications of the changes that are expected to take place to create a single gateway for Third sector participation.

The event considered a series of discussion points which were presented to the delegates through four set questions. The questions were shared amongst the workshops and each workshop considered two questions for discussion and notes were taken by the facilitators of the responses, comments and views shared.

The key questions that were presented to the delegates are as follows:

1. How will the membership for the new infrastructure organisation be decided? (discuss)

It is important to remember that any new organisation will have to recruit a membership to its decision making body.

- Who should be involved?
- What should the criteria be for membership?
- How can we encourage BME organisations to become members?

2. What do you expect from the secretariat of the new infrastructure organisation? (discuss)

The secretariat for the management board is a crucial part of the workings of an organisation. Not only does it need to be a professional part of the organisation but also a body that reflects all aspects of the communities it serves.

- How should the secretariat be set up?
- Where should the secretariat be based once it becomes operational?
(Example - Voice EM, Engage EM, GOEM, EMDA, Regional Assembly EM)
- What should the secretariat be responsible for?

3. What do you think the responsibilities/functions of the infrastructure organisation/assembly should be? (discuss)

The key responsibilities will determine the impact the new infrastructure organisation will have on the general and overall work. It is important to understand the purpose of setting up the new infrastructure organisation as a means of creating a single gateway to debate and dialogue.

- How should the organisation determine its key responsibilities?
- What are the key responsibilities that reflect BME organisational and community needs?
- Is a single gateway for consultation a good model for BME communities?

4. How can we ensure this new model will adequately reflect BME representation? (discuss)

A single gateway for dialogue with BME communities will enable a single voice to reflect the needs of the local communities across the region. This model will enable this to take place.

- How can we increase greater participation from the BME communities?
- How will the assembly ensure that the management board reflects a fair representation from the BME communities?
- Will a single gateway be the best model for communication with BME communities?
- How will the assembly ensure that institutional discrimination does not take place?

This report will not be dealing with individual questions and the responses to them. The reasons for this are that each workshop had gone beyond the original guidelines for discussions and thereby creating areas of overlap on many of the issues. Therefore in this regard, it would be more beneficial to address the four questions collectively to ensure that we can cover the breath of the debate without losing any of the salient points that were raised by the delegates.

During the final plenary session the delegates and their facilitators were given an opportunity to feedback information and discussion points to the wider group and then to open up to a question and answer session. (The agenda for the event is set out in Appendix Two).

Voice East Midlands commissioned Vivitas to undertake the final analysis of the workshop outcomes and to present a completed draft report to the Acting Chief Executive by Tuesday 19 June 2007. Vivitas were asked to write the report to ensure transparency and independency over the analysis of the workshop outcomes. Voice East Midlands have played no part in the write-up of the report nor changed any part of the contents of this report except where there were points of errors or omissions relating to the general style of the report.

The following is an outline of the workshop discussions and the plenary session that followed. The comments, views and opinions have been collated from the discussion points shared at each of the workshops.

Feedback from the Workshops

The workshop discussions led some delegates to pursue the belief that at the heart of the government proposal for a new infrastructure model (Model) was an attempt to develop a generic tool designed to force BME-VCS to become acquiescent or submissive. Some workshop participants commented that they saw the hand of the government behind the initiative, most likely driven by 9/11 and 7/7 where BME-VCS are artificially forced to build bridges of partnership working where traditionally the wider VCS have unwittingly 'discouraged' this to happen. Furthermore few delegates were dismissive of the public authority's insistence on referring to the voluntary sector as the Third Sector. They feared that this is an attempt to control the voluntary/community sector and to rob them of their innovation and character by distracting them from their own identity and agenda by placing them in to a common identity and thereby reducing their individual characteristics that makes them unique.

The workshops discussed and collectively commented that the needs and requirements of the BME-VCS vary considerably. It is not enough to suggest that "*one size fits all*". The BME-VCS are as diverse as any other sector of society and this should be recognised at the start of any debate on the BME-VCS.

Equalities was a common strand that ran through the discussions and anxiety was shared by the delegates about the new Model, suggesting that it did not make adequate provision for proper and appropriate scrutiny to ensure that equalities was enshrined throughout the fabric of this Model.

Concern was shared by the delegates that the BME-VCS would be reluctant to positively endorse collaborative working under the new proposal without proper information and informed decisions around the new structure.

The equalities debate was an important and common concern as BME-VCS experience of working within a wider VCS framework across the East Midlands has previously shown to be inadequate and unhelpful when competing for access to common or shared resources. Many of the delegates had said that they did not have full confidence in the new Model and therefore further work was required to be undertaken to explore key questions such as:

- where do the interests of these communities (BME-VCS) fit within the Model
- how will the Model engage with BME-VCS and
- what level of influence will the BME-VCS have in the Executive of the new Model
- how much influence will the BME-VCS have within the Secretariat

In addition to the key questions that challenged the main structure of the new Model, concern was expressed about how BME faith groups may become excluded as they are not often seen as an integral part of mainstream voluntary or community organisations by the wider VCS.

There were many questions that were raised about the overall structure and this offered the delegates an opportunity to breakdown the points in to distinct discussion areas:

- The Assembly/Parliament
- The Executive
- The Secretariat

In addition to this some of the delegates resisted the name “Assembly/Parliament” and felt that it should be renamed with a softer title such as “The Partnership Forum or the Partnership Network”. This was mostly due to the term Assembly/Parliament sounding distant from the kind of terminology used by the BME-Third sector.

The Assembly/Parliament

There were several issues concerning the Assembly/Parliament (Assembly) which created some intense discussions.

One key area of discussion that came up in several of the workshops was the membership of the Assembly and how the Assembly will attract a representative membership of the different communities, including faith based organisations, from across the BME-VCS. Several delegates discussed the newly settled and migrant communities not represented within the overall framework. The general Model appears to exclude many of the sub-cultural identities of voluntary and community organisations and this was something that needs to be addressed before the final structure is agreed.

The suggestions made by the delegates were that the Assembly should undertake a commitment through VOICE East Midlands that the BME communities will be invited from across the different community groups to share in the overall membership of the Assembly. Also sub-regional Assemblies should be set up who can engage with local communities.

The fabric of the discussions focussed on ensuring that there was adequate involvement in the Assembly and that every effort should be made to ensure that the BME-VCS will have full confidence in the new Model.

The Assembly model did not offer to show the detail of how the regional and sub-regional organisations from across the BME sector will be involved and the format and process for engagement was noticeably missing.

The Executive Board

Tokenism was the biggest 'fear' expressed by the delegates who said that "we should not accept any token gestures".

The delegates made the following observations on the new Model which are laid out as follows:

(We have attempted to keep these comments broadly in the same terminology and vocabulary that was used by the delegates)

- BME communities and the BME sector have varying needs and requirements. How will the Executive address these within the structure?
- Executive Board members should understand and identify the needs of BME sector. There is lot of expertise within the sector and the needs should be accommodated within the Model.
- The Executive and membership should reflect the diverse BME communities' resident in the region.
- Whose responsibility is it to identify the potential members? And who had the organisational infrastructure in place for the region to engage with the BME-VCS.

Many of the delegates agreed that Voice East Midlands was the only voluntary body (at present) that had the infrastructure in place to undertake this work and to ensure that the wider BME voice can be heard through its internal and external partnership working. The general consensus was the Voice East Midlands should be one of the key agencies to lead the BME-VCS in this debate.

The general discussion took place, with broad agreement, about the Executive being well placed to lead the secretariat and that further work was required to ensure that appropriate and adequate representation reflected the membership of both the Executive and the Secretariat from the BME-VCS.

- The Executive should identify the needs of the new and emerging communities e.g. Somalis, Eastern European etc. There are lot of problems and difficulties experienced by these communities. There are institutional barriers and misunderstanding amongst the service providers in the region.

Several delegates suggested the discussions should be opened up with the local Racial Equality Council's representative body (EMREC) to discuss how the wider BME communities and especially the newly arrived communities can be engaged in this process and to ensure that the equalities agenda was a visible and significant part of the Model's infrastructure.

- The Executive should have necessary resources and power to commission any research which benefits the sector. The Model should be funded adequately in order to support the regional infrastructure. A reflective proportion of the financial resources currently allocated should be ring fenced for the BME-VCS who can then compete equally within any structure.
- There was a question raised whether there will be a payment for the Executive board members. One delegate suggested financial loss, travel expenses and any child care costs to attend the meetings should be met by the new Model.
- The Executive should have adequate financial resources to support the proposed Model. This will enable to provide support and guidance to sub groups and respond to any issues/consultation from any Government Departments and EMDA.
- The Executive should develop policy and quality standards and be held democratically accountable to the Assembly and the VCS as a whole.
- There should be proper selection and election process for Executive board members who should attend the meetings on a regular basis. There should be at least 25% from BME sector on the Executive. There should be a Job Description and Personal Specification of the board member. Many of the delegates agreed that the role on the Board should be a paid function.
- The Executive should resolve any disputes, conflict and tensions within the membership.
- Substitutes should be allowed to attend the Executive in case a member cannot attend meetings.
- The interests of the BME-VCS should be protected within the structure. These can be achieved by having meetings with the groups and sub regional partnerships through (for example) Voice East Midlands.
- The Executive should play a key role in drafting any policies and responsibilities of members. They should take responsibility and ownership of these policies.
- There should be an agreed independent mechanism of election of the Chair of the Executive. The BME-VCS should be allocated senior positions on the Executive to ensure their interests are truly represented.
- The model should reassure the BME communities. There should be regular meetings with GOEM and EMDA and any responses should be fed back to the BME-VCS as soon as possible.
- Delegates were concerned with the proposed timescale and lack time to feed any comments back in to the BME-VCS.
- One delegate commented "There are various CVS's in the region and dominated by white groups and communities. They have failed to engage with us in past. Why did they not engage with BME-VCS? What guarantee do we have that they will not continue to do the same in the future?"

- Single gateway is not a good model for consultation for BME-VCS due to historical reasons. This was said in the context that BME-VCS who have traditionally been marginalised by the wider VCS and the public sector where joint working arrangements have been proposed. This has been for several reasons such as competition for resources, institutionalised prejudice & barriers and lack of understanding of the needs of the BME-VCS.
- How will the Executive address the current inequalities that are reflected in the community?

Delegates were equally scathing of the wider VCS partners whom they believe were trying to isolate the BME-VCS and to take a larger than a fair share of their role within the new Model for themselves.

They emphasized that the BME-VCS was badly underdeveloped and there was a clear need to develop and resource this sector more substantially than they are at present.

Delegates did not regard the Model as being equality proofed and had difficulty of identifying a dynamic role for Voice East Midlands within the governance of the new arrangement.

Delegates further questioned whether the proposed Model was truly democratic insofar as the appointment of the Executive. It did not appear that the Assembly would be appointing the Executive. The Model gives the impression that the Executive would be appointed by a small clique. If this is the case then it would raise serious questions of accountability.

Delegates were anxious to ensure that the Assembly did not become a glorified talking shop. It should engage in a bottom up approach and address real and tangible issue affecting the voluntary and community sector and mandate the Executive. The Assembly would then need to meet at least 3 times per year.

The Secretariat

Delegates focused on 3 broad principles regarding the secretariat and raised questions about its fundamental role.

1. A low level secretariat that provides administrative services to the Executive and the Parliament/Assembly. Derbyshire has half time person in post.
2. A high level Secretariat with a small core team. They will provide services as in 1 above but they will have additional responsibilities for commissioning, capacity building and research and ensuring that as far as possible that existing Agencies do the work and;
3. A well resource Secretariat with specialist staff with strong sector interest. Their function will include 2&3. They will also have additional role such as training, analysis of government documents and policies from statutory bodies, engage with compact and ensure that the BME-VCS and the wider VCS are allocated better share of financial resources and benchmark good practice in the sector etc.

Two and Three above will then have staff at the appropriate level to interact and negotiate with staff from the regional statutory bodies.

Some delegates felt that the Secretariat should be set up by the Executive and be also accountable to the Assembly.

If 1&2 was pursued then existing Agencies will have to compromise and possible re-fashion their services to a delivery model. It was acknowledge that this would be contentious.

They then heeded the advice given at the opening session 'to grasp the opportunity'. Some delegates were eager to have a 'neutral secretariat'. They however, questioned how this might be best achieved. They explored various ideas such as TUPE in staff from different infrastructure agencies or to have an open and transparent selection process. These were eventually deemed to be details which should best left to the Executive to decide. It was noted, that as the Derbyshire Infrastructure Agency does not have a legal entity, so their staff employment is delegated to the Derbyshire Rural Community Council. The same issues could arise in this venture. It is important to recognise that the Derbyshire model as one possible avenue for discussions where Engage East Midlands and Voice East Midlands can be recognised as the lead agencies for the new Model.

It was also agreed by the delegates that the secretariat should have an allotted number of primary staff who would work exclusively with the BME-VCS. The suggestions where as follows:

- Chief Officer
- Communications and Consultation Officer
- Administrative Officer

Delegates had three thoughts about location of the Secretariat.

1. EMDA or GOEM
2. Independent base
3. Voice East Midlands

The delegates were split on whether the location of the secretariat should be with Voice East Midlands or an independent location.

Delegates felt that Voice East Midlands should enter the deliberations as an equal partner to Engage East Midlands or any other body and should ensue that all aspect of the structure, employment and operations, was equality proofed by an independent agency. Whoever undertook this role should have an established network of experiences and knowledge of working within the equalities field and have the confidence of the BME-VCS.

Review and Reflections

The delegates shared concerns about the overall issues raised in the consultation event and suggestions were made about how the new Model will be able to secure the confidence of the BME-VCS as it presently stands. It was said that there is no hard and fast rule in undertaking a confidence building exercise providing the exercise is transparent and democratic in its process. If the new Model is to secure the interest of the BME-VCS and is genuine in its commitment towards engaging with the BME-VCS then agreement has to be sought to offer a greater participatory role of the BME-VCS within the framework of the Model.

The recurring theme which was discussed with some degree of passion was equality proofing and how this should be undertaken as part of the overall scrutiny functions for the new Model. It was said that monitoring of the work was an important part of the scrutiny process and this should be an independent process within the Model.

The leadership functions within the Model are causing some concern and it is almost perplexing to understand that the BME-VCS will not have a significant role within the overall Model and especially within the Secretariat. Many of the delegates felt that if this part of the organisational framework significantly excludes the BME-VCS, the Model will be doomed to failure. This point was expressed with an extraordinary commitment to ensuring that the BME-VCS will not sit back and engage in token gestures but will play an influencing role in shaping the work of the infrastructure model.

The consultation event acknowledged that this proposed Model was a good opportunity to reflect and develop the functions and impact of the VCS within the region. They also acknowledged that for the first time the BME-VCS have an opportunity of working collaboratively within the Third sector as an equal partner. But it was also said this can not happen at any costs. The interests of the BME-VCS should remain paramount to any proposed Model and that equalities should remain a significant part of the diverse network of partnership working. The delegates suggested this can only happen by ensuring that every aspect of the work of the Model is scrutinised, valued and measured. Equality proofing was a key element to the discussions and this consideration will offer confidence and accountability to be transparent.

The debates that shaped much of the day offered excitement, innovative thoughts, creative discussions and challenging views. The delegates were given every opportunity to share their visions, views and opinions on how the VCS across the East Midlands should engage in partnership working. The main criticism of this event was that delegates didn't feel that there was enough information about the new Model and that further discussions were important to have before a final decision is taken by EMDA and GOEM. The criticism in this respect was that some felt the Model was being rushed through without proper thought to the long term implications for the BME-VCS.

Governance issues were raised throughout the afternoon, as the Model was not clear on its accountability structure and further work was required to ensure that the BME-VCS played an equal role in the overall governance framework. This was particularly evident in a discussion concerning the impact on the work, role and influence of the regional and in particular the sub-regional BME groups across the East Midlands within the general work programme of the Executive and the Secretariat.

New and emerging community organisations were perceived to be excluded from the overall work of the new Model and this was raised as an important consideration. Voice East Midlands were asked how they intended to involve these groups and what steps were planned for their full participation. Voice East Midlands said that newly arrived communities are already invited in to the general membership of their organisation and that every effort will be made to engage with them around issues that are prevalent to their needs. Voice East Midlands have already set out a draft policy paper which looks at discussing this aspect of their work with a number of newly settled communities such as the Somali community, the Polish migrant community and other newly settled communities to produce an action plan for developing this sector for future action. The delegates acknowledged that Voice East Midlands currently is the only regional infrastructure organisation which has a wide brief for engagement with the BME-VCS and this should be enhanced for long term planning with the BME-VCS. Several delegates expressed their support for Voice East Midlands to continue to represent the sector on the new Model as it was seen as an exemplar of good practice.

The workshops explored the community cohesion debate and questioned how this was going to shape the general outline of the new Model. It was acknowledged that the VCS have little or no experience of what is required from the community cohesion debate and therefore how can they be realistically be expected to take this debate forward without the full involvement of the BME-VCS.

It was suggested that the new Model should have a phased development programme over several years. If the Model is rushed without proper thought, this may isolate and exclude some parts of the BME-VCS and therefore causing a breakdown in the confidence building process. Equally the phased programme will allow the new Model to regularly inform the BME-VCS on developments and enable informed feedback on the general development of the organisation; it will ensure that resources have been allocated and that skills are adequately identified to meet its need.

Capacity building was discussed and questions were raised on how the VCS saw the capacity of the BME-VCS within the new Model. Institutionalised racism and perceived prejudice were identified as significant barriers towards identifying capacity building needs of the BME sector and safeguards were needed to challenge these negative perceptions which seriously hinder the active involvement of the wider BME communities across the region.

Conclusion

Vivitas were asked to lead the consultation event and to draw together an independent analysis of its outcomes in this report. We have therefore attempted to capture the salient points in this report and covered the majority of views that were shared. Inevitably there will be some views and opinions that have not been recorded here and this is mostly due to managing the capacity of the feedback from the workshops. Nevertheless the important issue discussed in this report are those views and comments which will help shape the future of community and organisational consultation across the VCS and the BME-VCS together.

The comments shared in this report offer immense thought and immeasurable views that are based upon decades of mistrust, isolation, exclusion and perceptions of prejudicial barriers faced by the BME-VCS. The event has achieved inestimable level of positive feedback that offers an insight to the discussions and debates that take place across the

BME-VCS and hopefully these comments will aid the growth of a positive and valuable working relationship across the wider VCS for the future.

On completion of this consultation exercise we are confident that the delegates had been offered every opportunity to discuss the new Model for the wider VCS for the region. The delegates shared an unexpected level of challenging points and sought assurance that this exercise will offer an opportunity to the BME-VCS to engage with and reflect upon discussions which are important for the BME-VCS and that regular feedback will be offered on the developments that take place.

We are of the view that delegates deserve regular feedback and that the outcomes of this report will be given to (at the very least) all those that attended on how the new Model is developing. Transparency can only be evident when people feel they have the full facts of the information available to them and their colleagues. Democracy is only possible when shared visions are as a result of shared discussions.

The independent Chair of the consultation exercise, Dr Mohammed P. Aslam agreed at the plenary event that he will write to all the delegates present with a response from EMDA and GOEM on the outcomes of the consultation report as part of the agreement on the conclusions reached and the outcomes agreed. No time period was agreed but it was generally understood that this would happen within the next six months.

List of Delegates who registered to attend the event

Appendix One

Name	Organisation
Mohammed Aslam	Vivitas Resourcing and Independent Chair for the Consultation Seminar
Amreen Hussain	Nottingham City Council
Amu Devani	East Midlands Racial Equality Consortium
Amy Bladen	Voluntary and Community Development & Neighbourhood Support
Bhavesh Jani	Nottingham Asian Arts Council
Bimmy Rai	Derby Millennium Network
Carol Leeming	Mainstream Partnership
Eddie Mighten	Voice East Midlands
Gopa Nath	Surtal Asian Arts
Hassan Ahmed	Nottingham Community College
Helal Shahid	Commission for Racial Equality
Henri Baptiste	Enterprising Communities
Issak Abdi	Somalia Service Providers Forum
Nur Yaryare	SAEMP Somali Media Project
Jane Barratt	Government Office of the East Midlands
Joy Smith	Youth Services
Kate Milner	Voice East Midlands
Len Shillingford	Hadhari Project
Lubna Alvi	Kamyabi Project
Lubna Sana	Voice East Midlands
Martin Ball	Voice for Change England
Masud Ahmed	Neighbourhood Services
Michael Henry	Human Relations Network
Milton Crosdale	East Midlands Racial Equalities Consortium
Najeeb Nazir	Pakistan Centre
Nik Trivedi	Voice East Midlands
Nizam Chowdury	MEEM
Parveen Mirza	Asian Women's Project
Patsy Hunter	Project Development Consortium
Pete Edwards	Derby Infrastructure Consortium
Prakash Panchal	LEMP
Randeep Singh	Dunkirk & Lenton Partnership Forum
Resham Aujla	Indian Community Centre
Richard Chester	Charnwood Borough Council
Sangita Jobanputra	Voice East Midlands
Seema Mohinder	Nottingham Asian Arts Council
Shamsher Chohan	LEMP
Vandna Gohil	Voice for Change England
Nur Yaryare	SAEMP
Sidney McFarlane	Lincolnshire Racial Equality Council
Shahid Sharif	Voice East Midlands CEO – Designate
Tasib Yusaf	Muslim Community Organisation
I Jamil	Equality First [db]
Akhtar Hussein	Muslim Community Organisation
S. Mohamed	Muslim Community Organisation
N. Agalu	Muslim Community Organisation
John Grey	CONTRAST
Safdar Azam	Project Pro-Active
M. Riasat	Muslim Community Organisation
R. Aziz	Esperanto
S. Riaz	Esperanto
Raja Fazal	UPKO
M. Taj	UPKO
Syed Anwar	Nottinghamshire Library Services
Anna Ratcliff	Nottinghamshire Black Partnership
Delroy Brown	ACNA Centre
Murphy Brown	NCOMPASS Northants



Round Table Discussions

YOUR VOICE ...

*A New Vision for the Future of the BME Voluntary and Community Sector
in the East Midlands*

Agenda

12.00 Noon	Registration and Lunch
1.00pm	Opening comments by the Acting Chief Executive & Chair of Voice East Midlands
1.15pm	Introduction by Dr Mohammed P. Aslam Vivitas Resourcing. Independent Chair for the consultation exercise
1.30pm	Workshop session 1
2.30pm	Refreshments – Break
2.45pm	Workshop session 2
3.45pm	Plenary – Feedback from workshops, Q & A
4.30pm	Finish

The results of this consultation will be written up in a report format and a copy will be sent to delegates for their information. Any comments, views or suggestions can be fed back directly to the Acting Chief Executive Nik Trivedi Tel: 0115 950 8820 or email him on nik@voice-em.org.uk