



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CABINET
6 APRIL 2004

Report of the Director of Policy

Community Cohesion Action Plan

RECOMMENDATION

1. To approve the proposal to produce a Community Cohesion Action Plan for the city as a Derby City Partnership document.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 An integrated approach to issues of equality and diversity has been nationally recognised as achieving better results.
- 2.2 The Community Cohesion Action Plan, like the Community Safety Strategy, has implications for other key partners such as the Police and the Health Service and therefore can best be dealt with collectively at Partnership level.
- 2.3 The government has recognised the importance of Local Strategic Partnerships – LSPs – and encourages the development of positive relationships between partners in order to work together and tackle problems of community life.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Community Cohesion incorporates and goes beyond the concept of race equality and social inclusion. Government Guidance to local authorities in December 2000 addresses how community cohesion strategies should fit with other plans and strategies.
- 3.2 The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 introduced a new positive and enforceable duty on public authorities to promote race equality. This requires local authorities to have due regard to the need, in everything they do, to:
 - tackle racial discrimination
 - promote equal opportunity and
 - promote good relations between people from different racial groups.

- 3.3 In December 2002, the Local Government Association – LGA, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – ODPM, the Commission for Racial Equality – CRE, and the Inter-Faith Network published guidance for local authorities on community cohesion. The guidance highlights the fact that all local agencies need a detailed understanding of the nature of the communities they serve in order to assess how well equipped they are to build community cohesion.
- 3.4 Community cohesion is important to the success of initiatives and strategies adopted by LSPs, which aim to improve the quality of life of people in their area. Therefore, it is important for both the council and our partners to invest in understanding Derby's communities.

Definition of community cohesion

- 3.5 The concept of community cohesion was promoted by the Cantle report in the wake of the disturbances of summer 2001. The definition of community cohesion most widely used is taken from the guidance to local authorities published in December 2002. This definition now also appears on the Home Office web site and forms the basis for the recent performance indicators. It is:

“a cohesive community is one where there is a common vision and sense of belonging; the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances are positively valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, strong and positive relationships”.

- 3.6 Derby is a continuously improving and progressive city with a sense of belonging for its people. The community represents a broad range of people's beliefs and cultural backgrounds and the positive value of this is reflected in many of the city's voluntary, private and public organisations.
- 3.7 We want the city to do everything we can to celebrate and support communities from different backgrounds and make sure that all our citizens have fair life opportunities. We will continue our work in developing cohesive and positive relationships for all, both in the work place, in schools and within local neighbourhoods.

Purpose of community cohesion

- 3.8 The purpose of the Partnership's Community Cohesion Action Plan will be to identify how Derby City Partnership, with the Council playing a key role, can most effectively contribute to the development of a cohesive community in Derby.
- 3.9 In order to support this work, the aim will be to strengthen our partnerships with the community by demonstrating our commitment to fair and open communication. We will continue to encourage and support groups and representatives from public, private and voluntary agencies, media, faith and community groups to work cohesively and enable greater understanding and respect of their work and make sure that they continue to feel valued.
- 3.10 With our partners, we will look at our approach to education, housing, regeneration, employment, policing, health, New Deal for Communities and other key programmes to make sure they are contributing to community cohesion.

The Government's approach

- 3.11 The government response to the disturbances in some northern towns and cities during the summer of 2001 was to set up a Ministerial Group to explore options for national policies. The purpose of this group was to examine and consider national policies that could be used as a tool by local authorities to promote more cohesive communities. The government, at the same time, established a Review Team under Ted Cante to find out the views of the people and their leaders in affected cities and identify what issues needed to be addressed.
- 3.12 The government, in collaboration with the LGA and CRE, issued a comprehensive guidance document based on the findings published by these groups. The intention was to help local authorities and their partners to develop appropriate community cohesion strategies in their own areas.
- 3.13 A recent briefing paper from the Local Government Information Unit advocates the need for strategic management of community cohesion. It states that the concept of community cohesion seems to fulfil a need within strategic management, bringing community relations issues into strategic corporate agendas. However, the issue of community cohesion will best be progressed jointly with local partners and this is the reason why we are proposing that we should develop Derby's Community Cohesion Action Plan within Derby City Partnership.

Progress to date in Derby

- 3.14 Derby's transformation into a vibrant multi-cultural city has been rapid and without any major social upheaval. The Council has played a major role in this positive development by recognising diversity as a positive asset.
- 3.15 The city has successfully settled a large number of incoming migrants of different nationalities and from different parts of the world, including people from the South Asian sub-continent, eastern Europe and the West Indies. They came to the city to gain employment. It is generally accepted that the early incoming migrants have helped make Derby what it is today.
- 3.16 A lot of hard work was put in by many groups of people from the minority ethnic communities on a self-help basis to build community facilities in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, Derby saw its first Mosque, Gurdwara, Hindu Temple and black churches established soon after their arrival in the city. The Council, with the help from central government through Urban Aid, facilitated the establishment of purpose-built Pakistani, Indian, Chinese and West Indian Community Centres in the city. These communities are now helping to establish and build good community relations between their own communities and the white community within the city through cultural activities within the centres.
- 3.17 Derby was spared any major racial disturbance during the 1970s. However, we did experience a shock when the National Front tried to march through Normanton, causing some minor incidents. The city also suffered from copycat riots during the 1981 disturbances, but the community worked hard to stop this from becoming a major conflict.

- 3.18 The more recent arrival of certain asylum seeker and refugee communities into the city has created some tensions, particularly within the Pakistani and Indian communities in the inner city. It has also placed further pressure on service providers because of language barriers and additional demands on health, housing and education. Petitions have also been submitted to the Council asking that we do not place more asylum and refugee communities within the inner city areas. The Council has made strong representations to the National Asylum Seekers Support Service to try and make sure that their future dispersal policy takes these tensions fully into account.

The Council's contribution to community cohesion

- 3.19 The Council is determined to create a cohesive community, where diversity is valued and people can live in safety and harmony. This vision persuaded it to adopt and develop equal opportunity policies and practices soon after the Race Relations Act 1976.
- 3.20 The Council was one of the first authorities in the country to establish a full-time post to develop the Council's strategy for dealing with community relations and equality issues.
- 3.21 Over the last two decades, the Council has come a long way in changing the culture of the organisation by adapting, practising and promoting equality policies. We want to make sure that all communities residing in the city, whatever their cultural or racial background, have similar life opportunities. The Council aims to encourage people of different faiths and cultures to come together with the Council and its partners to address all the issues that concern Derby communities.
- 3.22 Three Advisory Committees addressing issues relating to disabled people and women as well as minority ethnic communities – MECAC – have long been established to advise the Council on its work with these groups.
- 3.23 The Council has now established a community development team, in partnership with the Primary Care Trusts, and they are working with residents in three priority neighbourhoods with an emphasis on reaching residents from all communities and fostering community cohesion.
- 3.24 More recently, the Council and Derby City Partnership have adopted a city-wide Consultation Strategy. One of the Council's major priorities for change is to enhance its community leadership role both at strategic and neighbourhood level, through partnership working and listening to, and communicating with the public. The Council is clear in its commitment to reach out to those disadvantaged groups who are traditional hard to reach. The Council is clearly moving along a path with a 'citizen focus' as evidenced by its work on area panels, consultation, community development and working with partners.
- 3.25 The Police, the Council and the Community Safety Partnership work closely together and provide regular updates on community issues and also host a Community Leaders' Advisory Group to help reduce community tensions. The Police and the Council also have a Community Tensions Protocol, which is managed through Derby Community Safety Partnership.

- 3.26 The Council has introduced many good equalities policies and these are available to our partners and others to benefit from. Derby was one of the first councils to produce its Race Equality Scheme and has shared this as good practice with other local authorities. The Council was also one of the first to set aside funding to roll out anti-racism training to front line staff following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.
- 3.27 Nine out of the current 50 elected members of the Council are from minority ethnic groups, representing over 17% of the total. The Council employs more than 8% of its workforce from minority ethnic groups, as against 12.6% of Derby's economically active population. The Council has established equality targets to increase the overall number of employees from minority ethnic communities and those at a senior level. We aim to have a workforce that reflects the community we serve.
- 3.28 The Council now intends to meet many challenges in the area of community relations by building upon the progress that has already been achieved and develop new approaches to community cohesion and promoting better understanding between different racial and cultural groups. Derby has the will to examine all the current relevant issues to decide what needs to be done and then address these problems to bring about a more socially cohesive and prosperous community.
- 3.29 The Community Cohesion Strategy being developed in Derby is part of the national exercise to address the issues of concern to many local authorities and local communities and help achieve peaceful and cohesive communities in our multi-cultural towns and cities.
- 3.30 All the function and responsibilities of the Council, identified in the Community Cohesion Guidance document issued by the LGA, were circulated to each department. Each service has been producing reports for MECAC covering the issues in the guidance document. The progress and appropriate commitments included in these reports will be incorporated in the Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy. Community Cohesion reports presented to MECAC so far have included:

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| • The Youth Service | April 2003 |
| • Employment as an Employer | July 2003 |
| • Sport and Leisure | October 2003 |
| • Community Safety | November 2003 |
| • External Funding and Regeneration | November 2003 |
| • Employment and Economy | January 2004 |
| • Planning | January 2004 |
| • Housing Strategy | March 2004 |
| • Asylum Seekers and Refugees | March 2004 |
| • Travelling Communities | March 2004 |
| • Arts and Culture | March 2004 |
| • Press and Media | March 2004 |

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 To produce a stand alone Community Cohesion Strategy for the Council. This would have enabled the Council to identify its core activities and their potential impact on community cohesion. However, it would not enable us to deal with health, or law and order issues.
- 4.2 To produce a strategy document based on the information presented in the MECAC reports by departmental officers on functions identified in the Community Cohesion Guidance. This again would exclude issues dealt with at Partnership level.

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| Background papers: | Local Government Community Cohesion Guidance | | |
| List of appendices: | Appendix 1 – Implications | | |

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.

Legal

2. The Council has a legal obligation to promote good relations between different groups within the city and the strategy to achieve a cohesive community will help us meet our legal obligation.

Personnel

3. The Council will be fully represented on the group of officers who will be tasked to produce the Derby City Partnership Community Cohesion Action Plan.

Corporate objectives and key priorities

- 4.1 The proposal comes under the Corporate Plan objectives of **strong and positive neighbourhoods**.
- 4.2 The proposal furthers the priority of **enhancing the community leadership role of the Council, both at strategic and neighbourhood level, through partnership working and listening to, and communicating, with the public.**

