Community Cohesion
Report of the Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee 2012/13

Week of Peace 2012, Schools Community Choir, Hillingdon Inter Faith Network, Metropolitan Police and LBH working together
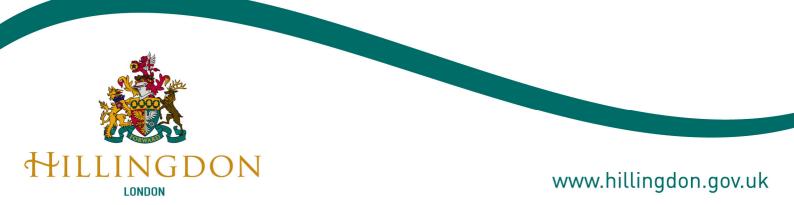
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Members of the Committee

Cllr Richard Lewis (Chairman)
Cllr Michael White (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Beulah East
Cllr Neil Fyfe
Cllr Lindsay Bliss
Cllr Raymond Graham
Cllr Richard Mills
Cllr Carol Melvin

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Chairman's Foreword

Councillor Richard Lewis – Chairman of the Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

What is community cohesion?

Community cohesion is not a precise term and can be interpreted in many ways. Broadly speaking it is about 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".

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 initial results of the 2011 Census provides evidence of this **INSERT STATISTICS**

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 become more limited. Threats from extremism and terrorism are still real and can cause conflict, tensions, prejudice and misunderstanding within communities.

Hillingdon's approach has been not only to understand what our community cohesion challenges are in Hillingdon and where in the Borough, risks to community cohesion are greatest. But that it is also equally 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 can reduce the risk.

Such as:
- Strong local leadership (political, community etc)
- Strong communication activity/strategy to engage with local communities

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- 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

In 2007, the Council's External Services Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of community cohesion and made a number of recommendations including the importance of the Council in taking a leadership role in promoting community cohesion in the Borough with the involvement of local partners.

In April 2009, the Strong and Active Communities Partnership was established as a theme group of the Local Strategic partnership –Hillingdon Partners, responsible for delivering upon the key priorities around strong and active communities, setting out a vision for Hillingdon to be:
"A Borough where communities are strong and cohesive and local people have a real opportunity to take an active part in local life, leisure and culture."

The partnership has established strong working relationships between the Council and its partners in responding to local community cohesion issues and developing pro-active and positive models of community development activities and engagement.

The lead for facilitating the work of the partnership sits within the Partnerships Team in the Chief Executive and Administration Directorate and the work very much relies upon the relationships established with local communities, the voluntary sector and other statutory partners as well as other departments within the council to deliver this agenda.

For this review, the Committee was assisted by the Council's Stronger Communities Officer.

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OBJECTIVES

Initially the review was 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. This would be with a particular focus in relation to perception of fairness, transparency and equality of access. However, the scope of the review changed and focussed on how the Council could reach out to more individuals from all backgrounds, particularly those groups and sections of the community who were difficult to engage with.

In addition how were Council's services communicating with residents, beyond the promotion of services. Also what steps were taken to break down barriers to engage with groups which would enable the interaction and itegration with the rest of the Borough's community.

The **Terms of Reference** of the review were as follows:

- 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.

Supporting the Cabinet & Council's policies and objectives

The review supported the work of the Council as part of its Equality Duties to ensure promotion of good relations.

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.

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INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

The Committee's first meeting on the review took place on 24 July 2012 when Members received a presentation from the Council's Stronger Communities Officer. This meeting set the context for Members in terms of what is Community Cohesion and what the Council is doing in terms of enabling all its residents to access Council services and also be more active within the borough and therefore promoting greater community cohesion.

As previously mentioned there is no standard definition of community cohesion, however, 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.

Risk Factors

Some of the challenges (or risk factors) to community cohesion include:

- Rapidly changing demographics and diversity within localities.
- The perception of the fairness of allocation of resources and provision of services to meet the needs of the whole community.
- Socio-economic pressures on individuals, families and localities
- Inequality of opportunity for individuals to achieve in education and employment.
- Perceptions of crime and anti social behaviour within communities
- The influence of extremist groups within communities that can promote tensions and influence individual's perceptions of fairness and inequalities in communities.

Positive factors

Conversely, positive factors can build and strengthen community cohesion and these include the following:

- Knowing and understanding who makes up our community and what their needs and concerns are.
- Positive engagement through social, sport and cultural activities

- Ensuring local people have a voice and a say in how services are delivered.
- Ensuring fair access to services.
- Open and transparent decision-making.
- Designing services that enable individuals to take responsibility for their own well-being.

National Policy Context

The Government in February 2012 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 also important in enabling positive interaction and relationships in communities.

Key Issues of the review

The review initially started off with the aim of examining how Council services were working in order to mitigate against the community cohesion risk factors and building upon the positives that underpinned resilience in communities.

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However Members agreed that the review would focus on how the Council could reach out to more individuals of all backgrounds, particularly those groups and sections of the community who were difficult to engage with. The review was particularly interested in how the Council communicated what was available to the community, beyond the promotion of its services. What steps were taken to break down barriers to engage with groups which would enable them to interact and integrate with the rest of the community as well as access Council services.

Positive Contributions

The Committee understood the importance of recognising where the positive factors in building community cohesion were taking place and that these were promoted in order to create greater opportunities for underpinning the resilience within communities.

These positive contributions included:
- 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

The benefits of positive outcomes in terms of community cohesion can influence and make an impact upon the following:

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

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The Role of the Council's Stronger Communities Officer

A central role to community cohesion for the Council and its strategic partners is played by the Stronger Communities Officer, who co-ordinates and drives forward many of the initiatives.

The role provided:
- Strategic and policy lead on community cohesion and integration
- Advice and guidance on community cohesion across the Council
- Advice, guidance and support to external partners
- A community engagement and community development role in relation to community cohesion and integration

A summary of some of the many activities that the Stronger Communities Officer was involved in were provided and these included:

- Developing and Managing the Strong and Active Communities partnership and supporting partners in delivering the action plan
- Supporting partners in the delivery of community cohesion and integration related projects which Included English for Speakers of other languages (ESOL), Hayes Carnival, Junior Citizens, Hayes and West Drayton and Yiewsley community engagement programmes, Peabody estate multi-agency partnership, Schools community cohesion partnership
- Supporting Hillingdon's Inter Faith Network in developing its activities
- Supporting Women in the Community Network in developing its activities
- Supporting the Hillingdon Traveller Forum
- Support local Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community organisations
- Working in partnership with the police to monitor and co-ordinate appropriate response on matters relating to community tensions and preventing violent extremism in the borough

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EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

For the witness sessions meetings were held on 18 September 2012, 16 October 2012, 13 November 2012 and 6 February 2013. The Committee received evidence from:

Fiona Gibbs – Stronger Communities Officer
Carole Jones – Chair of Strong and Active Communities Partnership
Lisa Dancer - Curriculum and Quality Manager for Adult Learning
Debbie Hunn - Curriculum and Quality Manager for Adult Learning
Howard Griffin - Sports Development Officer - Sports and Leisure
Daniel Waller - Arts and Libraries
Khalida Obeida - Afghan Women's Group, Women in the Community Network and Refugees in Effective and Active Partnerships (REAP))
Duncan Struthers - Chair of Hillingdon Inter Faith Network
John Seekings – Corporate Head of Communications

Fiona Gibbs, the Stronger Communities Officer worked very closely with the Chair of the Partnership and they both provided the Committee with an overview of the work of the Partnership at the first witness session.

Strong and Active Communities Partnership

The Strong and Active Communities Partnership was established in April 2009, as a theme group of the Local Strategic Partnership and was responsible for developing and monitoring actions to deliver the key priorities within the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy around strong and active communities.

The Committee was informed that the main aims of the partnership were:

- Building stronger communities;
- Delivering through community partnerships with an emphasis on building relationships and working with young people, schools and communities; and
- Strengthening communities and promoting models of good practice as well as ways of working

The partnership has established strong working relationships between the Council and its partners in responding to local community cohesion issues and developing pro-active and positive models of community development activities and engagement.

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The work very much relies upon the relationships established with local communities, voluntary sector and other statutory partners as well as other departments within the Council to deliver this agenda.

The main priorities of the partnership were:

Targeted local area partnership working around:

- Participatory approaches to partnership working including identifying synergies with other theme group priorities e.g. reducing health inequalities and promoting health equalities, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, improving outcomes for young people and economic development
- Bringing local agencies and organisations together to work in partnership for benefit of the local community
- Working with faith communities through Hillingdon Inter Faith network to build relationships and promote understanding
- Work with schools to promote involvement of young people and families

To promote and increase residents involvement in leisure and cultural activities across the Borough.

- Sports & Leisure : e.g Olympics
- Culture & Arts : e.g Jubilee Celebrations, Hayes Carnival, Arts Week
- Learning & Development : e.g Adult Learning, English for speakers of ther languages (ESOL) provision

Monitoring of community tensions and local issues, working with partners to respond accordingly and appropriately and inform future priorities

- The prevention of violent extremism
- The monitoring of tensions - This work is required by the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Council and Police share data and information and work together on tensions that impact on cohesion.

Community Cohesion – The Schools Community Cohesion Partnership and The Yeading Junior Experience (Working Together for better outcomes for children)

Carole Jones, Chair of Strong and Active Communities Partnership and Head Teacher of Yeading Junior School provided the Committee with details of the work which had been carried out within many of the Borough's schools, and in particular at Yeading Junior School where she was Head Teacher.

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It was acknowledged that this schools partnership was the only one of its kind in the country and the work with schools on community cohesion has been recognised as good practice.

The Committee was informed that it was important for community cohesion work to take place in schools because:

- Schools had a duty to promote community cohesion
- The sharing of best practice in local schools could be shared across the Borough
- Schools and extended schools had the ethos of being community minded
- Young people had an important role to play for the future
- There was the opportunity to engage not only young people but also parents and the wider community
- Sustainability
- Partnership working

The Schools Community Cohesion Partnership involves 23 schools working together to promote community cohesion within their local communities and improving parental engagement and raising aspirations of students.

Members were provided with a short film on the Community Choir which had been formed from 5 schools, which involved 120 children and around 30 parents. This project was one of the outcomes of the schools partnership in bringing schools, students and parents together on a community project. This project had been important in terms of integration of different groups and building relationships within communities and with local organisations. The choir rehearse in a local church which has enabled barriers to begin to breakdown within a diverse community.

Reference was made to the Yeading Community House, situated next to Yeading School, which parents and residents from different community groups used to build relationships with others, form friendships and celebrate each others cultures and participate in educational and community learning programmes. This scheme had proved very successful and provided an opportunity for people to engage in programmes that built confidence, explored cultures, shared values and encouraged healthy active lifestyles and break down barriers with local services and individuals.

Partnership Workshop to share best practice

A conference is planned for March 2013 in partnership between Strong and Active Communities and Hillingdon Community Trust to share the learning from community cohesion programmes delivered and enable local community

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organisations, schools and other partners to work more effectively together to develop and deliver community cohesion outcomes for Hillingdon residents.

The Committee noted the excellent engagement which was taking place and the positive contribution the work with the schools had to community cohesion and integration within the Borough.

THEME: The community cohesion work which took place in 23 of the Borough's school provided a firm basis for integration and participation of children and their parents from all groups within the Borough. The events which were held helped cement further the relationships between all groups and provided the opportunity for information sharing and to engage with individuals and groups who perhaps would not have participated in community activities.

Further discussion took place on the scope of the review and the Committee agreed that this be amended to focus on how the Council could reach out to more individuals of all backgrounds, particularly those groups and sections of the community who were difficult to engage with. In addition how did Council services communicate its services to the community, beyond the promotion of its services. What steps were taken to break down barriers to engage with groups which would enable them to interact and integrate with the rest of the community?

Resident Services

To this effect for the witness session in October the Committee sought the views of the Council's Residents Services (Adult Education, Libraries and Sports and Leisure services) on how residents of the Borough accessed these services.

Adult Learning

- The service played a key role in the Strong and Active Communities Partnership and participated in local events offering taster sessions and workshops where current learners were able to exhibit their work
- The service worked in partnership with Children's Centres and schools to engage with typically "hard to reach" families in courses that include English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL).
- A wide range of provision was given for some 250 adults with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD). Reference was made to the Work in Supported Employment programme which was a 2 year qualification

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course which targeted young adults with LDD and which allowed residents to gain the skills and knowledge to equip them for work in the catering, business admin or horticulture sectors. These included vocational experience at the Disablement Association Hillingdon for Business Admin learners and volunteering at the Rural Activities and Garden Centre for Horticulture learners.

- A wide range of qualifications were offered in English, Maths and ESOL in community and Adult Learning venues. These run as independent qualifications or may provide learners taking wider vocational qualifications such as Floristry and Childminding with opportunities to develop functional language and study skills to support their achievement
- Work clubs took place in adult learning centres, libraries and at the Dotcom café in West Drayton
- A wide range of Bespoke provision which targeted particular groups of learners in response to local and national priorities
- A number of adult day classes took place which were attended by a higher proportion of women
- A higher proportion of men attended evening classes
- The service got involved in lots of community work and partnership work took place with schools to enable mothers to drop their children off at school, and then to attend adult education classes at children's centres
- There was a troubled family's programme which aimed at reaching out to this group.
- Reference was made to some people who were difficult to engage with and whom perhaps did not want to be reached
- Work did take place with other service areas but information on service users was difficult to share because of Data Protection issues
- Programmes took place with the Youth Offending Team to engage with young people
- The service worked with partners such as Brunel University, Job Centre Plus and the volunteering service
- Reference was made to the volunteering service who were working with young people in creating charities and opening up vacant shop premises to open them as "pop up" shops
- Specifically targeted work took place, such as with vulnerable groups who were not in education
- Workshop courses took place in community centres for the elderly which helped them develop their Information Technology skills and helped them interact and socialise with other people

Libraries

- There were 65,000 members of the Borough's libraries and records were monitored on a monthly basis
- All the Borough's libraries had free computers which could be used by all individuals throughout the Borough, even people who were not members of the libraries
- Libraries was an inclusive service and contributed greatly to community cohesion
- The ethos of the library service was that the service was open to all people
- Book were provided in different languages, there were large print books, talking books
- Reference was made to the service reaching out to the young and old. Bookstart was a scheme whereby free books were given out to all children
- Reference was made to the Summer reading sessions which took place throughout the Borough's libraries and which were fully inclusive
- The service worked very closely with schools and all children had access to books at libraries within schools
- There were close links with children's centres where there was a cross promoting of different Council services
- "Coffee and Conversation" – This was where authors came into libraries to talk about their books and which gave the public, particularly the elderly, an opportunity to meet and interact in a social setting
- The initial contact with one child did lead to other members of the child's family engaging with the service
- The introduction of E books would be looked at due to the popularity of the computers in libraries

Sports and Leisure

- Monthly reports were prepared on leisure usage which contained information on age, ethnic origins
- An Active Survey carried out on behalf of Sport England indicated that around 50% of the population did not take part in any exercise or leisure activities
- This Council had invested heavily in its leisure facilities which had had a natural uplift in participation in sports and leisure activities
- In 2009/10 it was recorded that there had been 800,000 visits to sports and leisure facilities. In 2010/11 this had increased to 1.5million visits
- The Back to Sport scheme encouraged residents to get back into sport with inexpensive sessions starting from £2. Activities took place in leisure centres and in parks and included badminton, archery fitness

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sessions. The aim of the scheme was to try and get people to make a lifestyle change

- Promotions took place on the Council's website, through Hillingdon People and with poster campaigns
- There were activities for people with disabilities, activities for the over 50s, activities for families which included grandparents which were examples of the service reaching out to all sectors of the community
- At the Botwell Leisure Centre a mum's fitness session took place straight after the school run and was targeted at those women who did not usually attend gym or fitness sessions.
- The Council provided free swimming for the over 50s which attracted large numbers
- There was a Leisure Link scheme which was linked to the Hillingdon First Card and provided discounts for leisure and sports facilities for people on benefits
- Health links were made with the NHS, GPs and doctor's surgeries and organisations such as Parkinson's UK
- In relation to the Disablement Association Hillingdon, day time activities took place in community facilities
- Social network media was used such as Facebook, text messaging to promote benefits of sports and leisure

The evidence received from the Council's Residents Services was very encouraging and positive and indicated that the Council did encourage all people and groups within the Borough to access its services not just through formal written communication and promotion but the importance of face to face interaction and encouragement and building of relationships between services and the wider community. However, the Committee agreed that the challenge was getting messages across to those people who did not normally engage with public authorities.

THEME: A great deal of work was carried out by Council's services and there were many success stories.
The importance of building relationships and interacting face to face with residents is key to sustaining engagement, particularly with those groups who are less likely to access services through other means.
There is an opportunity for services to learn from each other what works and also to widen engagement through promoting more widely services from across the whole council not just their own service area.
However further efforts could be made to reach out to those individuals and groups in the community who were not aware of the facilities and services which the Council offered its residents. What other means could be used to communicate services to further integrate and increase participation of more groups within the Borough ?

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Hillingdon's Inter Faith Network

The Chair of this organisation provided the review with details of the organisation's work in relation to community cohesion, together with the aims of the Network. These were:

- To hold regular inter faith network meetings, with faith leaders and community representatives where common issues could be discussed
- To develop a programme of inter faith activities and events
- To work together, supported by the police and the local authority, to develop strategies to address misunderstanding and local tensions
- Acting as a resource for information on different faiths in the Borough
- Participate in consultation activities and events with statutory and voluntary services to influence service development and delivery
- To provide support to different faith communities in Hillingdon for the furtherance of the Network's aims

The Committee was informed that there were 110 faith buildings in the Borough. Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Jain, Muslim and Sikh faith buildings were documented in the database.

An audit which had taken place highlighted that 48% of the activities were run for the wider community in comparison to 52% that have a religious emphasis. This was broken down to well over 1,000 different activities which ranged from activities for religious services, for community groups, for groups specifically for older people, youth groups, children's groups, pre-school groups, activities where food and drink were sold or provided and self-support groups. This indicated the wide ranging community groups and activities which took place around the Borough.

Reference was made to the inter faith work which took place where people from different religions learnt about other faiths and religions and often went to observe others at worship. This integrated people from different religions and gave an opportunity to learn more about other people and their religions.

Members were informed of some of the work of the Network which included:

- Regular themed network meetings bringing faith groups together with common concerns i.e benefits, housing, crime and safety, planning, young people
- Work with schools and young people including faith in schools programme with volunteers from different faiths running workshops in local schools on social issues. A regular inter faith workshop in partnership with Swakeleys school that brings students from secondary schools from across the borough together to discuss matters relating to

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building inter faith understanding and dialogue. Involvement in a research project with Brunel University in relation to young people and religion and creating a DVD with sixth form students

- Bringing faith leaders together from across the borough to act as a resource for guidance and dialogue in times of difficulty or tensions in the borough and to work in partnership with LBH and the Police as necessary
- Maintaining the resilience?

Reference was made to the excellent work which the Strong and Active Communities Partnership carried out and special thanks was paid to Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities Officer, who drove many of the initiatives forward.

Women in the Community Network

Throughout the review, the Committee had acknowledged the good work of many Women's groups who are working in partnership with the Council and who support the work of the Strong and Active Communities Partnership. Members wanted to hear their views on the work which the Council did in relation to community cohesion and to assess whether there were any gaps in terms of communication from the Council, which would further improve access to Council services and encourage further integration of all groups within the Community.

Khalida Obeid from the Afghan Women's Group who are part of the Women in the Community Network kindly provided Members with a summary of some of the activities of the groups she represented.

The aims of the Women in the Community Network are:
- To establish a network of women from different community groups and representatives from the diverse communities in Hillingdon to share and address the key issues facing women in the Borough
- To empower women to make the difference they need within themselves, their families and communities
- To promote a healthier understanding between women of different communities and backgrounds in Hillingdon

The objectives of the Network were:
- To increase partnership working amongst the various existing community groups supporting women in the Borough
- To promote women to foster healthier lifestyles
- To support women to feel safe and secure in the community
- To equip women with appropriate skills, confidence and self esteem
- To disseminate and celebrate the achievements of women

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- To facilitate and encourage women from different communities to access and participate in mainstream services
- To support and empower women with parenting skills
- To facilitate an arena for women to share and learn about each other and common issues they faced. These included: religion, the environment, community, citizenship, children's education, health and employment.

On a more personal level, the Committee was also provided with a summary of some of the work which took place within the Afghan Women's Group who support Afghan women in the Borough:

- Work took place with often isolated women from a male dominated culture
- Work took place on building trust with the husbands of Afghan women to enable the Group to work with these women
- Every Wednesday afternoon an English Language class was provided at a Children's Centre. This was important as this enabled women to learn the language and culture of the country and to integrate better and not to feel as isolated
- Work took place with the Council's library service, adult education, leisure services to provide various activities for these women. These included swimming classes, knitting classes and helping women access the many services offered in libraries

Reference was made to the good use which the organisation made of the Council's libraries and Children's Centres; however an area which the Group found difficult to access was after school clubs for children.

The Committee heard that the information which the Council communicated was not always accessed by the community and this was an area which could be further investigated. The representative reported that she provided an information link to Afghan Women in the community and she would ensure Council information on services would be passed onto this group.

The Committee noted that lots of information and communications was sent out to community groups that were part of the Network. In addition residents of the Borough also received Hillingdon People which was a source of useful information on Council services.

The point was noted that some people, regardless of how much communication came from the Council, would not access this information how the Council's many services.

> **THEME: The Council through its Strong and Active Communities Partnership work had the links of communication to a large number of community groups and their lead representatives. Greater information could be disseminated through these representatives, centrally from the Council, to enable up to date information on Council services and events to be communicated to a wider audience. This could further enhance community cohesion and the integration and participation of people who would not usually be aware of what the Council offers.**

Corporate Communications and Communicating with residents

The Council's website and Hillingdon People provided good opportunities for the Council to reach out to all people and to promote greater integration and interaction of all individuals.

The Committee was informed that Corporate Communications role is to help increase public and other stakeholder understanding of the services and policies of the Council. This is done in three key ways:

Core activities - including media relations, publications (such as Hillingdon People), corporate branding, marketing (leaflets, posters and displays) and digital media.

Campaigns – these are linked to key service priorities and range from fully integrated campaigns (which includes some or all of the above) to event-based or public information campaigns.

Consultation and engagement – to help the Council understand current residents' views, satisfaction levels and thinking on specific policy issues or services. Examples include the annual residents' survey or the recent consultation on changes to council tax benefits.

Engaging with all individuals and residents

The Council works hard to ensure that it communicates effectively with all communities, helping to ensure integration and cohesion. Below are some examples of how the Council is engaging with individuals from different backgrounds and hard to reach groups, either through the Council's day-to-day activities or targeted projects.

Hillingdon People

The residents' magazine is published six times a year and distributed door-to-door to all of the Borough's 113,000 households as well as libraries, leisure centres, nursing homes and public buildings to ensure everyone in the borough is kept well informed about the Council's services.

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Large print and audio versions are also produced and delivered to residents requesting these services. For those that would prefer to read HP online we publish a PDF and digital version. We use plain English and adhere to Royal National Institute of Blind People guidelines to ensure wide accessibility. Finally, each edition carries a contacts list for key Council services so that residents have a ready reference for information.

Web and digital media

The Council's public website has been overhauled with improved design, navigation, functionality and content to deliver a first class customer service. The site is DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) and Equality Act 2010 compliant and meets the accessibility guidelines issued by the Worldwide Web Consortium.

Over 40,000 residents are registered to report or request information online, which is a sizeable proportion of the Borough's population. In rolling out the self-service option the Council have been monitoring take up from across communities and it reflects the profile of the Borough well.

To further improve accessibility a mobile version of the website was launched at the end of November 2012. There is also a Young Hillingdon version of the website, and the Youth Council of the Borough get involved in making decisions for the site.

Residents of all ages follow the Council using social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, which is use to explain, warn and inform – as well as encourage residents to get involved in consultations.

Campaigns and marketing

A wide range of marketing materials including posters and leaflets for services and events for older people and those with disabilities have been introduced. The Council support programmes for younger people such as FIESTA and the Kids in Care Awards and extensive campaigns for fostering and adoption to support children in need.

The majority of the Council's priority one campaigns are aimed at all residents and care is taken to ensure inclusion regardless of age, social background, gender, disability, ethnicity and sexuality. Recent examples include the council's anti-social behaviour (ASB) campaign which had the potential to unfairly feature young people as the main perpetrators of ASB and to reinforce negative stereotypes. It was also important to ensure that older people weren't featured as the primary target of ASB as is often portrayed in the media. A campaign was therefore created using non age or gender

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specific characters instead of people and articles featured residents of all ages a backgrounds.

Change 4Life Hillingdon and Feel PROUD campaigns were also targeted at all residents and featured residents of all ages highlighting the campaign through their own unique perspectives to help all residents identify with the campaign.

All campaign and marketing work is designed to be accessible by the widest possible range of residents and we work hard with departments where specific tailoring is needed to meet specific residents' service needs. This approach is also adopted in service areas that reach out to all residents such as our libraries, and care is taken to ensure that these outlets are used as key communication channels.

Branding

The Council's branding guidelines call for all communications to be as clear and easy to understand as possible. Signage is designed to be uncluttered with a simple point of contact online or by telephone. We consider the needs of visually impaired residents with DDA compliant signs where appropriate.

JOHN SEEKINGS IDEAS AND EVIDENCE IN HERE

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Examples of work in Hillingdon

Some examples of the positive work that is being undertaken in Hillingdon include:

- Hillingdon Improvement Programme workstreams 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
- Partnerships work in relation to building Stronger communities, community cohesion and managing community tensions

Conclusion

Achieving community cohesion is dependent upon a complex set of factors that impact upon individuals and community interactions. These factors include: establishing a sense of belonging, pride and aspiration, and identity with their local area and promoting a sense of fair treatment and equality of opportunity to achieve, in education and employment and wellbeing in life. Therefore, achieving community cohesion outcomes relies upon a joined up and co-ordinated approach across all aspects of the council's services as well as with other local partners and local communities.

Hillingdon's approach reflects that complexity and draws together council services, other local statutory partners, voluntary sector and local communities with a shared set of actions based upon a core focus around promoting engagement, education, empowerment and active involvement.

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