



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED

Cabinet

24th March 2003

“Taking Forward Community Cohesion in Leicester”

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To endorse the report of the independent consultants IDEA “Taking Forward Community Cohesion in Leicester” (attached).
- 1.2. To initiate a Task Group of Members with the Leicester Partnership to guide action on the report in the short and longer term.

2. Summary

- 2.1. In July 2002 Members agreed to commission Ted Cante and a multi-cultural team from IDEA to make recommendations on how to improve community cohesion across all majority and minority communities within and between outer and inner city communities. The aim was to develop a Leicester Cohesion Strategy with the Leicester Partnership. Following consultations with relevant stakeholders over the past few months, IDEA has now produced their research report. This follows the Cante and Denham reports. It is also in line with the Government’s recently published “Guidance on Community Cohesion” that urges authorities and partners to conduct a base-line assessment of current policies and programmes so as to develop a new community cohesion strategy.
- 2.2. The response to the draft has been positive, and based on the emerging research a bid was submitted to the Home Office for a community cohesion pathfinder programme. Leicester’s bid was 1 of 15 successful out of 75 bids and has drawn in extra funding to mount new activities centred on the needs of youth that will help bring together outer and inner communities.
- 2.3. The report commends much that has been achieved in Leicester over recent decades, in particular its vision and leadership in:-
 - valuing cultural diversity;
 - tackling disadvantage;
 - working with community and voluntary partners;
 - refusing to take good community relations for granted.

- 2.4. However, significant challenges exist for all partners and services which include:-
- residential concentrations of minority and majority communities that lack sufficient contact and understanding of each other's cultures;
 - competition over scarce mainstream and regeneration resources;
 - perceptions in white as well as Black and minority ethnic areas that other areas are more favourably resourced, particularly the feeling in some outer area communities that they are sometimes under-valued and under-resourced;
 - the desire to see more women and young people in leadership roles.
- 2.5. Members have welcomed the report's recognition that community cohesion is essentially about the dynamic relationship between and within communities. This is particularly relevant to Leicester's outer and inner city communities each of which needs to be positively affirmed as a critical and valued component in the life of the city. The report draws attention to the lack of contact between Leicester's different communities which allows people to lead parallel lives and creates potential for fear, mistrust and tension.
- 2.6 The report emphasises that people's housing, education and cultural activities provide a real opportunity to increase contact between communities that can sometimes be separated by poverty, deprivation, history, heritage, class, race, geography, faith and different generations. There is also a need to dispel unfounded perceptions that certain areas of the city have lost out in the competition for scarce resources.
- 2.7. Members therefore wish to take the initiative to set up a Task Force with the Leicester Partnership to tackle some of these issues between and within outer and inner city communities. Members have indicated that because young people often bring energy and open mindedness to creating contact between communities, they should become the focus of much of the action flowing from the report. The Pathfinder Programme contains many imaginative ideas for working with young people across different communities and the Task Force will give impetus to this programme as well.
- 2.8. The main spending of the Council also needs to be reviewed to ensure that it is aligned with a fair distribution of support for outer and inner city needs. The Task Force will therefore draw partners from all sectors of the community to support a city-wide strategy for community cohesion and examine City Council and other spending programmes to ensure the best possible use of resources for all and to foster growing contacts between different communities.
- 2.9. There is now a need to take forward 3 related strands of work based on the report in order to secure real outcomes for outer and inner city communities from this challenging research and to maintain Leicester's position at the forefront of developing community cohesion in Britain:-
- (a) implement the community cohesion Pathfinder Programme Action Plan focused on young people;
 - (b) develop with Leicester Partnership and its sub-partnerships the City's first community cohesion strategy in the light of Government guidance. This will involve disseminating and debating the report's findings during the summer, and

drafting the final strategy in the autumn. The strategy will need to be completed by the end of November 2003 so that any financial implications can be determined by Members, and actions incorporated in Business Plans during the spring of 2004. A strong communications strategy will need to be developed to support this work over this period; and

- (c) identify the key mainstream activities of the Council and other agencies that most significantly contribute to community cohesion so as to ensure that they are aligned with the strategy and all sectors play their full part in bringing together what could otherwise divide our communities

3. Recommendations

Members are asked to:-

- 3.1. Endorse the report of the independent consultants IDEA “Taking Forward Community Cohesion in Leicester”.
- 3.2. Nominate Members to lead a task force with the Leicester Partnership to tackle the challenge of bringing together outer and inner city communities by:-
- implementing the Community Cohesion Pathfinder Action Plan;
 - generating city-wide support from Leicester Partnership and other partners for the city’s first Community Cohesion Strategy in line with national guidance;
 - identifying key current service activities that can most effectively be harnessed to bring together and accelerate outer and inner city cohesion and regeneration.

4. Financial Implications

The resources needed for these activities will be found through existing budgets in the Chief Executive’s Office and through the additional funding received from the Home Office Pathfinder Programme funding which amounts to £285,000 over 2 years.

5. Report Author/Officer to contact:

Rodney Green
Chief Executive

DECISION STATUS

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