

**LEICESTERSHIRE TOGETHER (LOCAL STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP) BOARD**

Tuesday 21st February 2006

COMMUNITY COHESION

REPORT OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Purpose of Report:

- To provide the Leicestershire Together Board with an overview of community cohesion.
- To request that the Board agrees an outline proposal to take forward community cohesion in Leicestershire.
- To request that the Board both approves and actively embraces the report and its recommendations.

Context

1. Following incidents of community unrest in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford in 2001, the Government set up an independent review team headed by Ted Cattle to identify good practice, key policy issues and new and innovative thinking in the field of community cohesion. The Cattle Report saw Local Authorities as critical to initiating and driving change at a local level and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) as having an important role in facilitating community cohesion.
2. Ultimately, community cohesion is about breaking down barriers and building relations between and within communities. The Local Government Association defines a cohesive community as one where *'there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities, the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued, those from different backgrounds have similar life and opportunities and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods'*.
(LGA, Community Cohesion Guidance, 2002).

Leicestershire context

3. Whilst Leicestershire has not experienced disturbances to the extent of those in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, community cohesion lies at the heart of what makes a strong, vibrant and safe community. Mechanisms, therefore, are needed to establish such conditions and alleviate community tensions before they have the chance to escalate into community unrest in Leicestershire. The consequence of this was

highlighted by a number of racist incidents in Loughborough in September 2005 which appeared to be linked to the London bombings in July.

4. The three Leicestershire Together community cohesion projects piloted in 2005/06 (see below) importantly focused on young people and equality and diversity issues but it needs to be recognised by the Board that community cohesion is about much more than race and ethnicity. Community cohesion is about building good relations between different parts of the community, focusing on a wide potential source of division and including the likes of social class, age, gender, geography, disability and degrees of transient and established residence, in addition to race, ethnicity and faith.
5. The Borough of Charnwood and Leicester City have already been working on building cohesion in their areas. In 2003, both were part of the Community Cohesion Pathfinder programme, funded by the Home Office. The programmes and projects reflected a range of creative and responsive approaches to breaking down barriers between and within communities.

Background

6. There is a commitment in the Leicestershire Community Strategy to develop an agreed partnership approach to community cohesion. In 2004/ 05 Leicestershire Together collected information about existing County projects that contributed to community cohesion and information about projects that could be developed under the auspices of Leicestershire Together to enhance community cohesion in Leicestershire. This information informed a draft Community Cohesion Action Plan for Leicestershire, which focused upon key projects that could be taken forward by Leicestershire Together to enhance cohesion. The three priority projects identified by the Board all focused on young people, as follows:
 - A Youth Champion Grant Scheme awarding funding to groups of young people to build community cohesion in Hinckley and Bosworth. (Hinckley & Bosworth Borough)
 - Interactive drama based workshops for young people exploring national and local cohesion and diversity issues at the Sonic Boom Event (Oadby & Wigston Borough)
 - Youth engagement/ consultation project exploring national and local cohesion and diversity issues at the Belvoir Bash (Melton Borough).
7. The Sonic Boom and Belvoir Bash events have now taken place. The Youth Champion Grants Project applications have been received and the sub-group of the youth council are currently appraising them for funding. The projects awarded funding will run from February 2006. The results/ outcomes of these projects will inform the mapping exercise (see below).

A Framework for Action

- A. There needs to be a strong ownership of the community cohesion agenda from the Leicestershire Together Board. It is essential that each organisation/partnership on the

Board also works closely with others within their own organisations/partnerships to help to build a wider community ownership of community cohesion.

- B. It is essential that a local approach to community cohesion is developed. To do this the local context needs to be understood. This will involve a mapping exercise to understand community make-up and dynamics and identify existing community cohesion groups/projects/services/activities in Leicestershire in order to identify gaps in services and rationalize/co-ordinate activity. In addition, research into the regional and national agenda is required in order to understand the given structures, initiatives, legislative requirements and sources of potential funding. The outcomes of both pieces of work will influence the way forward and preliminary findings will be presented to the Leicestershire Together Board at their next meeting in July.
- C. The establishment of a Leicestershire community cohesion network, consisting of relevant County officers, District Council officers and representatives from the voluntary and community sector would be a significant development. This will enable information/best practice to be shared and provide greater expertise, resources and authority to support community cohesion in Leicestershire. It is envisaged that the network will assist with the development of an inclusive local vision and direction for community cohesion in Leicestershire.
- D. The formulation of a "Community Cohesion Toolkit" would assist the process of mainstreaming community cohesion principles and practices. Community cohesion cannot be approached as an 'add on' to public service delivery and needs to be incorporated into mainstream service plans in order to build strong and cohesive communities in Leicestershire.

Additional Drivers for Action

- **Ted Cante Report:** In 2001 the 'Cante Report' identified that communities were living segregated parallel lives and that breaking down barriers and promoting a more inclusive society was one way to address some of these issues.
- **Race Relations Amendment Act 2000:** This places a positive duty on Local Authorities to promote race equality and equal opportunities; eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and encourage good race relations between people from different racial groups.
- **Local Area Agreement (LAA):** The penultimate draft indicates linkages between the LAA and community cohesion.
- **Leicestershire's Community Strategy:** The Community Strategy identifies that Leicestershire people want to have a sense of "community spirit" and to be supported in community activities to bring people together. The Community Strategy is committed to developing an agreed partnership approach to community cohesion.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- **The Board agree to progress the community cohesion agenda in Leicestershire as outlined in this proposal.**
- **There is active participation from Board members and from officers within their organisations and partnerships in taking forward the community cohesion agenda.**
- **The Board considers preliminary findings from the mapping exercise and research at their next meeting in July which will shape the way forward.**
- **Volunteers from the Board nominate themselves to support this work area by emailing Sasha Ryan (sryan@leics.gov.uk) by Tuesday 28th February.**

Officer to contact

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