HATE CRIME AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Contact Officer: Fiona Gibbs
Telephone: 01895 277 035

REASON FOR ITEM

The Chairman requested an update on Hate Crime and Community Cohesion. Officers have been asked to report on what has been done in the last twelve months by the council to fight against hate crime, what the Council currently doing, and what the Council has by way of future plans.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

INFORMATION

Background

What is Hate crime?

A Hate Incident is generally seen as any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them due to their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender. Not all hate incidents will amount to criminal offences, but those that do become hate crimes.

The Association of Chief Police Officers and the CPS have agreed a common definition of hate crime: "Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender."

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 Context

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 impact of economic pressures and austerity measures on public services, inevitably places a strain on families and communities as resources become reduced and access to support and services are limited. Threats from extremism and terrorism have increased 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;
- 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.

What we are doing?

Tackling hate crime requires a holistic approach. Not only in dealing with reported incidents and supporting victims but also in working together with partners and the wider community to build resilience to the factors which influence hate crime and or divide communities such as the influence of extremism.

In Hillingdon, through the joined up approach of the Strong and Active Communities Partnership and the Safer Hillingdon Partnership, we are working together to address local challenges and build stronger relationships.

Managing reports of hate crime

The Council's contact centre receive reports of hate crime and these are passed onto the ASBIT team who should respond within 24 hours where possible. Case work is then undertaken by the ASBIT team to work with victims of hate crime, to identify perpetrators if possible, ensure the matter is reported to police and where the perpetrators are council tenants to ensure we take actions relating to the terms of their tenancy. Complex cases can be referred to the CRMARAC to enable a multi-agency problem solving approach. The police and other agencies are also able to bring cases to the CRMARAC (Community Risk Multi Agency group) Chaired by the Police, which also provides a governance role in ensuring that actions by all partners are taken in a timely manner and are co-ordinated effectively.

Partnership working

The Strong and Active Communities partnership works to address the following priorities:

1. Community Cohesion and integration - working together to build more cohesive, empowered and active communities in Hillingdon.
2. Residents involvement in sports, leisure, culture, volunteering and learning activities.
3. Monitoring community tensions - working together to understand local community dynamics and identify potential or actual tensions and their impact.
4. Preventing Violent Extremism - working to ensure that issues that may give rise to community tension or which might result in violent extremism are addressed, and supporting the management of critical incidents.

Some examples of work delivered under the partnership, facilitated by the council include:

- Supporting partners in the delivery of community cohesion and integration related projects including: ESOL, Hayes Carnival, Junior Citizens, Schools community cohesion partnership, Adult learning, learn to be well programme
- Supporting Hillingdon Inter Faith Network in developing its activities, 2016 celebrated ten years of HIFN. The annual peace walk which is led by the Mayor, Borough Commander and local faith leaders also celebrated its 10th year.
- Supporting the Women in the Community Network in developing its activities: Celebrating international women's days, with 400+ women attending an information fayre at Botwell library and hosted an empowering women event held at Brunel University.
- Supporting the Hillingdon Traveller Forum
- Supporting local BAME community organisations
- Working in partnership with the police to monitor and co-ordinate an appropriate response on matters relating to community tensions and Preventing violent extremism in the borough
- Partnership working with community groups/ services to bring about cohesion and integration
- Work with schools including, providing support in relation to current legislation and advice on the embedding of British Values across the curriculum and the development of character education, utilising the reach of schools to facilitate cohesion in the wider community and community groups, leading to improvements in outcomes and early preventative work. For example: Celebrated ten years of the schools inter faith programme in 2016 (led by Swakeleys school), Performance at Beck Theatre by 7 local schools - "together we can make a change" - presentation of community cohesion through music and song, bringing together local schools to establish the schools community choir - Hayes, who perform at Hayes carnival and other community events.
- Measuring the outcomes of local area based work, projects and activities on community relations
- Review of the groups methods of working including the introduction of new themes to secure effective outcomes and efficient working between partners

Themes of work identified for 2016/17

- Volunteering
- Areas/Estates/Residents
- Schools

- Events, festivals and use of green spaces
- Isolated groups
- Communication and access
- Preventing Violent Extremism
- Managing community tensions/ safety concerns

Implementing the Prevent Duty

The Council has taken the lead in:

- Co-ordinating and managing the Hillingdon Prevent Partnership - developing a local action plan and providing advice, guidance and support to partners on the Prevent strategy and duty;
- Support for vulnerable individuals - co-ordinating the Hillingdon multi-agency Channel panel and ensuring governance through the children and adults safeguarding boards;
- Information sharing and identification of local needs;
- Training and awareness raising - ensuring staff are aware of their responsibility to report and refer concerns. Approx 3,000 staff from agencies and organisations (including schools) across the borough have received this training;
- Work with our communities, supporting the work of Hillingdon Inter faith network and ensuring there are strong relationships in place with faith communities;
- Emerging challenges, understanding risk and current threats.

Priorities for Hillingdon

- Ensuring Radical groups and speakers do not have the opportunity to promote their views and recruit in Hillingdon.
- Ensuring the influence of extremist groups (including far right) in the borough is managed.
- Ensuring anyone identified as being vulnerable is offered appropriate support.
- Work with the local community and local partners to prevent people, particularly vulnerable young people from travelling to areas of conflict
- Maintaining good relations between different faiths and the diverse communities in the borough

Engagement and awareness activity

Schools work: as previously described above. In addition, a project is being developed with schools, Uxbridge College and Brunel University to look at tackling issues relating to extremism and hate crime through a debating project - which will enable students to develop skills in critical thinking and looking at two sides of an argument, whilst improving language and literacy skills as well as self-confidence.

Police - Hayes: The community police officers in Hayes have been working closely with local Ward councilors, council departments and community groups to improve relations and engagement. Initiatives have included, Solidarity in Hayes, women's groups, surgeries and coffee mornings, English conversational groups, a community workshop to name a few.

Hillingdon Inter-Faith Network: HIFN aims to bring faith communities together in Hillingdon to promote better understanding and positive relationships. HIFN works closely with the council and other partners.

<u>**Legislative Framework**</u>

The Equalities Act 2010 (section 149) put in place a 'Public Sector Equality Duty'. This means that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: • Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act • Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and person who do not share it • Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on responsible authorities (which includes local authorities) to prevent crime and disorder, antisocial behaviour, substance misuse and reducing reoffending in their area.

Public Order Act 1986 Section 4(A)(1) of the 1986 Act deals with the offence of causing harassment, alarm or distress. A person is guilty of an offence if, with intent to cause a person harassment, alarm or distress, s/he - "uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or disorderly behaviour; or displays any writing, sign or visible representation which is threatening abusive or insulting, thereby causing that or another person harassment, alarm or distress".

Protection from Harassment Act 1997 There are two offences that arise under this statute which may be relevant to the sanctioning of hate motivated harassment. The offence of harassment: this arises under section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Under this, the prosecution must prove: 1. That the Defendant had pursued a course of conduct on at least two separate occasions; 2. That the Defendant's course of conduct amounted to harassment of another – what constitutes 'harassment' tends to be a matter of common sense e.g. the repetition of racist or homophobic remarks could amount to harassment; 3. That the Defendant knew or ought to have known that the course of conduct amounted to harassment.

Human Rights Act 1998 states that people should have: • The right to liberty • Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom to express your beliefs • Freedom of expression • Freedom of assembly and association • The right not to be discriminated against in respect of these rights and freedoms • The right to peaceful enjoyment of your property • The right to an education

Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
Places a Duty on all public sector organizations to deliver against the Government's Prevent strategy. Within this Duty is a specific role for the Local Authority in providing leadership and co-ordination of local activity with partners.

Prevent Aims and Objectives:
Aim: To stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
Objectives: To:
1.Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it.
2. Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support
3. Work with sectors and institutions where there are risk of *radicalisation, which need to be addressed. Priority areas include education, faith, health, criminal justice and charities.

*Radicalisation is defined as the process by which people come to support terrorism and ****extremism** and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist groups.

** "Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas*" (HM Government Prevent Strategy 2011)*

Government Strategy

The Casey review 2016

This review into opportunity and integration by Dame Louise Casey, was commissioned in July 2015 by the then Prime Minister David Cameron and Home Secretary Theresa May and published in December 2016.

The focus of the review was to 'consider what could be done to boost opportunity and integration in our most isolated and deprived communities'. It was prompted by a number of factors including:

- The unprecedented pace and scale of population change and immigration, particularly in deprived areas;
- Recovery from recession and implications for different groups;
- Concerns about the future of public services;
- Concerns about terrorism;
- Problems of social exclusion among ethnic minority groups and poorer white British communities in some areas.

The review made a number of recommendations:

- Build local communities' resilience in the towns and cities where the greatest challenges exist.
- Improve integration of communities in Britain and establish a set of values around which people from all different backgrounds can unite.
- Reduce economic exclusion, inequality and segregation in our most isolated and deprived communities and schools.
- Working with schools
- Overcoming cultural barriers to employment
- Improving English language provision
- Improving understanding how housing and regeneration schemes/ policy impact on integration/ segregation
- Stronger safeguards for children not in mainstream education
- Increase standards of leadership and integrity in public office

Governments Hate crime Action Plan July 2016 - Action Against Hate

Sets out the Government's programme of actions to tackle issues of hate crime to 2020.

Main themes include:

- Preventing hate crime by challenging the beliefs and attitudes that can underlie such crimes
- Responding to hate crime in our communities with the aim of reducing the number of hate crime incidents.
- Increasing the reporting of hate crime, particularly from communities who traditionally under report.
- Improving support for the victims of hate crime
- Building our understanding of hate crime through improved data collection.

Underlying the plan are two key themes - working in partnership with communities and joining up work across the hate crime strands to ensure best practice is understood and drawn upon.