

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
13 March 2008

CORPORATE COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY 2006/07 – ANNUAL REPORT
(Director of Corporate Services)

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper presents the Overview and Scrutiny Commission with a detailed progress report on the implementation of the Council's Corporate Community Cohesion Strategy during 2006/07.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 **That Appendix 1, the Council's Community Cohesion Annual Report for 2006/07 be noted.**

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In May 2004 the Council approved a three year corporate strategy for promoting community cohesion in Bracknell Forest. The 'All of Us' Community Cohesion Strategy was a fundamental part of the Council's CPA Improvement Plan and continues to be the key vehicle for meeting the Council's statutory duties under various equalities legislation, including the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. Therefore effective implementation of the Strategy was considered crucial and it was agreed that an Annual Report would be submitted to Members detailing progress to date.

- 3.2 The progress that the Council has made in implementing Community Cohesion during 2006/07 is detailed in the Annual Report in Appendix 1 and is evident in two key performance measures against which the success of the Strategy is judged, namely

✓ All of the 72 Key Tasks in the Strategy have been completed within their respective timescales, with the majority ahead of schedule

✓ Of the 25 performance indicators where information is available, the Council's performance has seen 12 improve, 8 remain stable and only 5 decline.

- 3.3 The major performance indicator by which the Council is measuring its progress in Community Cohesion is "the percentage of people who feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together". This has been measured by survey in 2003 and 2006. The results show that there has been a dramatic improvement, with those that agree with this statement increasing from 66% in 2003 to 81% in 2006, which brings the Council into the top 2nd quartile when compared nationally. (Top quartile results are 84% and above).

Key pieces of work in the last 12 months

- 3.4 One of the major pieces of work undertaken to support the Community Cohesion Strategy has been the completion of the Black and Minority Ethnic groups audit. Detailed mapping of service data availability has been undertaken with partners and

key data sources for ethnic community service users has been identified. Further work has been completed to provide a detailed geographical mapping across the Borough of all key service user groups by ethnicity to provide an ethnic community profile.

- 3.5 Members attention is also drawn to a sample of case studies of where the Council has successfully applied the principles contained in the Community Cohesion Strategy during 2006/07. These case studies are outlined on pages 5-10 of Appendix 1.

Where do we go in the future?

- 3.6 There is no doubt the Council has performed well against the tasks and targets it set in the first strategy for Community Cohesion. However there is a recognition that nationally the approach to community cohesion issues has matured over the last couple of years and the approach the Council adopts to ensure maximum cohesion will need to mature in a similar way.

- 3.7 The publication of the report 'Our Shared Future' by the Commission for Cohesion and Integration, is also leading the way forward by identifying key areas where Local Authorities can help improve community cohesion. These are:

- Firstly, the sense of **Shared Futures**..... - an emphasis on articulating what binds communities together rather than what differences divide them, and prioritising a shared future over divided legacies
- Secondly, an emphasis on a new **model of rights and responsibilities**..... – one that makes clear both a sense of citizenship at a national and local level and the obligations that go along with membership of a community, both for individuals or groups
- Thirdly, an ethic of hospitality – a new emphasis on **mutual respect and civility** that recognises that alongside the need to strengthen the social bonds within groups, the pace of change across the country reconfigures local communities rapidly, meaning that mutual respect is fundamental to issues of integration and cohesion.
- A commitment to equality that sits alongside the need to deliver **visible social justice**, to prioritise transparency and fairness and build trust in the institutions that arbitrate between groups

- 3.8 There is clearly a need to keep the momentum of the first strategy alive with the development of a further strategy to take the Community Cohesion work forward beyond 2008. The new community cohesion strategy will need to ensure that these key areas are included and that locally we build a strategy that is meaningful to the people of Bracknell Forest.

- 3.9 Work has begun on the development of a new strategy which is due to be approved this Spring.

- 3.10 The progress of the strategy will continue to be monitored by a working group (Community Cohesion & Engagement Working Group), with representatives from all the departments across the Council. From September 2007 this group was expanded to include representatives from key partners in Bracknell. This has proved to be of great benefit, in enhancing partnership working, but to share data and expertise across a wide range of equalities and cohesion issues. In addition to this an Executive Member has been appointed as the lead Member for community cohesion from May 2007.

Background Papers

Community Cohesion Strategy and various working papers.

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