

COMMUNITY COHESION

Committee name	Corporate Services, Commerce & Communities Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities and Prevent
Papers with report	Appendix A – Legislative Framework

HEADLINES

The Committee requested an update on work related to promoting community cohesion and building stronger communities. This update includes consideration of what action the Council takes to reach out to all communities, and how Council and community events are promoted.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee note the report regarding Community Cohesion.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Background

The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, celebrating and valuing diversity, eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and promoting good relations.

Our policies and procedures are intended to ensure fairness for all and reinforce our commitment to delivering fair, accessible and relevant services and equality in employment.

The Council, along with its partners, aims to promote a strong and resilient community in Hillingdon and to counter extremism and bring communities together to promote cohesion and integration.

The Council also aim to build a strong sense of belonging and pride for everyone who lives, works within, or visits the Borough. The Council want all people to feel valued and be able to fully participate in, and contribute to, building a strong community in the Borough.

1.2 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”.

Achieving community cohesion is dependent upon a complex set of factors, which can affect how individuals and communities interact with one another. These factors include:

- Establishing a sense of belonging and pride of place;
- Developing aspiration and sense of ability to achieve; and,
- Promoting a sense of fair treatment and equality of opportunity; in work, in education and in quality of life.

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

- 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; and,
- Designing services that enable individuals to take responsibility for their own well-being.

Addressing the issues, therefore, relies on a co-ordinated approach across all aspects of the Council's services, as well as with other local partners and local communities.

1.3 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 government policies, and wider politico / socio / economic factors, can place a strain upon families and communities, as resources become stretched and access to support and services may become limited, or are perceived to be unfairly allocated. Threats from extremism and terrorism have increased and can cause conflict, tensions, prejudice and misunderstanding within communities.

Hillingdon's approach has been, and remains, not only to understand what our community cohesion challenges are, and where in the Borough risks to community cohesion are greatest, but that it is equally important to recognise where the positive contributions to community cohesion are taking place. With this understanding, the Council can work together to 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 this 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; and,
- Capacity building and sustainable approach to community engagement and community development, which is inclusive and embraces the diversity of the Borough.

2. What is the Council Doing?

The Council works with its statutory and community partners with the aim of building stronger and safer communities. Promoting community cohesion, tackling crime, including hate and extremism, and fostering good relations and integration.

In order to promote a sense of cohesion, integration and belonging, the Council is working in a number of ways:

2.1 Partnership Working

The Stronger Communities Partnership brings together the Council and its partners, with the aim of promoting a strong and resilient community in Hillingdon, and to counter extremism and bring communities together to promote cohesion and integration. In order to do this, the partnership has identified three key areas of focus: working with faith communities, women, and children and young people.

There are a number of projects and activities delivered in partnership. A few examples are detailed below:

Junior Citizens Programme

Led by the Fire Service and supported by the Council, Brunel University London, NHS, MPs, TfL, RNLI and others. This programme delivers key safety and citizenship messages to year six pupils as part of preparing them for moving on to secondary school and becoming more independent. Over 4,000 pupils take part and receive messages relating to internet safety, knife crime awareness, drug and alcohol, fire safety, travel safety, road safety and water safety.

Hillingdon Voices United Project

The project, supported by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, aims to strengthen community cohesion, build resilience, and improve community relations, enabling the local community to work together to raise awareness and understanding of hate crime and extremism, and how to tackle these issues. The Council want to encourage more young people to feel confident in challenging hate and discrimination, and in promoting greater understanding, respect and unity.

Participating learners have produced infomercials, poems, lesson plans, documentaries and more. This work will form part of a community learning resource to be utilised by other schools and local community organisations.

Phase One came to a successful conclusion with three schools presenting learning around challenging hate and extremism to an audience of teachers, governors, councillors, parents, and faith and community organisations at Brunel University London. Pupils demonstrated learning via documentary, PowerPoint and poetry in 2018.

Phase Two involved further schools, college, university, adult learning providers and Hillingdon's Women's Centre engaging, producing poetry, short stories, infomercials, posters, lesson plans and more, challenging hate and discrimination, celebrating diversity and community.

Pre- and post-project questionnaires demonstrated over 90% of participants report an increase in confidence in reporting hate crime.

This project has been funded for a further two years.

Celebrating International Women's Day

Working with local women's groups and other partners, the Council celebrate International Women's Day each year. Providing an opportunity for women to come together, share experiences and celebrate diversity.

Faith Communities

Our faith communities play a valuable role in supporting and building stronger communities.

The Council works closely with our faith communities, not only through its support to the Hillingdon Inter Faith Network, which aims to bring faith communities together, to promote greater understanding, building relationships and tackle common issues facing local people, but also in supporting them to deliver community services, such as luncheon clubs.

In partnership with local Police, the Council has held meetings with faith communities to offer reassurance, listen to concerns, and identify ways of working together. The Council has supported initiatives such as the Hillingdon Street Angels, and through its Stronger Communities Team, offers support to community-led initiatives and groups, to develop ideas and work collaboratively together.

2.2 Communications

How the Council communicate with residents is an important part of ensuring that everyone feels included and able to access our services. The Corporate Communications Team ensure that there is a coordinated and cohesive approach to the Council's communications. There are a number of ways in which the Council do this:

- Press releases to media;
- Hillingdon People magazine;
- Hillingdon People Locals pamphlets (every two years);
- The Council website;
- Social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn);
- Various brochures (Culture and Heritage, Explore Hillingdon, Green Spaces, activities for over-65s, Adult Learning brochure); and,
- Campaigns using posters (including JCDecaux), leaflets, banners, signage etc.

Hillingdon has a diverse population and, therefore, direct engagement and building relationships with different groups is important to ensure that services reach out to all the Borough's residents.

There are a number of ways in which the Council reach out to different groups in order to build those relationships on a face-to-face level. This includes contact through front-line services, along with consultation and engagement activity through residents' forums, the Older People's Assembly, and Carers' Assembly, as well as stronger communities' activity, including inter-faith, BAME and women's groups, the Travellers' Forum and support to the voluntary sector.

2.3 Events / Opportunities to Interact

In order to promote that sense of belonging and inclusion, the Council delivers a range of services and provides a number of different opportunities and activities that enable people to come together and feel part of the community.

Below are some examples that have been delivered through the Council's libraries and other services, which aim to bring communities together:

Community Events

- Hayes Community Family Fun Day: Annual event in Barra Hall Park which engages with the local community in Hayes, including women's groups, church, mosque and temple groups, local charities, uniformed groups (e.g. scouts, guides etc), amateur drama groups, and local sports clubs. The event attracts circa 2,000 people.
- Family Fishing Fun Days: Two-day, annual event at Little Britain Lake – engages with all age groups and backgrounds, and is an open event for cross-borough (and some out of Borough) residents to have a free taster session of fishing. The Council work with volunteers from local angling clubs who provide tuition to the people who attend, and assist with the equipment use and landing / catching fish. Free activities for under 12 years in arts and crafts, and face painting etc. In 2019, over 800 people attended.
- Opening events at new build schools, care homes, housing, leisure centres, sports facilities etc: The Council engage with local residents and users of the buildings, and contractors and site developers. The events range across all areas of the Borough, and all age groups,

often including specific sports clubs or community-based groups.

- Opening of playgrounds, outdoor gyms, green flag awards to sites: the Council engage with local residents to the site and community groups which will benefit from the installation, often involving local schools and special schools to attend the opening events hosted by the Mayor. The events vary in size, but usually a minimum of 30 people attend each, from all backgrounds and ages.
- Mayor's Parlour Events: Events are also held in the Mayor's Parlour to invite in community groups to receive awards for various reasons, such as long-service volunteer awards and success in London In Bloom. These events normally have between 30 – 40 people at them, and they are local residents from across the Borough of all ages and backgrounds. It is an opportunity for residents to meet like-minded people, e.g. green spaces volunteers who assist with the upkeep / litter picking at open spaces and parks.
- Civic Pride / Heritage events: As directed by the Leader or Cabinet. Examples include the Armed Forces Flag Raising in June, and annual Armistice Remembrance event. The Council work with local RBL, faith groups and RAF / other services. Often these involve the selection of public and invited guests from across the Borough, and all age groups. The event on 11 November on the Council forecourt involves Council staff from the Civic Centre.
- Ad-Hoc Heritage / Civic Pride Projects: These events often work with smaller communities within the Borough, such as the Gurkhas, Polish or Sikh communities. In 2019, the Council have co-ordinated the planting of 22 cedar trees in wards across the Borough to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The Annual Polish Air Force Memorial event in September engages with the Polish community from the Borough, local areas to Hillingdon, and from Poland, with up to 600 people at the event.
- Hillingdon In Bloom Competition: This annual event engages with residents across the Borough from all age groups and abilities in horticulture. The Council extend the competition to schools with a special category, and there is also a first-time entrant category to encourage new participants. The Autumn Show (fruit, vegetables and art, handicraft, cooked produce) also takes place, and has entries from all age groups across the Borough, both from private gardens and also allotment groups. In 2019, the number of entries in the show had increased on previous years, and the attendance at the show by non-participating residents and public was several hundred across the course of the day.
- Service Veterans and RAF Northolt: Often the Council have to engage with specific groups of serving and retired service personnel at civic functions. There can be all three service arms, and also foreign armed forces personnel.
- Senior Diplomats, elected Members of Parliament and other Dignitaries: The Council often liaise with these people for events / projects, including backroom staff and police protection teams.

Dementia Support

Hillingdon library service has expanded its work supporting people living with dementia, and those caring for people with dementia. Four libraries have Tovertafels (magic tables); interactive projected games that help those in late stages of dementia, to move and interact in a community

environment. The four libraries are Uxbridge, Botwell Green, Ruislip Manor and Northwood Hills. Three more Tovertafels are being installed at Yeading and Harefield before the end of the financial year (Oak Farms was installed in late September). Tovertafels have been funded by the Leader's Initiative.

Since April 2019, a total of 1,234 people have used the Tovertafels in the four existing library sites. This includes use by residents living with dementia, care homes, the Occupational Therapy Team, MENCAP, and children with autism and learning difficulties.

In addition, there are currently nine dementia friends' coffee morning meetings across Hillingdon. Most meet weekly, however, South Ruislip meet fortnightly and Manor Farm and Yiewsley on a monthly basis. The coffee mornings include reminiscence, songs and art sessions. Northwood library is the first branch to provide a regular coffee morning for people with early onset dementia. The majority of library staff are trained as Dementia Friends.

Since April 2019, a total of 1,850 people have attended the dementia coffee mornings (69 people attend groups on a regular weekly basis across give different libraries). There are three new libraries that plan to start coffee mornings, including Oak Farm, Harefield and Yeading.

Teen Engagement

Since April 2019, the library services has made improving teen engagement a priority. Two managers are leading on this work, meeting with CAMHS and the YMCA, and internal partners, including the Transporter Bus, Youth Service, Archives and the Youth Council. The goal is to improve the customer experience for young people by asking for their ideas and opinions of what libraries can offer them building better relationships with students and schools, and training staff in understanding the best way to work with teenagers.

Libraries are creating more volunteer opportunities for teenagers and ensuring work experience and Duke of Edinburgh placements are enriching and worthwhile. In 2019, the library service used 46 volunteers aged 14-18 to support the Summer Reading Challenge, more than double the number used in 2018. The volunteers contributed almost 618 hours, 70 more than the previous years.

Culture Bite – Celebrating Women

The annual arts and culture festival has run since 2015, and this year has been a year-round programme to allow residents greater opportunity to access talks, workshops and performances. Culture Bite is cost-neutral for the Council, and includes many free talks and events to provide opportunities for everyone to get involved.

In May, Botwell Green hosted a Culture Bite event called Celebrating Women, which invited women from BAME communities to share their stories and experiences. As well as guest speakers from the Hillingdon community, talking about their cultures and backgrounds, an open mic element asked audience members to tell other attendees about their lives as refugees, immigrants, and British citizens. At the event, women were invited to write about their experiences and to put the notes on a tree image. Over 40 notes were collected, and the 'experience tree' has

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDIX A: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

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 include local authorities) to prevent crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and reduce 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 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 accounted 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; and,
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; and,
- The right to an education

Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on all public sector organisations 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:

- Tackle the causes of radicalisation* and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism;
- Safeguard and support those most at risk of radicalisation through early intervention, identifying them and offering support; and,
- Enable those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

* **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 intolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Also included in the definition of extremism are calls for the deaths 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 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; and,
- 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 of integrations and segregation; and,
 - Stronger safeguards for children not in mainstream education.
- Increase standards of leadership and integrity in public office.

Government's Hate Crime Action Plan: July 2016 – Action Against Hate

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

The 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; and,
- Building our understanding of hate crime through improved data collection.

Underlying the plan are two key themes – working in partnership with communities and joined up work across the hate crime stands, to ensure best practice is understood and drawn upon.