

CABINET

Referral to Cabinet - Community Cohesion 8th July 2008

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To request Cabinet to consider the referral from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a result of the Call-in of Cabinet's decision with regard to Community Cohesion – Minute 12.			
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Overview & Scrutiny
Date Included in Forward Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>		
This report is public			

RECOMMENDATIONS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- (1) That Cabinet do not appoint a Community Cohesion officer at the present time.
- (2) That Cabinet consider alternative ways of achieving the aims of the Corporate Plan on cohesive communities, including working with the universities. Overview and Scrutiny draws the attention of Cabinet to priority outcome 16 and highlights that:
 - ❑ The Community Cohesion Strategy could be achieved through working with the LSP and voluntary sector. A future programme of spending on Community Cohesion should be based upon this strategy.
 - ❑ Area Based Grant (ABG) money could be used to implement the Children and Young People Strategic Plan.
 - ❑ Area Based Grant money could be used to achieve the aim of a civic programme that celebrates our heritage and benefits our communities.
- (3) That Cabinet reconsiders the issue of achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard as an issue separate from the spending of the Community Cohesion Area Based Grant monies.

1.0 Introduction

The Chief Executive agreed to a request by Councillor Bray, Langhorn, Towers, Brown and Rogerson to Call-in the decision made by Cabinet at its meeting on 3rd June 2008 with regard to Community Cohesion.

At the Call-in held on 25th June 2008 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made three recommendations which have been referred to Cabinet for consideration.

2.0 Details

The recommendations agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are detailed below:

- (1) That Cabinet do not appoint a Community Cohesion officer at the present time.
- (2) That Cabinet consider alternative ways of achieving the aims of the Corporate Plan on cohesive communities, including working with the universities. Overview and Scrutiny draws the attention of Cabinet to priority outcome 16 and highlights that:
 - The Community Cohesion Strategy could be achieved through working with the LSP and voluntary sector. A future programme of spending on Community Cohesion should be based upon this strategy.
 - Area Based Grant money could be used to implement the Children and Young People Strategic Plan.
 - Area Based Grant money could be used to achieve the aim of a civic programme that celebrates our heritage and benefits our communities.
- (3) That Cabinet reconsiders the issue of achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard as an issue separate from the spending of the Community Cohesion Area Based Grant monies.

3.0 OFFICER COMMENTS WITH REGARD TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Recommendation 2

“That Cabinet consider alternative ways of achieving the aims of the Corporate Plan on cohesive communities, including working with the universities. Overview and Scrutiny draws the attention of Cabinet to priority outcome 16.”

- **Area Based Grant money could be used to achieve the aim of a civic programme that celebrates our heritage and benefits our communities.**

The main events contained within the current Civic Programme are set out below.

May

Annual Council.
Mayor's Sunday.

November

Remembrance Day

June

Community Festival.

January

Holocaust Memorial Day

July

Freeman's Court.
Youth Games.

March

Mayoral At Homes

September

Possible Overseas Students

The Mayor also supports a number of local charitable organisations by the granting of up to 13 free lettings in any year. These have included the support of events such as Chinese New Year and Hindu festivals and the Holocaust Memorial Day celebrations are also held with the benefit of a free letting.

With regard to the Civic Programme for the Centenary Celebrations for 2009 Cabinet is advised that a Heritage Partners meeting consisting of Officers has been formed in order to, amongst other things, consider proposals and make arrangements for the celebrations. Representatives include the NWDA, Museum, Williamson Park and the City Council. No firm proposals are available at the time of writing this report, however, proposals could include extending the duration of the Heritage Open Days concept, which is already arranged on an annual basis in the District on 1 day in the year, to a weekend event for 2009. Buildings that could be opened to the public include public buildings, such as the Town Halls, the monument at Williamson Park, the Museum, Lancaster Castle, stately homes and other buildings that could be of interest. However, negotiations would need to be undertaken with the owners of the buildings to ensure that they would be willing to participate.

ABG could be used to make arrangements for the event, pay any costs that may arise such as booking arrangements, opening and staffing costs, together with promotional literature/press releases and signage that maybe required.

Cabinet is also advised that the Williamson Park Board has created a Centenary Working Group, which has met to discuss proposals for the centenary celebrations. The following has been agreed by the Board:

- A Centenary Dinner/Reception on the 24th October 2009, with Prince Charles being invited to attend.
- Creation of an Illuminated Woodland Walk, with funding being sought.
- That the opening of the Illuminated Woodland Walk coincide with the Centenary Dinner/Reception.

The Group proposed that the Memorial be lit temporarily for the centenary celebrations by a local firm who had lit the Memorial some years ago. They additionally suggested that the Arboretum Walk be lit as a permanent feature by accent lighting under the trees, in order to create a winter woodland walk.

The lighting of the Arboretum Walk would serve several purposes, namely:

- creating a winter activity in the park, possibly with guided tours;
 - increasing security;
 - promoting Green technology with solar powered L.E.D. lighting;
 - using the scheme for match funding for any Lottery bids in future.
- **The Community Cohesion Strategy could be achieved through working with the LSP and voluntary sector. A future programme of spending on Community Cohesion should be based upon this strategy.**
 - **Area Based Grant money could be used to implement the Children and Young People Strategic Plan.**

Cabinet work with the LSP to develop a Community Cohesion Strategy

Development of a Community Cohesion strategy would need to be developed with partners through the LSP and in particular the newly formed Valuing People Thematic Group. The first meeting of this group is scheduled for the 8th July. The nominated officer to support the Cabinet Member nominated to the thematic group is the Head of Corporate Strategy who is also the Officer nominated to the relevant County LSP Thematic Group. The LSP Manager currently supports all of the thematic groups in developing their action plans and is supporting the establishment of new LSP structures following the recent peer review of the LSP.

Working with the LSP to take this work forward is the correct way but this is a very early stage in the formation of the LSP group. It has not yet at this stage identified its membership apart from a small core membership. It has yet to begin action planning as to how best to deliver its identified priorities, what targets and milestones it will set itself before it begins to consider resources required to deliver an action plan. Those resources could be both in house amongst relevant agencies and externally commissioned – both have their place but this will take time.

The allocation of Area Based Grant provides a significant opportunity to provide a resource to both support this activity both internally and with partners. It also provides an opportunity for us to begin to significantly address some the equality and diversity issues the Council itself faces. In providing leadership to our partners we are also being given the opportunity to offer a resource to co-ordinate all of this work.

The Service (and the Head of Service) does not have the current capacity to take all of this activity forward without additional resources or revising priorities in this year's Business Plan.

Use of cohesion Area Based Grant to fund Children and Young People Strategy

Lancaster City Council's Children and Young People Strategic Plan has identified priority areas of work to be developed over the next three years.

For 2008/09 the main priorities are 'to develop a Youth Engagement Strategy' and to 'improve access and take up of positive activities, including sports, cultural and leisure activities', both of which contribute positively to community cohesion.

Currently Cultural Services already have funding bids in through the SPAS (Sport and Physical Activity Strategy) to enable staff work with a range of partners on delivering 'diversionary activities', expanding on a similar scheme that ran successfully for a 12 week period in 2007.

The use of Area Based Grant funding could enable more young people to be able to access positive activities, developing both practical and social skills and help to dispel misconceived ideas about the majority of young people who want to be able to build positive relationships within their communities.

A decision to use area based grant funding for this purpose will need to be considered alongside the comments made in the first section.

Recommendation 3

"That Cabinet reconsiders the issue of achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard as an issue separate from the spending of the Community Cohesion Area Based Grant monies."

As set out in Appendix B to the original Cabinet report, the Human Resources staffing budget includes £10,000 towards equality work. However, from August 2008 there will be a part time (two days a week) vacancy within Human Resources, equating to £10,550 in salary. The Service does not currently have the capacity to lead the work on achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard, and, from past experience, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to fill a vacancy of this nature in order to provide such capacity.

It would be possible to appoint an external body to work with the Council to achieve Level 2 of the Equality Standard. A quotation was obtained in November 2007, when this option was being considered in order to meet Level 2 in 2007/08. The quotation has recently been updated and is in the region of £22,000.

If Cabinet were to reaffirm its decision to establish a new post of Community Cohesion Officer, it is envisaged that that officer would take on the role of leading the Equality Standard work. However, if Cabinet does not reaffirm that decision, it would need to consider whether it wishes to pursue the Equality Standard. If so, given the lack of capacity within Human Resources, Cabinet may wish to consider using the Human Resources salary saving identified above, supplemented by an amount of ABG grant, in order to buy in the work from an external provider.

4.0 Options

1. Reaffirm the decision of Cabinet on 3rd June 2008.
The original report to Cabinet on Community Cohesion with appendices and relevant minute are attached to this report.
2. Accept the recommendations either wholly or in part made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the Call-in on 25th June 2008, and make resolutions in line with those recommendations.
3. Decide to spend the ABG in some other way or defer consideration to a later meeting.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Sustainable Community Strategy (currently under development) will have within it a Valuing People theme which will have within it outcomes and targets relating to Community Cohesion.

The Corporate Plan 2008/09 has relevant targets within it:

“Improve score against Equality Standard for Local Government – Level 2 March 2009 and Level 3 March 2011” and “Develop and implement a Community Cohesion Strategy”

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

Such an approach would have a positive impact and support the Council’s community leadership role in terms of positive action in respect of equality, celebrating diversity and working to promote safe and cohesive communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The implications of the original Cabinet report are set out in the appendices attached.

If the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny are preferred either wholly or in part, and/or Cabinet wish to take forward issues highlighted under the Officer comments, Members will need to decide how they should be funded and how the ABG is to be allocated.

In the event that Cabinet decides not to support Options 1 or 2 there will still be a need to consider how ABG for community cohesion is allocated.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact Officer: Liz Bateson
Telephone: 01524 582047
E-mail: ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk