

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Slough Wellbeing Board
DATE: 15 May 2013
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PART I

KEY DECISION

LIVING TOGETHER: A COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY FOR SLOUGH 2013 – 2015

1. Purpose of Report

To agree a Community Cohesion Strategy for Slough, which sets out the key objectives and work areas for the Community Cohesion PDG for the next two years.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

That the Slough Wellbeing Board considers, comments on and endorses "Living Together: A Community Cohesion Strategy for Slough 2013–2015" as set out at Appendix A to this report.

3. Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities:

The Strategy supports the delivery of:

- a) the Slough Wellbeing Board's **vision** of an integrated and cohesive community, where all residents are treated fairly and equitably;
- b) the Slough Wellbeing Strategy's **five priority areas** (i.e. economy and skills, health and wellbeing, housing, regeneration and environment and a safer Slough); and its **two cross cutting themes** of civic responsibility and promoting the image of Slough - which inform each of the five priority areas and the Slough Wellbeing Strategy as a whole.

4. Other Implications

(a) Financial - There are no specific financial implications. It is anticipated that the Strategy will utilise existing resources to meet its outcomes and objectives; this may include a review of where these resources are currently allocated.

(b) Risk Management - There are no specific risks associated with the agreement of the Strategy as a whole. Risk assessment and management will be carried out for specific actions and initiatives included in the Strategy's supporting action plan (as it is developed) and where appropriate.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications - The Strategy (and its forthcoming action plan) support Articles 9 and 14 of the Human Rights Act 1998, namely the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the right to enjoy all convention rights without discrimination on any grounds.

(d) Equalities Impact - The Strategy (and its forthcoming action plan) contain outcomes and objectives that will promote fairness, equality and diversity and build community cohesion in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, namely to “*Foster good relations between people who share an equalities characteristic and those who don’t*”, and specifically in relation to the council’s general duty under section 149 of the Act and the duty to have ‘due regard’ to the need to (i) eliminate discrimination, (ii) advance equality of opportunity and (iii) foster good relations between people.

4. Supporting Information

- In 2008 the coalition Government defined community cohesion as “*What must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together.*” It is committed “to creating One Nation”, a country where “*every colour is a good colour ... every member of every part of society is able to fulfil their potential ... racism is unacceptable and counteracted ... everyone is treated according to their needs and rights ... everyone recognises their responsibilities ... racial diversity is celebrated*”.
- In recent years the approach to tackling community cohesion has very much shifted away from centrally-dictated to locally-determined activities (where government has less of a primary role), where “*....each of us, whatever our background, has a chance to contribute. ... Integration is achieved when neighbourhoods, families and individuals come together on issues which matter to them*”.
- The Local Strategic Partnership’s previous Cohesion Strategy was launched in 2010 and predominately focused on the role of the council in leading cohesion - rather than developing a partnership approach.
- “Living Together” has been developed in light of national guidance and by local partners and organisations, who have come together to (a) identify the issues that matter most to their client groups, and (b) develop a shared understanding of, and vision for, cohesion across the borough for the next two years. The resulting Strategy therefore enables the council to be a key partner in leading the work on cohesion, whilst supporting and commissioning activities (where appropriate) to promote increased cohesiveness, from within existing budgets.
- The seven themes¹ identified in the 2010 Strategy have now evolved and developed into following five outcomes and 30 objectives for delivery by 2015:

Outcome	Objectives
1. People feel and sense of pride and belonging	1. A shared sense of belonging 2. Responsive services that meet local needs and which are open and accessible to all 3. A greater understanding of the borough’s rich heritage 4. Attractive neighbourhoods that have a clear sense of identity and where people are proud to live, study and work 5. Neighbourhoods where people value one another, support the vulnerable and help those most in need 6. The direct involvement of local people in decision making about local services and increased participation local democracy 7. A good quality well maintained environment
2. Better Life Opportunities for all	8. Narrow the gap between the most and least deprived areas of the borough 9. Accessible schools, community facilities and employment opportunities 10. Year on year improvements in the determinants of deprivation e.g. ill health, mortality, unemployment, literacy, mental health and school performance 11. Improve social and economic wellbeing across the borough 12. Promote employment and training opportunities to under represented, disengaged, vulnerable and hard to reach groups and individuals 13. Raise people’s aspirations for them selves, their neighbourhood, their communities and the borough 14. Increase the number of local people who volunteer

¹ 1) Understand, respect and celebrate diversity, 2) Community engagement, 3) Promote a sense of belonging, 4) Address access and barriers to services, 5) Enabling integration/ inclusion, 6) Myth busting/tackling perceptions; and 7) Training and knowledge.

3. Diversity is valued	15. A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity 16. Zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination 17. Workforces that are reflective of the wider community across all sectors and at all levels 18. Promote and celebrate the rich heritage and cultural diversity of the borough's local people 19. Create strong, positive relationships between people from different backgrounds
4. Positive relationships within and between Communities	20. Reassure and empower local people to tackle anti social behaviour 21. Improve cross cultural, interfaith and community understanding 22. Strengthen and improve relationships between older and young people 23. Support children, young people and families 24. Ensure community cohesion is actively and effectively monitored
5. We all take responsibility	25. A robust and proactive response to all forms of discrimination, prejudice, racism and hatred 26. Political and inter-agency consensus about how difficult issues should be tackled 27. Increased community control of appropriate neighbourhood assets and delivery of some services 28. Local people empowered to take responsibility and accountability for their homes, their neighbourhoods and their 29. Effective democratic neighbourhood representation 30. Maximise community engagement opportunities for local people to get involved and have their say

Living Together (and its forthcoming action plan) will be delivered and monitored through the Community Cohesion PDG, which brings together council, police, health sector and a wide range of local third sector and business interests to work on what matters most to residents.

6. Comments of Other Committees / Priority Delivery Groups (PDGs)

All of the thematic PDGs reporting into the Slough Wellbeing Board have been consulted and their views used in the development of the Strategy. A wide range of local third sector partners and the public were also given the opportunity to comment and their views have also been taken into account during the development of this Strategy.

7. Conclusion

Slough is a rapidly changing borough and this Strategy aims to mitigate the reputational risk of our being seen as not concerned with the issue of supporting new and established communities to get on well together in Slough. The Strategy will also go some way to mitigate the (a) risk of legal challenge for potentially failing to meet the requirement of the Equality Duty to 'foster good relations' between different groups in the borough and there is a risk that community tensions could also increase, resulting in less positive feelings between neighbours, and (b) help mitigate the risk of community tensions in the borough. Failure to adequately monitor tension risks and to be seen to address concerns and grievances could lead to increased community tensions, personal safety risks for minority populations, and reputational damage for the council.

Living Together has been agreed by the Community Cohesion PDG and the Slough Wellbeing Board is asked to endorse the Strategy.

8. Appendices Attached

Appendix A – Living Together: Slough's Community Cohesion Strategy 2013-2015

9. Background Papers

None.