

CABINET

COMMUNITY COHESION

3rd June 2008

Report of Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To consider how to take forward community cohesion within Lancaster District in the context of the Area Based Grant.			
Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member
Date Included in Forward Plan	08 May 2008		
This report is public.			

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That the Community Cohesion element of the Area Based Grant (ABG) be used to support the establishment of a new post of a Community Cohesion Officer, initially for a period of 3 years, and to commission community cohesion activities as set out in the report.
- 2 That the Revenue Budget be updated accordingly.

1 INTRODUCTION

Lancaster City Council has received an Area Based Grant for Community Cohesion for the three year period from April 2008. Cabinet, at its meeting on 18 March 2008, resolved at Minute 137:

- (1) That for April 2008 Area Based Grant be used to continue existing arrangements for Neighbourhood Management in Poulton and the West End of Morecambe and a report on future options be brought back to Cabinet in April 2008.
- (2) That work on options to develop Neighbourhood Management arrangements for the District be considered and brought back to Cabinet.
- (3) That allocation of the remaining Grant in 2008/09 be subject to a further report to Cabinet.
- (4) That the General Fund Revenue Budget be updated accordingly.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Community cohesion can mean different things to different people. Within the Lancashire sub-region we have settled on a definition (attached as **Appendix A**).
- 2.2 The City Council has been engaged on equality and diversity work programmes over a number of years, most recently through working on the Equality Standard and in partnership with other organisations on the equality and diversity “building block” of the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Lancaster City Council has achieved Equality Standard Level 1. The Corporate Plan for 2007/08 identified Level 2 as a target, but this has been deferred to 2008/09 due to capacity problems and the need to prioritise the Fair Pay programme. Nevertheless, the City Council initiated and has contributed to the development of a local forum with community leaders, has continued to work within the LSP and has been active within the Lancashire sub-region.
- 2.3 There has previously been in place an agreed allocation by way of Service Level Agreement (SLA) to the value of £2,200 per annum with Preston & West Lancs Racial Equality Council for advice and support on equality and diversity matters. However, it had been proposed by Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Resolved, amongst other things, by Cabinet, at its meeting on the 22 January 2008, Minute No 94(1):

“That Officers explore the opportunity to offer a three year SLA for £2,000 per annum with no inflation for the provision of equality and diversity assistance and advice in the district.”

This amount has been included in the 2008/09 Revenue Budget.

The proposals in this report enable the capacity of the Council to be enhanced and for services over and above £2,000 to be procured by one or more SLAs, should that be appropriate.

- 2.4 It is acknowledged that capacity needs to be provided if the Council is to provide leadership to the equalities and diversity/cohesion agenda to ensure that these issues are addressed as set out in the Corporate Plan and a consistent approach is taken in relation to all the Council's business.

3 PROPOSAL DETAILS

Funding

- 3.1 Cabinet, at its meeting on the 18 April, agreed the allocation of Area Based Grant (ABG) in respect of Neighbourhood Management and asked for a further report regarding the allocation of a new element which is paid directly to the Council in respect of Community Cohesion (see below)

Area Based Grant Allocation (£)			
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Revenue - Cohesion	26,000	49,000	75,000

Attached at **Appendix B** is a note of previous arrangements.

Note. Cohesion money is a *new* ABG funding allocation not yet allocated to any specific expenditure heading within the 2008/09 Draft GF Revenue Budget.

Capacity

- 3.5 It is recommended that a new post of Community Cohesion Officer be established to become Lancaster City Council's lead officer in respect of Community Cohesion/Equality and Diversity issues. It is further recommended that the excess ABG over and above that required to cover the salary costs of this proposed new post, be retained as a working budget for the postholder to allow for appropriate commissioning of activities, meeting training needs, positive promotion etc.
- 3.6 It is anticipated that the role of the Community Cohesion officer (and the range of activities commissioned) would be wide ranging and varied in terms of developing policy, co-ordinating activities and representing the Council on District and County Officer Working Groups.

4 DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

The Council's Corporate Plan was the subject of extensive consultation during its preparation and it has within it a specific outcome - "Work to maintain a cohesive community where respect for all is valued and celebrated" and a specific action - "to develop and implement a Community Cohesion Strategy." Additional capacity will be provided by the establishment of this post to take this work forward.

5 OPTIONS AND OPTIONS ANALYSIS (including risk assessment)

- Option 1 To pull together the existing employee resource allocated to equality and diversity issues within HR, combine with resources from the ABG to create a whole time equivalent officer and a commissioning budget.
- The officer will be located in the most appropriate City Council Service (Corporate Strategy) or the work programme to be procured from another organisation.
- Option 2 That the ABG be used in some other way to be determined by Cabinet. Should Cabinet resolve to use the ABG for different purposes, there will be a resourcing issue in respect of the Corporate Plan action to achieve Levels 2 and 3 of the Equality Standard.

The preferred option is Option 1. The allocation of ABG to the City Council offers a timely opportunity for the Council to address the issues it faces in terms of community cohesion, equality and diversity.

CONCLUSION

Community Cohesion has been moving up the agenda nationally, regionally and locally over the last year or so. The ABG enables the City Council to take further actions in relation to community cohesion and integrate those actions with existing work programmes and plans in relation to equality and diversity.

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

For Option 1 the proposed salary range for the new post is SCP 34-37 currently estimated at £27,594 -£29,728, which will be subject to the outcome of Fair Pay. Assuming a start date of no sooner than 1st September 2008, the maximum costs of £22,150 can be funded by the ABG of £26,000 together with the saving of £10,550 generated by the Senior HRO returning to work on 3 days a week. A balance of £14,400 would be remaining for commissioning work before any recruitment costs have been allowed for, estimated at in the region of £1,600. However if the start date is later then this figure would increase and the budget would need to be updated once the appointment has been made and a start date known.

The maximum staff costs of £39,250 and £40,570 in 2009/10 and 2010/11 could be funded from the indicative ABG of £49,000 and £75,000 respectively with the remainder being allocated to commissioning work, subject to annual review as part of the budget process. However, as funding has so far only been agreed for 3 years, a provision will need to be made in 2010/11 for redundancy costs.

If the work programme is procured from another organisation, the costs cannot yet be identified but would need to be contained within the budget available above.

If Option 2 is preferred Cabinet members may recommend (or decide) other uses of the allocation, but if any amounts of the ABG remained unallocated, initially these would go towards supporting the revenue budget generally, together with any staff savings from the Senior HRO. (If there was an overall underspend at the end of the year this would fall into balances). If this was the case, it may be necessary for HR to fill the remaining two days of the Senior HR Officer post and the saving of £10,550 would, therefore, not be generated.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

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

ABG Guidance

Government's response to the Commission
on Integration and Cohesion

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