

Item No.	Classification	Date	Committee
1	Open	14.12.05	Cross Party Working Group
Report Title		Strengthening Community Cohesion in Southwark	
Ward (s) or groups affected		All	
From		Chief Executive	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Working Group note the actions to date to develop and embed cohesion policy and practice into mainstream Council and partner activity.
- 1.2 That the Working Party note that the impact of Council policies and services on good community relations is included as one element of an Equality Impact Assessment.
- 1.3 That Members consider what further actions they might wish to promote, for example, visits to mosques, Member links with different communities, area-based cohesion events via Community Councils.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The following recommendations in Lord Ouseley's report related to the Council's role and responsibilities in respect of promoting good community relations and cohesion:

5	There should be improved E&D information available to elected Members so as to generate greater interface with diverse communities and to provide consistent and meaningful feedback to communities and service users as well as promoting better relations between cultural communities
7	The Equalities Action Plan should highlight and prioritise targets explicitly aimed at promoting good race relations in the borough, which is a statutory requirement
22	The Council will wish to be reassured that existing arrangements for assessing and responding to the potential for inter-ethnic youth conflict are adequate and effective
18	The promotion of good relations between people of all backgrounds must be a priority for schools, through learning and in the curriculum, so that all children and young people have knowledge and understanding of different groups of people and the opportunity to learn with and from each other.

- 2.2 The Council, as a leading partner in the Southwark Alliance Community Cohesion Steering Group, has been at the forefront of national developments in taking a proactive approach to community cohesion. This started in a structured way in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe in 2002, and was consolidated through the Home Office Community Cohesion Pathfinder programme from March 2003 to September 2004. Since that date cohesion has become a major strand of embedded work with partners, with a focus on inter-generational relationships, inter-ethnic, faith and cultural contacts, and on tackling territorial divides.

2.3 Through this work, a definition of community cohesion relevant to Southwark has been adopted across partners:

Building community cohesion can be described as working towards a set of social relationships where:

- ***There is an absence of tension and harassment between people of different cultures, races, ages, faiths and lifestyles***
- ***There is mutual understanding and respect between people of different cultures, races, ages, faiths and lifestyles***
- ***There is positive inter-personal contact and engagement within daily life between different groups***
- ***While respecting diversity, there are some shared values between different groups about acceptable/unacceptable behaviours and attitudes.***

2.4 This definition indicates that promoting good community relations encompasses but goes well beyond tackling the deprivation that can be a catalyst for tensions, and interventions to address direct and indirect discrimination. It involves recognising that policies, whilst treating everyone equally or aiming to overcome past disadvantage, can reinforce communities living parallel lives. It encompasses a proactive approach to building positive social relationships, tackling inappropriate attitudes and behaviours, and engaging in debates about shared values and identity.

2.5 The Council's role and approach is multi-dimensional, reflecting that cohesion cannot be imposed on communities, and needs to be built by, within and between communities. These roles involve:

- Strategic leadership
- Policy and service delivery
- Developing and sharing good practice
- Facilitating and supporting community-based practice

2.6 The sections below identify some of the key activities that are taking place linked to each role, including areas for further development. The Working Group has already considered a detailed report from the Director of Children's Services in respect of Recommendation 22.

3. FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

Strategic leadership

3.1 Through its democratic mandate and community leadership role, the Council is uniquely placed to speak and act on behalf of the community in proactively demonstrating commitment to promoting cohesion and challenging intolerance. Over recent months, there have been a number of practical demonstrations of this leadership role. Examples include:

At the start of the Iraq war, issuing a joint statement with the police and faith groups about tolerance and understanding between different communities
As a result of 7/7, issuing a joint statement with the police about community reassurance, and holding reassurance meetings with Bengali and Somali communities who felt particularly vulnerable
Piloting Home Office Citizens Day (one of four areas by invitation) as an opportunity to promote the diversity and cohesion of Southwark's communities
Promoting through Community Councils a range of events and activities that bring communities together and send a message of tolerance and understanding e.g. Dulwich Multi-faith Walk, I love Peckham
Launching the Southwark Community Games as a major initiative to bring young people together across faiths, cultures and territories
Using the MORI survey to provide baseline measures of cohesion against which to monitor progress
Development and implementation of a strategic Cohesion action plan to embed understanding and co-ordination across departments and partner agencies
Creation of youth provider networks, bringing together all the agencies working with young people in key areas, to work together on cohesion related initiatives
Inclusion of community cohesion issues as part of the Member development equalities training programme

3.2 Of particular concern nationally at present is the degree to which people of Muslim faith feel valued and engaged with mainstream life. The Council is working closely with the Southwark Muslim Forum, the Southwark Multi-faith Forum, the Southwark Somali Forum, the Bengali community and individual voluntary groups to support their engagement and to widen understanding within the whole community about Islam. Further work is planned in relation to young people and links with mosques.

3.3 One key leadership role is to assess and monitor levels of community cohesion and tension. There are two types of measures currently available:

- MORI survey data
- Hate crime data

3.4 In terms of MORI, we have data for two consecutive years, using the national cohesion measures. This indicates that overall, people are feeling more positive about community relations. There are however some significant differences between different areas, and further work is taking place to understand why this is the case. There does appear to be a close association between more positive attitudes and areas of greater affluence.

	2004	2005
% who definitely agree or tend to agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together	74%	83%
% who definitely agree or tend to agree that their area is a place where residents respect ethnic difference between people	71%	79%
% who regularly meet and talk with people of different ethnic origins in particular locations	Shops 58% N'hood 47% Work 36% Leisure 32% Transp 30% Study 16% Worship 13% Relative 12% Sports 10%	Shops 67% N'hood 49% Work 39% Leisure 37% Transp 38% Study 19% Worship 18% Relative 11% Sports 13%

3.5 In terms of race and homophobic incidents, the data is as follows.

	2003/4	2004/5	% change
Racial incidents (incident attended by police)	607	588	- 3%
Racial offences (incident where law been broken)	565	492	- 13%
Homophobic incidents (incident attended by police)	108	122	+ 13%
Homophobic offences (incident where law been broken)	88	96	+ 9%

3.6 For the half-year 2005/6 compared to the same period in 2004/5, the figures are:

	2004/5	2005/6	% change
Racial incidents (incident attended by police)	309	280	- 9%
Racial offences (incident where law been broken)	246	262	+ 7%
Homophobic incidents (incident attended by police)	64	60	- 6%
Homophobic offences (incident where law been broken)	48	49	+ 2%

3.7 The trends and hotspots for hate crime are monitored closely through the Safer Southwark Partnership and the community concern meetings held between the police, Council and community organisations. The recently adopted Hate Crime Strategy includes activity aimed at increasing reporting, so that agencies can better target both prevention and intervention. While compared to other types of crime, the number of incidents is relatively small, communities say that fear of race and

homophobic hate crime is corrosive of their confidence in statutory agencies and sense of belonging in Southwark. Analysis seems to suggest that race hate crime or religious and faith related incidents are linked with general heightened criminal behaviour. Homophobic or transgender incidents are worse during weekday evenings.

3.8 Targets in respect of hate crime have already been adopted by the Safer Southwark Partnership. Discussions will take place over the next few months about what may be appropriate targets to set for measuring progress on the community relations aspects of cohesion, to be incorporated in the Council's next Corporate Equalities Action Plan.

Policy and service delivery

3.9 The Council's policy and service delivery remit also has a major impact on how communities relate to each other, affecting the degree of cross-cultural contact and understanding. For this reason each Equality Impact Assessment includes an assessment of the contribution of the policy or function to promoting cohesion and good community relations.

	Examples of policies and functions with potential high impact on cohesion
Regeneration	Promotion of mixed residential communities Promotion of mixed business communities Employment strategy
Community Safety	Hate crime Strategy and services Anti-social behaviour strategy and services
Housing	Geographical distribution of larger housing units and those adapted for people with disabilities Housing allocations policies and practice
Education	School admissions Opportunities for inter-school contacts and joint activity Bullying policies (new policy being launched) School curriculum reflective of all cultures Provision and programmes of youth services
Health and social care	Work with individual children and families/groups used as opportunity to improve understanding Opportunities for vulnerable adults and older people for cross cultural and inter-generational contact

3.10 As part of their overall approach to equalities, Council departments are developing more explicit approaches to cohesion as part of day-to-day service delivery. Cohesion issues will be included in the Community Impact Statements on all formal reports to Members.

3.11 Evidence of community tensions elsewhere in Britain and in Europe indicate a strong cross-over between deprivation and community tensions. They also demonstrate that misunderstandings can escalate about who the beneficiaries are of targeted intervention programmes. This demonstrates the importance not only of the policy or service itself, but also of providing accessible information and sustaining dialogue with all communities about what is happening in a locality. The report on Community Engagement elsewhere on this agenda sets out some of the ways the Council seeks to undertake this.

Developing and sharing good practice

3.12 A key lesson from the Cohesion Pathfinder is the need to build the skills and understanding of public and voluntary sector practitioners about what cohesion is about. A key message has been that building cohesion is not necessarily about doing different things, but about doing the usual things differently. A key to this is identifying how as part of day-to-day business different communities, generations, and faiths can engage with each other. Such approaches need to be sensitive to valuing the diversity and uniqueness of different cultures, faiths and identities, whilst ensuring that communities do not become isolated and inward-looking.

3.13 Working with partners, the Council's work in developing tools and training to build understanding has gained national recognition. Work to date and in hand includes:

Celebrating Southwark Booklets	A Sense of Belonging – exploring identity in 21 st century A Mark of Faith – explaining how faith affects everyday life – a national 'best seller' and used by Home Office How To ... build community cohesion in Southwark – practical guide for TRAs, youth workers, faith groups, public sector workers including how to use previous booklets in education and community settings A booklet (s) is planned on attitudes and prejudices towards learning disabilities and mental health
Cross sector training	Undertaken with wide range of Council staff – e.g. wardens, housing officers, youth workers, regeneration staff Request to train 130 PCT staff
Community Cohesion Steering Group	Brings statutory, voluntary, and faith partners together locally to share practice and learning, and support partner activities
National and regional Learning and Practice networks	Linking with Home Office Faith and Cohesion Unit, GLA, GOL, to share Southwark's practice and learn from elsewhere.

Facilitating practice

3.14 The fourth dimension of the Council's work on community cohesion is to support financially, or through offering expertise, or in some cases delivering directly, activities and interventions explicitly designed to strengthen cohesion and good community relations 'on the ground'.

3.15 The Family Learning Activity Trip initiative is one illustration of how doing the usual things differently can contribute to cohesion. Many schools arrange outings for

pupils and families. Without careful planning these can simple reinforce playground cliques and parents existing friendship networks, making others feel excluded. The FLAT initiative in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe was designed to break down barriers. Through pre-planning and encouragement a mixed group of children and parents opted for each trip. Ice-breaking activities were included, and follow-up contacts were facilitated after the trip. Organisers commented '*On the way out, none of the adults were attempting to talk with each other. But on the way back there was a lot more togetherness between everyone, singing and talking about the games they played, tree climbing, etc. Lots of communication around shared experiences.*'

3.16 As understanding of cohesion widens, the number and range of activities that have an explicit or implicit cohesion aspect is also growing. A number of these were recently reported to Community Councils and are listed in the Annex.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Cohesion cannot be imposed from above, and the development of both policy and practice has taken place through the multi-agency Cohesion Steering Group of Southwark Alliance involving statutory, voluntary and faith organisations. The Southwark Alliance stakeholder conference in November 2004 adopted the Southwark definition of cohesion as a framework for action. Each individual cohesion activity involves working with the relevant community organisations – TRAs, faith groups, youth projects, community of interest forums – to design and deliver appropriate interventions.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council's strategic and co-ordinating role in promoting cohesion is embedded in the core business of the organisation. Council officers support local community organisations to access special resources for particular initiatives.

6. COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

6.1 This report deals specifically with the Council's duties to promote good community relations. The strategic leadership and policy interventions, coupled with their practical delivery on the ground are designed to promote tolerance and positive relationships between people of different ethnic backgrounds and faiths, between younger people and adults, towards people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and across different areas of the borough.

6.2 Through a combination of strategic leadership and grass roots activity, embedded into the Council and partner agencies core business, the aim is to both sustain and strengthen Southwark as a positive place to live, work, learn and have fun for people of all backgrounds.

6.3 Ongoing assessment of success will be measured in part by the MORI and Hate crime data, in part through the Equality Impact Assessment programme, and through feedback at community councils and other involvement events and opportunities.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Independent Review of the Council's Equality and	Social Inclusion, Town Hall, Peckham Road, SE5	Nathalie Hadjifotiou 020 7525 7194

Diversity Framework	8UB	
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APPENDIX 1

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Chief Executive	
Report Author	Nathalie Hadjifotiou, Head of Social Inclusion	
Version	Final	
Dated	5.12.05	
Key Decision		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS /DIRECTORATES /EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Borough Solicitor and Secretary		
Chief Finance Officer		
Chief Officers	YES	
Leader & Executive Member	YES	YES