



HILLINGDON

LONDON

Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee Review Scoping Report 2012/13

OBJECTIVE

Community Cohesion

Aim of review

The review aims to examine how Council services are working in order to mitigate against the potential risk factors that can impact upon community cohesion and build upon the positives that underpin resilience in communities. The review will include a particular focus in relation to perception of fairness, transparency and equality of access.

Terms of Reference

- To learn about community cohesion in Hillingdon
- To understand the risk factors that undermine community cohesion
- To assess the effectiveness of the positive work undertaken to promote community cohesion in Hillingdon.
- To identify whether there are any particular issues or challenges that undermine community cohesion in Hillingdon.
- To identify any measures that would address any issues identified above and would promote community cohesion in Hillingdon.

Background

What is community cohesion?

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Community cohesion is about a creating a sense of belonging, valuing diversity, tackling inequalities and promoting interaction to develop positive relationships within a community.

The Institute of Community Cohesion uses the definition:

“community cohesion is widely used to describe a state of harmony or tolerance between people from different backgrounds living within a community. Linked to the concept of social capital and the idea that if we know our neighbours and contribute to community activity then we are more likely to look out for each other, increase cohesion and minimise cost of dependency on institutional care”

In addition community cohesion is about relationships within communities, and about addressing differences between people, that may sometimes cause division, misunderstanding or tensions that, in turn, affect the way that communities interact with one another and see themselves. This is not exclusive to ethnic or faith groups but can also include, for example, the perceptions of young people and anti-social behaviour or socio-economic differences and how they can influence social interactions and involvement in community life.

Reasons for the review

The impact of the economic downturn has inevitably placed a strain on families and communities as resources are reduced and opportunities for employment and prosperity reduced. Adhered to this are the austerity measures which the public sector has been subject to, which will have had some impact on the delivery of services, possibly to the most vulnerable in the Borough.

Threats from extremism and terrorism are still real and can cause conflict, tensions, prejudice and misunderstanding within communities, particularly in these difficult times

Hillingdon has become more diverse with many areas seeing the proportion of white and ethnic minority communities more evenly spread. At the same time the Borough is experiencing increases in the number of young people and a growing older population.

The Council’s approach, therefore, has been to understand what our community cohesion challenges are in Hillingdon and where in the Borough, risks to community cohesion are greatest. The review could explore this.

Supporting the Cabinet & Council’s policies and objectives

This review will support the work of the Council as part of its Equality Duties to ensure promotion of good relations.

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To deliver upon the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy with partners.

To deliver excellent services to our residents and achieve our aim of putting residents first.

INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Key Issues

For purposes of the review it is important to recognise where the positive contributions to community cohesion are taking place and promote greater opportunities for building on those positives and underpin the resilience within communities. Improving our knowledge of what works and what helps will reduce the risk.

Such as:

- Strong local leadership (political, community etc)
- Strong communication activity/strategy to engage with local communities
- Visible local initiatives
- Developing a local sense of civic pride
- Uniting local people on issues affecting the borough
- Strong partnership approach to local solutions
- Capacity building and sustainable approach to community engagement and community development which is inclusive and embraces the diversity of the borough

Positive outcomes in terms of community cohesion can influence and make an impact upon:

Increased sense of belonging
Increased participation in community activity
Increased satisfaction with services
Increased participation in sports, leisure and cultural activities
Reduced community tension
Increased community interaction
Reduced health inequalities
Increased aspirations
Reduced isolation
Increased health and well-being
Reduction in crime
Pride of place
Reduction in fear of crime
Increased educational attainment

Remit - who / what is this review covering?

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Stronger Communities – Policy, Performance and Partnerships – Central Services
Adult education
Libraries
Schools
Sports and leisure services

Connected work (recently completed, planned or ongoing)

The review will be provided with details of some of the positive work which is being undertaken in Hillingdon which includes:

- Hillingdon Improvement Programme work streams in relation to Civic Pride and the borough's Heritage
- Supporting local groups:
 - Voluntary sector support including core grants
 - Support for the Hillingdon Inter Faith Network.
 - Women in the Community Network
- Local Community Engagement including through Health Promotion
- Community engagement, Pride of Place and Town centres programmes
- Work with schools and the development of the Schools Community Cohesion Partnership.
- Libraries – community engagement activities
- Sport and Leisure programmes
- Adult Education – community adult learning and ESOL provisions
- Customer Engagement activities

Key information required

How residents perceive the provision of Council services and how accessible those services are?

How does the Council work with residents to promote a sense of pride and belonging, promotes equality of opportunity and sense of community?

How does the Council run services so that it can counter risks and potential tensions and perceived inequalities?

How enabling residents to become actively involved and engaged with Council services can improve residents' perception and satisfaction levels and promote sense of fairness, equal treatment and sense of pride in the Borough.

What are services doing?

How are Council services measuring residents' feedback and perceptions?

How are Council services engaging individuals from all backgrounds and demographics within our local areas?

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How are Council services promoting involvement and participation?

EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

Witnesses

Stronger Communities Officer and related community projects: HIFN , Women in the Community
Chair of Strong and Active Communities Partnership
Schools representation
Adult Education
Library services
Sports and Leisure services

Intelligence

The Government has recently published its integration strategy: *“Creating the conditions for integration”*

This strategy outlines the Government’s aim in promoting an integrated society, where everyone can play a full part in local and national life. Where people from different backgrounds treat each other with respect and contribute together. : *“integration is achieved when neighbourhoods, families and individuals come together on issues which matter to them”*

The strategy has outlined the key factors for integration as:

Common Ground : a clear sense of shared aspirations and values which focus on what we have in common rather than our difference.

Responsibility: a strong sense of our mutual commitments and obligations, which bring personal and social responsibility

Social mobility: people able to realise their potential to get on in life

Participation and empowerment: people of all backgrounds have the opportunities to take part, be heard and take decisions in local and national life

Tackling intolerance and extremism: a robust response to threats, whether discrimination, extremism or disorder that deepen division and increase tensions.

The Government highlight the link between community cohesion and integration, but issues relating to inequality and individuals experience are

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also important in enabling positive interaction and relationships in communities.

Resident's survey

CACI

Census

Government policy and strategies

ICoCo

Other research and analysis of community cohesion, social capital, integration and building stronger communities

Consultation and Communications

None at this stage

LOGISTICS

Proposed timeframe & milestones

Meeting Date *	Action	Purpose / Outcome
18 September 2012	Agree Scoping Report Witness Session 1	Information and analysis Council's Stronger Communities Officer Carole Jones, Chair of Strong and Active Communities Partnership and Head Teacher
16 October 2012	Witness Session 2	Council officer representatives from Adult Education, Sports & Leisure and Libraries
13 November 2012	Witness Session 3	Community representatives (i.e Women's Groups and Duncan Struthers, Chair of Hillingdon Inter Faith Network
6 February 2013	Witness Sessions 4 Draft Final Report	Head of Corporate Communications Proposals – To consider draft recommendations and draft final report

** Specific meetings can be shortened or extended to suit the review topic and needs of the Committee*

Risk assessment

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Part I – Members, Public and Press

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Failure to secure witnesses to provide evidence and advice to the Committee will impact on the thoroughness and completeness of the review.

This is an extensive area and the Committee may not be able to cover all the issues that they wish to examine within the time available.