

COMMUNITY AND SAFER CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 19 JULY 2011

COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY REVIEW 2010/11: DRAFT SCOPING REPORT

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: SP3: SAFE CITY

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: C101: 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 The purpose of this report is to put forward proposals and seek agreement from Members in relation to its forthcoming policy review into community cohesion.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Annual Scrutiny Conference was held on 19th May 2011. During the Scrutiny Café sessions a number of viable policy reviews were formulated for discussion by members of the Committee. At the meeting on 7th June 2011, following discussions regarding the work programme, the Committee agreed to focus on issue of community cohesion.
- 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 Community cohesion is a relatively new term which first came into use widely following the disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in 2001. In response to these disturbances, the Government commissioned the Cattle report. This report focused on the importance of developing a dialogue and understanding between members of different racial, cultural and religious communities and ensuring an open debate about issues such as identity, shared values and citizenship.
- 2.4 During the last decade, our understanding of the features of a cohesive community have continued to develop and evolve. This has reflected not only the complexity of the issue but also the fact that there is no one fits all solution to the problems faced regionally or at a local level. Community cohesion has therefore come to encompass broader issues than ethnicity or faith. It has now come to include wider issues such as

tackling poverty and inequalities and developing people's understanding and tolerance of others.

- 2.5 More recently, the Institute for Community Cohesion has provided a useful definition of an integrated and cohesive community as one where:
- There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country;
 - There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living; in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn;
 - Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment;
 - There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny;
 - There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common;
 - There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods
- 2.6 Put simply, community cohesion is about how well people in different neighbourhoods and across the city get on together, how well they support one another and how much they feel they share an interest in what happens in the city. It is about reducing inequalities, crime and levels of deprivation, increasing community engagement and promoting interaction between people.
- 2.7 In response to the issues facing the city, the Sunderland Partnership produced a Community Cohesion Strategy for the period 2008-2015. The document aimed to ensure that our communities are strong and vibrant and also the opportunities that exist to ensure that the people of Sunderland feel fully able to participate in the life and future of the city.
- 2.8 The Strategy recognises that while Sunderland has not experienced the kind of instability that has occurred in other North Western cities, there are a number of significant issues that need to be addressed:-
- Young People and intergenerational tensions
 - Tackling Deprivation
 - Developing a Sense of Belonging
 - Developing Links between Communities

3. The Scrutiny Review Process

- 3.1 Scrutiny reviews will carry out a number of stages in undertaking and completing a review. The stages broadly are:

Stage 1 Scope	The initial stage of the review identifies the background, issues, potential outcomes and timetable for the review.
Stage 2 Investigate	The Committee gathers evidence using a variety of tools and techniques and arranges visits where appropriate.
Stage 3 Analyse	The key trends and issues are highlighted from the evidence gathered by the Committee.
Stage 4 Clarify	The Committee discusses and identifies the principal messages of the review from the work undertaken.
Stage 5 Recommend	The Committee formulates and agrees realistic recommendations.
Stage 6 Report	Draft and final reports are prepared based on the evidence, findings and recommendations.
Stage 7 Monitor	The Committee monitors recommendations on a regularly agreed basis.

4. Overall Aim of the Scrutiny Policy Review

- 4.1 To explore the range of community cohesion issues in the city, such as the relationships between older and younger generations. To identify what the council and partners are doing in relation community cohesion and how national policy will impact on the city.

5. Proposed Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Policy Review

- 5.1 The draft Terms of Reference for the policy review are proposed:-
- (a) To gain a better understanding of what we mean by the term Community Cohesion;
 - (b) To consider the background and policy context for the development of community cohesion at a national and local level;
 - (c) To review the Sunderland Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy;
 - (d) To explore a range of community cohesion issues affecting the city across a number of themes including young people and

- intergenerational tensions; tackling deprivation, developing a sense of belonging and developing links between communities;
- (e) To consider 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;
- (f) To look at the measures being taken to tackle issues causing tensions between older and younger generations within neighbourhoods and communities;
- (g) To consider the action that can be taken to promote “myth busting” and combat misinformation.

6. Potential Areas of Enquiry and Sources of Evidence

6.1 The Scrutiny Committee can invite a variety of people, key stakeholders and interested parties to provide written or oral evidence in order that a balanced and focused range of recommendations can be formulated. A list of potential witnesses, though not exhaustive, is included for Members information:

- (a) Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders;
- (b) Representatives of the Local Strategic Partnership;
- (c) Councillor officers;
- (d) Area Committees;
- (e) gentoo
- (f) Local media
- (g) Key Stakeholders and partner organisations (eg. Schools, Health, Police, Nexus);
- (h) Community and Voluntary sector
- (i) Local residents;
- (j) Representatives of minority communities of interest;
- (k) Ward Councillors;
- (l) Local MPs;
- (m) Examples of good practice from other local authorities.

6.2 As well as gathering information and evidence by the methods outlined above the Committee may, if it feels it appropriate, co-opt an additional

member to the Committee for the duration of the policy review in accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 and the protocols set out in the Scrutiny Handbook.

- 6.3 Community engagement plays a crucial role in the scrutiny process. Consideration will be given as to how involvement can best be structured in a way that the Committee encourages those views.
- 6.4 In addition, diversity issues have been considered in the background research for this enquiry under the Equality Standards for Local Government. As such the views of local diversity groups will be sought throughout the inquiry where felt appropriate and time allows. Consequently, consideration has been given as to how the views of people from minority communities of interest or heritage (for example, people with disabilities, people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, black and minority ethnic people, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people), which may not be gathered through the usual community engagement routes, can be included over the course of the inquiry.

7. Funding from the Dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Budget

- 7.1 Consideration has been given, through the background research for this scoping report of the need to use funding from the Committee's dedicated Overview and Scrutiny budget to aid Members in their enquiry.
- 7.2 At this stage, it is suggested that funding may be necessary to support the following activities:
 - (a) Key witnesses;
 - (b) Engagement with voluntary and statutory organisations;
 - (c) Delegates for expert jury, or a public event;
 - (d) General publicity;
 - (e) Visits (as necessary) to deliver effective scrutiny; and
 - (f) Task and Finish activities.

8. Proposed Timetable of the Scrutiny Investigation

- 8.1 The following scheduled meetings will include evidence gathering for the study:

Setting the Scene - September 2011

Evidence Gathering - October 2011 to February 2012

Consideration of Draft Final Report - March 2012

Consideration of Final Report by the Scrutiny Committee - April 2012

Consideration of Final Report by the Cabinet/Council - June 2012

- 8.2 Additional working group meetings are likely to be necessary to complete the evidence gathering.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Members are recommended to discuss and agree the scope of the Community and Safer City Scrutiny Committee's policy review for 2011/12 as outlined in the report.

10. Background Papers

Sunderland Partnership – Community Cohesion Strategy 2008-2015

Contact Officer : James Diamond 0191 561 1396
james.diamond@sunderland.gov.uk