


<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>28 January 2019</p>	
<p>Report of: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director Governance</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Cohesion Challenge Session progress update</p>	

Originating Officer(s)	Iqbal Raakin, Strategy and Policy Manager
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

This report follows up from the scrutiny challenge session on the Council's community cohesion services, which went to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 12 April 2017 with 6 recommendations. This report reviews the progress against the recommendations.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the updates in the report.

1. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The Scrutiny Lead for Governance, Councillor Muhammad Ansar Mustaquin as part of his work programme for OSC for the municipal year 2016/17 agreed to Chair a scrutiny challenge session on community cohesion. The session considered the implications of the national review by Dame Louise Casey on opportunity and integration, in the borough.
- 1.2. This challenge session offered the opportunity to review the work that the Council and its partners have undertaken or commissioned to deliver improved cohesion outcomes and to understand the impact of

this work. Members wanted to understand what the important issues are related to community cohesion in the borough and what can be done further to enhance community cohesion.

1.3. The review specifically looked at:

- The definition of community cohesion.
- National reviews related to cohesion.
- The key findings from the Casey Review and to establish to what extent those findings were prevalent in Tower Hamlets by considering and comparing factual and statistical evidence.
- The Council's Cohesion Programme which included a prima facie review of existing projects and funding
- The Council's approach to grants and the associated impact on improving cohesion outcomes.
- Language as driver of cohesion, including a consideration of the effectiveness of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision.
- The impact of council policies on cohesion such as the school admissions, housing and planning policies.
- A consideration of the social and economic data and trends and the consequential impact on the gentrification of the borough.
- The context of the Equalities Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equalities Duty on the Council to foster good relations between people and the Council's leadership role on cohesion.

1.4. The report with recommendations is attached as Appendix 1. There are six recommendations arising from the challenge session held on April 12th 2017. It is useful to note that the report reflects the discussion from a two hour challenge session. The report recognises the limited amount of time that was available to cover such a wide ranging topic as cohesion. The report therefore focusses on the particular aspects of cohesion that the challenge session felt was important for Tower Hamlets. A recommendation has been made to consider setting up a taskforce that looks at cohesion in more detail to address this.

1.5. The report also highlights that the Council is leading on best practice in this area, as an example its role and involvement with London Councils to help develop the future approaches is noted and recognised. The report also recognises the range and scale of projects being undertaken by the Council, addressing cohesion in Tower hamlets. The report makes recommendations which aim to further enhance cohesion outcomes for the borough.

1.6. Findings from the challenge session discussion, which included qualitative evidence from professionals both internally and external to the Council and councillors' practical experience in the field, have been supplemented by additional secondary sources. These include review of population statistics and trends, ward data, as well as consideration of the impact of legislation and findings from national reviews. The

recommendations arising from this range of evidence sources are outlined below.

- 1.7. Recommendation 1:** The Council develops an approach and action plan to: mainstream cohesion across Council services and activities, explore external funding opportunities and develop a robust evaluation, review and reporting process for all cohesion activities and initiatives
- 1.8.** Update from service 11 January 2019: In order to mainstream community cohesion across Council services the Council is currently developing a Community Cohesion Framework which will reflect local as well as national and regional priorities. The Framework will help shape development of Council strategies, policies and services.
- 1.9.** The Framework will set out cohesion outcomes and what the Council is doing to achieve the outcomes grouped within the themes of:
- Relationships
 - Participation
 - Equality
- 1.10.** An early draft of the Framework has been produced and will begin going through the committee process beginning with the Governance Directorate Leadership Team meeting on 24 January 2019.
- 1.11.** The Council has also secured approximately half a million pounds of funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's 'Controlling Migration Fund' to deliver the 'Welcome to Tower Hamlets Programme' for newly arrived migrant which has within it the following elements:
- Production of a Welcome to Tower Hamlets welcome pack for newly arrived migrants
 - ESOL programme focusing on pre-entry level learning for migrants
 - Community volunteering
- 1.12.** The funding also covers one full-time programme manager and one part-time research officer.

The Council has also applied for the second round of funding of the Controlling Migration Fund and is awaiting the outcome.

- 1.13.** As part of the evaluation of the Community Cohesion Pilot Programme (a programme of community cohesion projects in the Mile End and Aldgate East areas) the Council commissioned Carney Green and the New Economics Foundation to produce a Cohesion Evaluation Framework which sets out cohesion outcomes, indicators and tools to measure the delivery community cohesion services. The Evaluation Framework was finalised in May 2018 and is being utilised for the

evaluation of the Community Cohesion Pilot Programme and will be used to inform the evaluation of future community cohesion services.

1.14. Recommendation 2: Idea Store Learning should explore a common assessment process between internal and external providers of ESOL in the borough to ensure appropriate analysis of user needs and better matching to course places.

1.15. Update from Idea Store service 11 January 2019:

Idea Store Learning has led on:

- Launch of an online platform, the ESOL Hub (can be found at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ESOL)
- Launch of the monthly ESOL bulletin for ESOL providers/practitioners which provides information on new course openings and enrolment information

1.16. Recommendation 3: The Council should commission more projects which tackle isolation and encourage strong positive relations and friendship between different groups in the borough.

The Council co-designed a cohesion outcomes framework with the local Voluntary and Community Sector in 16/17. Following this, in September 2017, the Council commissioned eight community cohesion projects were across the borough that meet these outcomes which include establishing strong positive relationships between different groups in the borough, increasing participation in public life and promoting equality.

As part of this, Age UK was commissioned to recruit to and organise an intergenerational forum which meets on a weekly basis and where participants can share skills, knowledge, participate in social activities and deliver small local projects together, such as the creation of a mural or a short film on ageism. One of the outcomes from this project is to tackle isolation.

Another project commissioned to Stifford centre included running a residents' and neighbours' club and holding fortnightly coffee mornings for residents aged 55+. During the coffee morning presentations are delivered by local service providers on their respective services provisions as well as training and information and advice.

Other projects included Migrant women's projects (with a focus on citizenship, local volunteering and sharing of skills) and food exchange from different cultures. All eight projects are running until the end of September 2019.

In April 2018, as part of the Community Cohesion Pilot Programme two projects under the themes of nature and food from different cultures were commissioned in Mile End and three projects under theme of nature, enlivening public spaces and visual arts were commissioned in Aldgate East with an aim to establish strong and positive relationships between different groups and facilitate community volunteering

in the two area. The projects have had many positive impacts; some examples are provided below (quotations and case studies).

Toyhouse (food from different cultures project) quotes from project participants:

- 'I loved every minute of my involvement! Thoroughly enjoyed meeting everyone & learning about everyone's background/ cultures through talking and making the food. I only wish it was every Friday for ever! Thank you so much for this opportunity!'
- 'I feel more involved with the community, including different people's cultures and values.'
- 'It was really nice to meet some different people and to listen, talk and discuss'
- 'I feel more confident now to interact with others'
- 'I feel like after discussing things with the group, I was able to go and discuss similar topics with friends, family and neighbours to see what they felt and experienced. It has made me think a lot about our community.'
- 'Well I now feel part of the community & I would like to help and take part in future events.'
- 'I think I can now go out and interact with other people from different backgrounds.'

Case study of female, aged 18 years who has special educational needs (SEND) and took part in the Creative Communities (enlivening public spaces) project delivered by Societylinks:

X's sister signed her up to attend the Christmas party. She had finished secondary school and is now spending a lot of time at home. She is disengaged from other local young people because of her SEND. The party gave her something to look forward to and provided her with a safe, fun outing with other young people. She is reluctant to go into situations that are new to her, which limits opportunities for her to go out and socialise. She was included in the gift-distribution at the party and was very happy when her name was called out to receive her present from Father Christmas. Her mother attended the party with her to reassure her but left her to enjoy the event independently because she knew she was in a safe environment.

Case study submitted by Four Corners for their 'My Neighbourhood Arts' project:

Manny is just one of the regular visitors to the Toynbee Hall Wellbeing center, one of our partners on the Aldgate East My Neighbourhood Project. Toynbee Hall puts people like Manny at the heart of their work and now he is a member of their Wellbeing Center Member's Board, that works to design and improve what Toynbee Hall can offer older people.

This year Manny celebrated his 100th birthday and here's what he has to say...

I was born here, about a mile away in Jamaica Street. When I was younger I used to go to Toynbee Hall because they had meetings there

and tea dances, that sort of thing. I used to go there about 80 years ago.

I started coming to the Wellbeing Centre 3 years ago; Helena, who is one of the Toynbee Hall's outreach workers in the City of London, introduced me to it. She would come to where I used to live and suggested that I come along. She brought me down and I've been coming regularly ever since, 2 or 3 times a week.

She asked what I liked doing, and I said I like mixing with people. She suggested that I try coming along to the centre where I could meet people, so I gave it a go. There are people here from all over the world. It's quite international. I enjoy that, you know. I get involved with a few things, I play chess, cards, dominos and we have a music class. It's my social life.

With the Aldgate East My Neighbourhood project, I could tell the others about the Whitechapel Boys (a loosely knit group of Anglo-Jewish writers and artists of the early 20th century. It is named after [Whitechapel](#), which contained one of London's main Jewish settlements and from which many of its members came. These members included [Mark Gertler](#), [Isaac Rosenberg](#), [David Bomberg](#), [Joseph Leftwich](#), Jacob Kramer, Morris Goldstein, [Stephen Winsten](#), [John Rodker](#), [Lazarus Aaronson](#) and its only female member, [Clara Birnberg](#)) when we were discussing the "Stories we wanted to tell", Mary can tell you more, she an artist.

There are not a lot of things to improve, but I like that they ask my opinion. I get a chance to do lots of things here. I'm not very mobile and I can't get around too far so this is quite easy distance for me. I don't know what I would do if the wellbeing centre wasn't here.

1.17. Recommendation 4: The Council reviews the Grant and Commissioning Policies to ensure that there is a stronger focus on cohesion.

The current mainstream grants programme (MSG) will be replaced by the Local Community Fund (LCF) from 1 October 2019. There will also be a new grants programme alongside the Local Community Fund which will bring together current small grants programmes, the Events Fund and the Ageing Well Fund, and parts of the former MSG programme relating to community cohesion and voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure support. These programmes have been developed in close discussion with the VCS during 2018. The themes, priorities and higher level outcomes for these programmes were agreed at Cabinet in October 2018. The reports can be found at <http://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=720&MId=8828>.

Community cohesion is a cross cutting theme in both the LCF and the grants programme. Organisations bidding to these programmes will be

required to demonstrate that their proposals contribute towards the Council's Community Cohesion Outcomes Framework and this will be reflected in the assessment proposals when they are finalised.

Community cohesion is also one of the main themes of the new small grants programme. The policy underpinning the new grants programme requires that each grant theme meets some or all of six specific criteria which make grants a more appropriate funding method than commissioned contracts. These are:

- Empowerment - responsive to new and emerging needs
- Innovation - provides the financial means for communities to do things for themselves
- Flexibility - can adjust to meet changing needs
- Reach - can be accessible to groups which would not otherwise be able to get funding through contractual arrangements
- Risk - shares the risk of new innovation between the provider and the funder
- Cost effective - can lever in other resources to support community activity

The innovation and reach were considered to be particularly important criteria for funding community cohesion activities. Full details of the Community Cohesion Theme can be found in the 31st October 2018 Cabinet reports referred to previously.

The former MSG budget for community cohesion amounting to £105k annually will become part of the new small grants budget. It is also anticipated that, as some existing contracts for community cohesion activities come to an end, they will also move to the small grants programme.

The new funding arrangements come into place on 1 October 2019. Both the LCF and small grants programmes will be reported to the Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee on a regular basis and the Grants Scrutiny Sub Committee will continue to provide input into the monitoring and evaluation process as these programmes develop.

1.18. Recommendation 5: Explore how leadership on cohesion can be developed by the Council through the delivery of specialised training for Councillors, senior officers and community leaders.

We are taking a phased approach to the delivery of the equalities and cohesion training programme. Phase 1 consists of training on the Equalities Act 2010, the legislation which underpins the community cohesion agenda.

Following the 2018 local elections, mandatory training sessions on the Equality Act and the Council's equalities processes were provided to members on:

- 5 September 2018
- 3 October 2018

Training to staff (including senior leadership) on the Equality Act and processes will follow the completion of an equalities review which the Council is currently undertaking where we are undertaking a rapid appraisal against the Local Government Association's 'Equalities Framework for Local Government'.

The second phase of the training will comprise of a more in-depth focus on the principles and priorities of community cohesion. This will be delivered after the development of the Community Cohesion Framework which will incorporate the national and regional social integration priorities as set out in the Government and Greater London Authority's social integration strategies as well as local cohesion priorities.

1.19. Recommendation 6: Explore setting up a taskforce to consider the impact of gentrification on cohesion in the borough.

As part of a test as to whether a taskforce was required to consider the impact of gentrification on community cohesion, in the development of the Community Cohesion Pilot Programme, we consulted with the community on key cohesion priorities in their local area through online and offline surveys and stakeholder sessions (which included local residents, business, voluntary and community sector organisations and public services) and discussed ways that these can be addressed. The feedback that we received from stakeholders indicated that although there was some local concern regarding the lack of mixing from different socio-economic backgrounds there are other cohesion priorities in the areas, such as the mixing of people from different cultural backgrounds and ages, which were deemed equally as important.

In order to address this we commissioned projects as part of the CCPP which seek to address all of these priorities. The Community Cohesion Framework will also incorporate these local priorities and will set out the council's strategic approach in addressing these challenges as well as other community cohesion challenges.

Furthermore, since this recommendation was made, there has been no hate incidents locally where anti-gentrification was a clear motivator. The biggest motivator for hate crime in the borough is race and this follows the national trend.

It is for these reasons that a taskforce looking at the impact of gentrification on cohesion is not thought to be required at this stage. The Council, through the No Place for Hate Forum and the Tension Monitoring Group, will continue monitoring this and if it is perceived that the impact has increased then will assess and address this issue through these two partnership forums.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. In carrying out its functions, the Council must comply with the public sector equality duty set out in section 149 Equality Act 2010, namely it must have due regard to the need to eliminate inequalities, the need to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 4.2. The community cohesion touches on the need to eliminate inequality and address in the main the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people of different backgrounds.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.

- 5.2 None to note.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 [Financial implications to be prepared by Directorate Finance Manager and agreed with Corporate Finance]

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Council has a legal duty to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not when carrying out its functions.
- 7.2 Protected characteristics include age, disability, race, and religion or belief amongst others. Therefore, the improvement of cohesion outcomes is central to this legal duty.
- 7.3 The compliance by the Council of this legal duty is reliant on taking into account the community cohesion outcomes and recommendations detailed in this report when subsequently carrying out its legal functions in the borough
-

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- List any linked reports
-
- State NONE if none.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – A More Cohesive Borough: A Scrutiny Challenge Report

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- These must be sent to Democratic Services with the report
- State NONE if none.

Officer contact details for documents:

Or state N/A