



**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Ward(s)

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**  
Cabinet

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

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**Community Cohesion Assessment Instrument**

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**Report of the Director of Partnerships, Performance and Policy**

**1. Purpose of Report**

To seek support and guidance for Cabinet for taking forward in consultation with partners, a new Community Cohesion Assessment Instrument which will inform and support the implementation and development of the council's community cohesion strategy. This cutting edge and experimental instrument will provide a mechanism for exploring the nature of community cohesion in the city, and will provide a basis for Area Committees to respond to local needs and priorities.

**2. Summary**

The cohesion assessment instrument is the outcome of work between the Partnership, Performance and Policy Team in the Council and Thilo Boeck of the Centre for Social Action, De Montfort University. The Boeck Instrument provides a cohesion framework and questionnaire which is based on existing and new performance indicators. It gathers together relevant and national datasets and indicators in order to identify those which relate to community cohesion.

The Community Cohesion Project Team has been consulted throughout the development of this work. A series of workshops were held with the involvement of partners such as the PCT, Police, Braunstone Inclusion and Leicestershire Voluntary Service, to carry out more detailed work.

The Boeck instrument is based on a participative approach which involves and empowers local people. It will provide opportunities for building social capital through a high level of local engagement, with local people trained to administer the questionnaire. By training and using local residents rather than consultants, not only can we raise awareness of cohesion issues in our communities, but we can also minimise costs. It also gives an opportunity for local people to identify local priorities and concerns for Area Committees and to influence decisions, shape practice and policy to improve service delivery at a local level.

This approach is based on an understanding that the concept of community cohesion needs to be related to social inclusion and social capital but also involves aspects such as the extent and nature of segregation, equal opportunities, educational attainment, community safety and population dynamics.

This work has the interest of the Audit Commission and of other local authorities for its holistic, innovative and participative approach to understanding and evaluating community cohesion. It has potential to shape interventions, policy development and service delivery particularly at an area committee and neighbourhood level. It offers a broad positive community based approach to dealing with national sensitivities around tension monitoring and the Government's initiatives around extremism.

An extract of the community cohesion assessment instrument is attached for information. The full report is available from the report author.

### **3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- a) The Boeck Instrument is adopted and made available for use by the Council and its partners, as part of a range of approaches to understand and evaluate community cohesion in Leicester, and if appropriate, across the 3 Cities in the East Midlands.
- b) Opportunities are sought for funding from Government such as the DCLG Tackling Criminal Extremism Fund, and for working with the Institute of Community Cohesion to supplement area committee funding.
- c) All area committees are asked to engage local residents based on the Boeck Instrument.
- d) The views of Scrutiny Committee Members be sought on implementation and evaluation.

### **4. Headline Financial and Legal Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial implications**

The feature of the Boeck report with direct financial implications is the proposed survey questionnaire, insofar as it will be necessary to identify funding to cover the costs of conducting the relevant surveys and analysing the results. The costs have not yet been quantified for this.

The Community Cohesion Fund currently holds the sum of £64k in an earmarked reserve, and some or all of this fund could be utilised for the purpose of progressing the survey(s) using the Boeck methodology.

There are currently 4 area committees meeting on a regular basis, with a fifth about to start up. Each area has been allocated £25k p.a to be spent at the discretion of the area committee subject to certain restrictions. The Council's constitution currently also requires Area Committee proposals formally to be ratified by the Cabinet. However, if Cabinet were to pre-determine the use of any Area Committee funds this would entail a change from the resolutions of Cabinet at its meeting on September 26, 2005. These resolutions formalised the allocation of monies to each Area Committee and also set out the "Criteria for accessing and spending Area based budgets".

## 4.2 Legal implications

"The legal framework includes the following:

- i) Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000.  
This places a duty on the Council, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need:
  - a) To eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
  - b) To promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.
- ii) Crime and Disorder Act, 1998.  
The Council must perform all its functions with due regard to the likely effect on and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.
- iii) Local Government Act, 2000.  
Section 2 provides Local Authorities with "well-being" powers to take any steps which they consider are likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of their local community"

## 5. Report Author / Officer to contact:

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<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Reason</b>	N/A
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	N/A
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	Executive (Cabinet)