

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2006/2007 REPORT NO. 230A

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

Cabinet 28th February 2007

Council 28th March 2007

REPORT OF:

Director of Performance,
Partnership and Policy

Agenda – Part: 1	Item:
Subject: Community Cohesion Strategy	
Wards: All	
Cabinet Member consulted:	Cllr Hurer

Contact officer and telephone number:

Julia Sherfield 020 8379 3011

E mail: Julia.sherfield@enfield.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report introduces the Council's first Community Cohesion Strategy. The report outlines its content and explains the process involved in developing the strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Cabinet are asked to approve the Community Cohesion Strategy and to recommend its adoption by full Council on 28th March 2007.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The CMB agreed proposals for developing the Council's community cohesion strategy in January 2006. This decision was based on a key finding for improvement identified in Enfield's corporate assessment report (Audit Commission December 2005), which suggested that 'The Council should bring together community cohesion activity in a coherent way so that impact can be assessed and learning shared more readily'. CMB agreed the general approach, project management arrangements and the use of external consultants. It was agreed that strategy development would be led by the Head of Strategic Policy and project managed by the Corporate Policy Team.

3.2 CMB has considered the evolving strategy on several occasions during 2006 and approved the final draft version on 9th January 2007.

4. STRATEGY CONTENT

- 4.1 The strategy (attached as appendix 1) is based around five key aims which reflect the broad issues raised by those members, officers, community and voluntary groups and residents involved in the engagement phase (this phase is explained below). The five key aims are:
- Democracy – to create a borough where local people play an active part in civic and community life, and contribute to local decision-making.
 - Opportunities for Bringing People Together – to create a borough where local people of all ages and backgrounds have opportunities to mix together
 - Investing in Our Future – to create a borough where local people have learning opportunities and feel there are good future prospects for them
 - Safer Communities – to create a borough where local people feel safe and are safe
 - Promoting Community Cohesion – To create a borough where the Council acts as a community leader and promotes community cohesion in all it does
- 4.2 The strategy action plan (available in the Members' Library) draws together the Council's activities around these aims and introduces a number of new actions to more specifically address the recommendations made through the engagement activities. Specific new actions include:
- Working with the Faith Forum to develop a practical programme of Council support for the group
 - Review the Council's Communications Strategy to ensure it addresses community cohesion
 - Use the new council magazine, website and other local communication initiatives to raise local neighbourhood and ward profiles
 - An annual awards ceremony to celebrate the achievement / contributions of volunteers in the borough

5. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Strategy development was supported by a cross council project board, the purpose of which was to provide a corporate focus on community cohesion and ensure Council-wide input.
- 5.2 The development of the strategy was divided into four key stages. The first stage involved a mapping exercise of the Council's existing activities around community cohesion using the Local Government Association (LGA) definition. The information gained and the subsequent 'position statement' were used to inform the strategy's second stage; community engagement. During this phase an external consultant held 15 events with groups from across the borough, to discuss community cohesion. Key partners involved included, Enfield Voluntary Action, Enfield Community Empowerment Network, Enfield Racial Equality Council, the Faith Forum and members of the Citizen's Panel and ESP Board.
- 5.3 The events raised a number of particular concerns, including some isolation between different communities, a lack of understanding between generations

and some feelings of prejudice towards new communities. These concerns and related recommendations directly informed the drafting of the strategy (stage three). The engagement phase ended with a strategy-planning event in July, involving members, representatives from voluntary and community organisations, members of the Citizen's panel and council staff. This event developed a consensus around the way forward for the strategy and provided another opportunity for individuals to express their views.

- 5.4 To ensure coherence with the developing community strategy the ESP Board agreed to promote a partnership vision of community cohesion through its adoption of the LGA definition. This commitment was developed at the ESP Board away day as it was agreed thematic action groups would be asked to consider their own contributions to community cohesion.
- 5.5 In order to ensure the strategy adequately mirrors the engagement outcomes stage four consisted of a period of consultation. Those who had been previously involved were asked to provide their comments on the draft strategy, the document was also made available more widely via the ECEN website and council intranet.
- 5.6 Twenty eight responses were received in total, including comments from the Labour Group, Save Chase Farm Group, Enfield Racial Equality Council, Enfield Police, Enfield Disability Action and Enfield Voluntary Action.
- 5.7 Following the consultation period many of the minor suggested changes have been incorporated into the draft. The key comments received from respondents have been addressed in a summary document; this summary has been sent to all respondents after the amended strategy was agreed by CMB.
- 5.8 The Corporate Policy Team are currently putting in place plans to take many of the new actions forward and considering a launch event in the Spring.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Alternative options were considered by CMB on 24th January 2006. This report details the outcomes of the approach already agreed by CMB.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To gain Cabinet's approval for the adoption of the community cohesion strategy and its subsequent recommendation onto full Council in March.

8. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

8.1 Financial Implications

Project funding of £105k was identified for Older Persons Strategy and Community Cohesion as part of the closure of the 2005-06 accounts. The reserve created for this purpose has a balance of £26k, after commitments,

available to address any additional costs arising from the Draft Community Cohesion Strategy that cannot be contained within existing resources.

Any funding implications arising from the specific actions contained within the report would need to be met from within existing resources or identified as part of the 07-08 budget process and the review of the Medium Term financial plan.

8.2 Legal Implications

The Community Cohesion Strategy has been developed under the community 'well being' powers contained in the Local Government Act 2000.

9 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The strategy sets out clear performance management arrangements, responsibility for this will lie with the Corporate Equalities Group. Questions on community cohesion in the Annual Residents' Survey and Citizen's Panel will provide key data by which the success of the strategy can be assessed. Leadership on community cohesion will be provided by the Cabinet member for Community Safety and the Voluntary Sector, and the Director of Performance, Partnership and Policy, as council champions for community cohesion.

10 PUTTING ENFIELD FIRST

The promotion of community cohesion within Enfield is expressed by the Council's mission statement and forms a core part of the Council's vision and purpose. The development of a Council community cohesion strategy will give greater coherence to the contribution made by Putting Enfield First, towards the promotion of community cohesion.

Background Papers

CMB reports 24th January 2006, 2nd May 2006, 13th June 2006, 3rd October 2006 and 9th January 2007.