COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2012

COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY REVIEW 2010/11: EVIDENCE GATHERING

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP3: SAFE CITY

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focussed Services, C102: Being 'One Council', C103: Efficient and Effective Council, C104: Improving partnership working to deliver 'One City'

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   To receive further evidence in relation to the Committee policy review into the development of Community Cohesion in Sunderland, including:-

a) a report on the ARCH hate incident reporting system which has been operating in Sunderland since November 2007;

b) a presentation on the background and operation of the Equality Forums (previously known as Independent Advisory Groups) which provide opportunities for hard to reach people and a method of gathering intelligence on some of the short, medium and long term threats to equality and cohesion in Sunderland;

c) an update on the current position with regard to the Government's proposed Integration Strategy.

2.   Background

2.1   On 7 June 2011, the Committee agreed to undertake a policy review into the actions and interventions being taken by the Council and its partners in relation community cohesion and how national policy will impact on the city.

2.2   Members chose this area in view of the importance attached by local people to the related issues of improving employment opportunities, tackling poverty, improving educational attainment, securing better housing and improving sport and cultural activities.

2.3   It was agreed that the policy should review should include consideration of the following themes:-

- the background and policy context for the development of community cohesion at a national and local level;

- the priorities for a future refresh of the Sunderland Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy;
- the range of community cohesion interventions in the city across a number of themes including young people, sport and cultural activities, education, housing and planning, community safety and policing and ethnic and minority groups;
- the policies and programmes of the Council, its partners and the community and voluntary sector which can help bring people together across the city and build bridges between communities;
- the range of interventions being taken to tackle tensions for example between older and younger generations within neighbourhoods and communities;

3   ARCH Hate Reporting System

Background

3.1   The ARCH hate incident reporting system has been operating in Sunderland since November 2007. Victims and witnesses of racist, religious, homophobic, transphobic and disability hate incidents are able to report incidents to ARCH. Victims can then be offered support and action can be taken against perpetrators.

3.2   Over 20 partner agencies from across the statutory, voluntary and community sector are now part of the ARCH Partnership. These agencies act as reporting centres, referral agencies or both.

3.3   ARCH is coordinated by the People and Neighbourhoods Team (part of the Council's Strategy, Policy and Performance Management function) and reports to the Safer Sunderland Partnership Board.

3.4   ARCH is part of a Tyne and Wear network, with all 5 local authorities using the ARCH system to monitor hate incidents and community tensions in their local areas.

Effects of Hate Incidents

3.5   It is estimated that at least a third of the population of Sunderland may be at risk of experiencing a hate incident. The negative effects of hate incidents on people and communities cannot be underestimated.

3.6   Hate based harassment is never an isolated incident. Victimisation is a process of accumulated negative experiences that affect day-to-day decisions and exert a detrimental impact upon people's lives. It becomes part of their routine and influences all aspects of their life including personal relationships, family and children, health and well-being and feelings of security, comfort and confidence. In being victimised people become isolated, both socially and economically. They may be scared to leave the home, or scared to stay at home. They become preoccupied with the harassment, constantly changing

their everyday behaviour as they try to continue an ordinary life. Partners will argue amongst themselves, blaming one another. Children's eating and sleeping patterns will be disturbed; their education suffers. Families often receive medical treatment for the effects of harassment, varying from depression to post-traumatic stress disorder. People in these circumstances are less able to function as normal members of society and this restricts their ability to contribute to their own economic growth and that of the local neighbourhood.

3.7   The monitoring of hate incidents and tensions in communities in Sunderland is extremely important in the building of resilient communities. It also needs to be understood and considered when working on other strategies and policies.

Snapshot of ARCH data

3.8   There have been 971 hate incidents reported to ARCH from November 2007 – August 2011.

3.9   Around 75% of incidents reported involve verbal abuse and 38% threatening behaviour. These include the types of incidents reported by shopkeepers or takeaway workers who are often verbally abused by customers; people being verbally abused or feeling threatened in the street or at/outside their on home. Attack on person (17%) and attack on property (11%) together make up nearly a third of incidents reported. These range from unprovoked attacks in the street to repeated damage to homes or businesses. All of these incidents have a very negative effect on victims, their families and local communities.

3.10   There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that many incidents still go unreported, particularly by people experiencing hate incidents on a daily basis. ARCH hopes to put more work into encouraging victims and witnesses to report hate incidents so that we can get a better picture of what is happening in local areas.

3.11   Of the 5 regeneration areas the East area contains the majority of incidents reported, mostly due to the fact that many BME people live in this area. However, around a quarter of incidents take place in the North area. Under the dispersal system there are a number of asylum seekers housed in this area as well as international students studying at the University. There are also a number of corner shops and takeaways with BME staff, some of who have been repeat victims. The Coalfield, West and Washington areas have experienced similar numbers of incidents; however, proportionally BME people in the Coalfields area are more likely to experience a racist incident than those in the West and Washington. All of these trends have been fed into the area based cohesion networks so that they can look at what interventions are needed in specific areas. The majority of hate incidents reported to ARCH have been racist, however, there are an increasing number of other hate incidents now being reported which means targeted work can be done around other areas of harassment.

3.12   Looking at data by ward level, Hendon and Millfield wards contain the highest numbers of hate incidents reported. St Michael's, St Peter's, Houghton, Southwick, Washington North, Barnes and Castle have also had a high number of incidents reported. This could be due to various factors. Some of these wards have an increasing BME population. A section of three wards also form part of the city centre in which there are many incidents involving perpetrators having consumed alcohol.

However, as previously discussed there is still under reporting of hate incidents in Sunderland particularly from victims in the younger age bracket. Additionally, the reporting of disability hate incidents has only just begun so again this may change the picture of where incidents are reported.

Increasing the Reporting of Hate Incidents

3.13   There has been an increase in reporting (particularly through non-police routes) year on year. However, underreporting of hate incidents is still an issue in Sunderland. There are a number of reasons why people do not report harassment, these include among others: not knowing what a hate incident is, what happens once it is reported or what support is available. It is a long term process to increase the confidence of communities to report hate incidents including those that they have witnessed.

3.14   The recent Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) inquiry into disability-related harassment suggested that disabled people are disproportionately affected by antisocial behaviour and are more likely to be harmed by it. It also stated that the scale of the problem is not adequately recognised.

3.15   Young people who are victims of hate incidents are also particularly under represented in the statistics, although from anecdotal evidence we know that young people are experiencing hate incidents sometimes on a daily basis. Without a full picture of what is happening to people in Sunderland we may target interventions or resources into the wrong area.

3.16   There are a number of key further actions for the future:-

- Work with communities and vulnerable groups around their understanding of what a hate incident is; what happens once it is reported; what support is available to victims of harassment and the importance of reporting for intelligence information;.
- Increase reports made by witnesses of hate incidents;
- Increase reports of disability hate incidents (launched Nov 2011);
- Roll out ARCH into schools and youth projects.

Monitoring and analysis of ARCH statistics and community tensions

3.17 The statistics gathered by ARCH enable a more accurate picture of the extent of hate incidents in the city and provide a baseline from which to work with. Trends and patterns can be analysed and compared with other data coming through the Intelligence Hub to see if peaks or troughs of incidents are symptomatic of wider community problems. These statistics are a valuable tool for monitoring tensions in Sunderland, enabling the sharing of particular community intelligence information with partner agencies and therefore allowing them to be more proactive in identifying tension hotspots. ARCH is already well placed to be the single point of contact for this information.

3.18 n this area, there are a number of key further actions for the future:-

- Raise awareness of ARCH being the single point of contact for tension monitoring information.
- Improve ARCH data analysis and continue to feed into area based groups for short, medium and long term interventions.
- Run joint ARCH/Prevent training sessions to appropriate frontline staff so that any community tension information can be gathered and passed on to the appropriate officers across the Council and Sunderland Partnership.
- Ensure ARCH statistical analysis is considered by partners when producing strategies and policies e.g. Economic Masterplan – Sunderland aims to become a University City - but if foreign students experience racist incidents it may be difficult to achieve without other interventions.

Partnership Working

3.19 ARCH needs to build upon its partnership working success by involving more organisations in the reporting, recording and challenging of hate based harassment, including the private sector. The partnership approach means all agencies in Sunderland are using a common monitoring system and intelligence can be gathered at a central point. ARCH is an example of best practice in partnership approaches to tackling hate and prejudice.

3.20 Now that all five Tyne and Wear local authorities use ARCH, we are in a much more influential position to work at a regional level in regard to combating hate incidents. Work is ongoing with Nexus and public transport providers to produce a regional strategy to increase people's safety on public transport and provide clear guidance to frontline staff. Again, this links to the EHRC inquiry which highlights the anecdotal evidence that disability-related harassment is a major problem on public transport. Regionally ARCH is also looking at key performance measurements to make sure that there is a standard approach to tackling hate throughout the region.

3.21 The Institute of Community Cohesion's Review of Sunderland stated that the Sunderland Partnership and the City Council need to be far

more up-front in challenging negative myths, rumours and stereotypes and promoting the benefits of Sunderland being a more open, welcoming and inclusive City. It recommended that this should be done on an everyday basis by elected Members and members of the Partnership Board. Partnership working and tackling all forms of discrimination will help challenge myths and promote equality in the City.

3.22   Key further actions in this area includes:-

- Formalise links with cohesion networks to promote a partnership approach to tackling hate crime.
- Continue to work as ARCH Tyne and Wear to influence regional priorities around hate crime.
- Work with elected Members to increase awareness of ARCH and their role within area based partnerships.

Operation of the Equality Forums

4.1   A detailed presentation will be provided at the meeting on the background and operation of the Equality Forums

4.2   The Equality Forums (previously known as Independent Advisory Groups) are networks made up of various engagement routes. They are designed to provide opportunities for hard to reach people to have their say in a way that is accessible to them. Through a dedicated co-ordinator, issues regarding barriers to equality and cohesion are collated and fed up through the partnership structure to the Inclusive Communities Group. Here, issues from the Equality Forums and the area based Community Cohesion Groups are discussed, this allows for a broader picture of need to be understood. Partners, including the Council can then identify possible solutions in response.

4.3   These networks prove invaluable in gathering intelligence on some of the short, medium and long term threats to equality and cohesion in Sunderland. However engagement with hard to reach people continues to be a real challenge.

5   Integration Strategy

5.1   It is anticipated the Government will be launching an Integration Strategy early in the New Year. The strategy is likely to see a distinct shift in language in this area. Instead of language referring to 'promoting local community cohesion' it is understood language will shift to 'promoting integration' and 'tolerance', integration meaning creating the conditions for everyone to play a full part in national and local life.

5.2   An update will be provided on the current position with regard to the Strategy and subject to the publication of the strategy further

information will be brought to Scrutiny Committee at the January or February meetings.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members are recommended to consider the report which will be included as part of its policy review into community cohesion.

7. Background Papers

Sunderland Partnership – Community Cohesion Strategy 2008-2015

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