

<b>STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 6</b>
<b>20<sup>th</sup> November 2012</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## **Report of the Community Cohesion Manager**

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### **COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY AND DELIVERY**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to scrutinise the effectiveness of the 2012/13 Cohesion Strategy in tackling current cohesion action plan priorities and make any recommendations for the cohesion strategy/action plan for 2013/14.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress on delivery of the Cohesion Strategy, and provides a steer on future delivery.

#### **3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

- 3.1 Community cohesion features as part of the Empowering People and Creating Cohesive Communities priority within the Sustainable Community Strategy. Within the community cohesion action plan (attached), there are three underlying themes, namely:

- improving community harmony
- engaging young people
- engaging and empowering communities

- 3.2 These themes (and the projects contained therein) link strongly to the priorities identified throughout the Single Delivery Plan – for example, improving educational attainment and parental engagement through an innovative programme of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) delivery, targeted work to reduce hate crime and supporting the work of the Disability Forum to give disabled people a voice in the city.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Community cohesion is a term that is easily misunderstood. Many confuse community cohesion as another word for diversity or equality. Whilst cohesion does encompass these principles, it is a much broader term that describes how the impact of a range of social issues can affect both individuals and the wider community. Cohesive communities are ones that have a shared sense of togetherness and enjoy positive relationships between people from different backgrounds. Put simply, it is about people getting on well together irrespective of differences in age, gender, background, culture or belief.
- 4.2 Peterborough is a largely tolerant and peaceful city, which enjoys positive community relationships. However, tensions can rise quickly in any community and if left unchecked, can result in crime, or as we saw in the national disorders last summer, large scale public disorder.
- 4.3 Whilst most community tensions are centred within the city, there is nevertheless potential for broader cohesion issues to be faced within rural communities. These might include social isolation, intergenerational issues, integrating new and existing communities or a lack of connection between villages and the city.

4.4 Through the Greater Peterborough Partnership, a Community Cohesion Board (made up from representatives from the public sector, business sector and voluntary, community and faith organisations) works to manage and reduce community tensions. The Board is supported by a Police-led Tension Monitoring Group, which closely monitors issues that may affect community relations.

## 5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 The 2012/13 action plan has identified three broad themes (outlined in section 3.1) where targeted actions are required in order to improve community harmony. Fourteen discrete projects have been identified and are delivering through a variety of community and statutory partners. Delivery is on track and no projects are rated as red risk. Key projects from the action plan are as follows:

5.1.1 • **Building better mutual understanding between communities through ESOL and family learning.** Improving English language is key to building a cohesive society. Being able to speak a common language increases understanding between communities and reduces community tensions. This is the flagship project from this year's delivery plan and builds upon the successful pilot programme delivered earlier this year. The project is delivered through local schools and supports parents to gain a better understanding of the education system and the language skills to support their child. The project is now in the process of being rolled out to further schools including secondary later this year.

5.1.2 • **Inspire Peterborough – aiming for the games.** We are working closely with DIAL Peterborough on an ambitious new project that is looking to build upon the legacy of the Paralympic games. We will improve sporting provision and access for disabled people that can provide a pathway from social activities through to paralympic standard. Inspire Peterborough will be established as an independent charity that will bring together sports providers from across the city under a unified brand. This will allow partners to bid for funding, gain access to specialist support and provide an enhanced sporting offer for disabled people from across Peterborough. Sport can be a highly effective tool to improve long term life outcomes for disabled people.

5.1.3 • **Events to bring communities together.** Opportunities to bring different people together are essential to building cohesion across Peterborough. This includes people from different backgrounds, ages, faiths and existing/new communities. We have supported a number of community and resident groups to hold celebratory events that can bring people together. Earlier this year, we supported thirty eight groups to hold Jubilee celebrations within their community. Feedback from community groups shows that the events were highly successful in engaging both new and existing communities. We are working with Neighbourhood Committees to roll out a further programme of cohesion grants to develop new projects that can bring people together and improve cohesion.

5.1.4 • **International Family Fun day.** The cohesion team supported the Friends of Central Park to hold an International Family Fun day in September. The event showcased music and dance from a range of different communities (English, Polish, Roma, Hindu etc) and was supported by a number of partner agencies to provide information and entertainment for all communities. The event was very successful with an estimated 2000 people attending throughout the day. We are now exploring developing further events in both the city centre and central park for 2013.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The vast majority of cohesion issues have been city centre focussed based upon the evidence of need from police and other partners. We have developed a strong and practical ethos of partnership working across a range of different communities and with partner organisations. This allows for intelligence to be shared rapidly and helps to pinpoint where community grievances may be developing. Our approach has been a combination of reacting to known hot spot tensions and identifying communities/localities likely to be vulnerable to a breakdown in cohesion.
- 6.2 Our overarching strategy is to address emerging community concerns before they are able to escalate into wider community tension or public disorder.
- 6.3 We will continue to work with a wide range of partners to reduce community tensions using an issues-based approach.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Consultation with the Community Cohesion Board and wider partners took place during the summer 2012 in order to identify and agree projects for the year. We regularly engage with community partners and networks to understand issues from a community perspective. Intelligence is shared amongst relevant partners to enable a targeted response.

## **8. NEXT STEPS**

- 8.1 Priorities for the coming months can be summarised as follows:
1. Deliver the projects as outlined within the Community Cohesion action plan
  2. Explore opportunities to bid for external funding to support the work of cohesion, particularly in relation to increasing English language skills
  3. Support Inspire Peterborough to become an established charity and develop a work programme to improving sporting provision and access for disabled people
  4. To support further events that can bring people together and improve cohesion.
- 8.2 We would welcome the Committee's view on the above and a steer for future areas of engagement within the community cohesion agenda.

## **9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1 None

## **10. APPENDICES**

- 10.1 Appendix 1: Community Cohesion Strategy 2012  
Appendix 2: Community Cohesion Action Plan 2012-13  
Appendix 3: Cohesion Action Plan progress update (October 2012)

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