

Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All

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

**Cabinet**

**13<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

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### **DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE SOMALI AND OTHER NEW COMMUNITIES IN LEICESTER**

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#### **Report of the Deputy Chief Executive/Corporate Director of Social Care and Health**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report briefs Cabinet on the wide range of actions taken in the last year since the consideration in August 2004 of a referral from the then Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet on the needs of the Somali Community and other new communities in the city.
- 1.2 It proposes a number of further steps to be taken by the Council with partner agencies to monitor and address short and medium term issues associated with this scale of migration now and in the future.

#### **2. Summary**

- 2.1 Somalia was colonised by four countries, including Britain for around 80 years, until the Republic of Somalia was formed in 1960. The Somali community is actually one of the oldest in the UK dating back over 150 years. The most recent Somalia Diaspora arose from the disruption to normal life caused by the civil war, which began in earnest in 1991. Over half a million people have died, and nearly 45% of the Somali people fled the conflict and have resettled in Europe and the USA. Since then there has been further migration from Holland in particular and it is estimated that the current size of the Somali community in Leicester is around 15,000 people, including approximately 1000 school students. Most have arrived in the last three years and the community comprises British Somalis, EU Somalis, refugees and Somali asylum seekers. Although unemployment figures are difficult to obtain for the community, it is estimated that around 85% of those eligible to work may be unemployed.
- 2.2 A number of recent studies have examined the needs of the community from an education, health, advice, employment and community cohesion perspectives. A summary of these was presented to the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in June and August last year. All make a number of recommendations for leadership by the public sector in Leicester.

- 2.3 The Somali Community Working Party has been meeting regularly to follow up on these matters and its recent work and recommendations form the basis of this report. In addition the African Caribbean Working Group has, for sometime, extended its interests to take a more holistic approach to the needs of the African and Caribbean community.
- 2.4 The Working Party has sought to complement the work of the Community Cohesion Board and the Leicester Partnership. This has included working with the Police, schools, parents and youth services on individual issues among and between young people from different communities in and around schools.

### **3. Recommendations**

#### **3.1 Cabinet is asked to:**

- (a) note the work described in this report to assist the community to settle, integrate and develop new social and economic networks in the Leicester;
- (b) confirm the service level agreement with Somali Development Services, negotiated on behalf of the council by Social Care & Health Department, that was put in place on an interim basis following the ending of SRB funding;
- (c) ask the relevant scrutiny committees to keep under review issues raised by the community about (respectively) meeting housing needs (particularly of those not entitled to public housing or support); education and youth provision; private fostering; burials; and access to NHS services including primary care and interpreting and translation;
- (d) recommend to Leicester Partnership that it continues the development of a new communities strategy and costed action plan to direct its, and partners' funding, to improving the integration, quality of life, employment and educational opportunities of refugees and asylum seekers in Leicester; and
- (e) support representations to Government for a funding strategy relating to large scale migrations caused by world events, and specifically about the circumstances of those children and families excluded from any public assistance by their immigration status.

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

- 4.1 The Council has not received any additional mainstream funds specifically targeted at meeting the needs of new communities in the city. Departments have responded from within existing resources or through short term programme funding.
- 4.2 The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 introduced prohibitions on the support that local authorities could provide to the nationals of other EEA states but these prohibitions have to be read in the light of the UK's obligations under the Community Treaties. Migrant workers from other EEA states have an entitlement to the same social advantages as UK workers and this includes access to welfare support. These prohibitions do not affect EU migrants' ability to access welfare benefits and social housing once they have established ordinary residence in the area. This area of

the law remains complex and requests for support need to be dealt with on an individual basis to ensure compliance with the Council's duties under human rights legislation. (Guy Goodman, Assistant Head of Legal Services - ext 7054).

- 4.3 This ineligibility issues also affects young people wishing to move into higher education. They are not able to secure student loans to attend university. This issue is being looked at with the city's further education colleges to explore alternative ways of continuing education.
- 4.4 The service level agreement with Somali Development services will cost the Social Care and Health Department £42,000 in 2005/06. Funding for this has been identified within the Department's overall budget. (Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance ext. 8800)

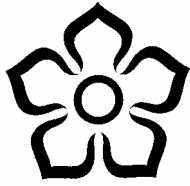
**5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

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**DECISION STATUS**

<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Reason</b>	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards.
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	Yes
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	Executive (Cabinet)



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### **DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE SOMALI AND OTHER NEW COMMUNITIES IN LEICESTER**

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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Report**

#### **1. Background**

1.1 At its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2004, the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee received, at their request, a presentation and background report on the needs of the Somali Community. The Committee agreed the following resolution to the Cabinet:

“that the following issues be submitted to Cabinet by means of a report:-

- (1) to instruct officers to create or revive a working party/taskforce which looks at the needs of the Somali Community and has representation from all Council Departments and relevant agencies;
- (2) to instruct this working party to produce proposals to address the issues raised in the report and the presentations;
- (3) that a report be produced by the working party/taskforce that considers the long term needs of the Somali Community;
- (4) to instruct Officers to enable the Somali Community to have a full opportunity to access the Community Cohesion Fund;
- (5) that Cllr. Suleman, as Cabinet Lead for Community Cohesion and the Chief Executive, or the entire Cabinet if necessary, be requested to meet with representatives of the entire Somali Community to explain how the Community

Cohesion Fund will work and to discuss in detail any issues which the Somali Community have raised;

- (6) that the Leader by requested to make a formal response to the meeting held on 12 March 2004 with Mr Haji outlining what action has been taken following that meeting; and
- (7) that progress on these matters is reported to the next meeting of this Committee.

1.2 Having considered this matter at its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2004, the Cabinet resolved to:

- (a) ask that an officer-level task and finish group be created, involving appropriate partner organisations and accountable to the Community Cohesion Project Board, to consider the issues raised by the Somali Community in the context of a wider review of the way in which the Council and other bodies provide services for new and existing communities within the City;
- (b) ask that officers write to key representatives of the Somali Community to inform them how the Council will be considering the issues they have raised.

## **2. Summary of Progress**

2.1 This report summarises a wide range of activity in the last year. The Somali Community Working Party has been reconvened, chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, and supported by the Policy and Performance Team of the Chief Executive Department. It has representatives of all council departments, mainly those with a relevant lead responsibility.

2.2 The Group has set itself three overall aims:

- (a) to find out more about the community and its needs;
- (b) to make our mainstream services more responsive;
- (c) to assist the community to settle, integrate and develop its own networks, businesses, organisations and activities.

and it has focused on four main areas of activity:

- (a) tracking departments' responses to the needs of the Somali community;
- (b) meeting and briefing the Somali community, on the council and partner organisations' work;
- (c) assisting in developing new initiatives and identifying funding sources;
- (d) monitoring new issues as they arise from, and in relation to, the Somali community in Leicester.

### **(a) Tracking departments' responses**

2.3 A detailed summary of work by Departments was appended to the Scrutiny and Cabinet reports last year. These included:

#### **Advice**

- Council's Welfare and Employment Rights Service (WERAS) and the Healthy Income Project have expanded services

- Benefits advice packs in Somali through New Arrivals Project, and now advice sessions.
- Somali language information pack to address problems in obtaining National Insurance numbers.
- Somali interpreters at advertised sessions.
- Creation of Refugee and Asylum seekers Advice Project to help with securing additional benefits, resolving housing problems and gain employment.

### **Social Care and Health**

- Assistance in understanding how services work in UK.
- Assistance to those with disabilities, daily living and other practical issues.
- Working closely with NHS to sort out access to GPs and other NHS services.
- Launch of Somali Health Strategy.
- Promoting take up of flu jabs by those over 65 and with conditions like diabetes and CHD.
- Provision of interim financial support to Somali Development Services.

### **Education**

- Allocate resources based on pupil mobility.
- Translated information packs for pupils and parents.
- Guidance for schools on best practice for the admission and induction of pupils.
- Appointment of Somali mentors to work with primary and secondary pupils.
- Work on the admission, assessment and induction of newly arrived pupils.

### **Lifelong Learning**

- Attract young people into existing provision.
- Support for purposeful activity projects.
- Ensure young people are supported through personal help/advisors inc. Connexions.
- Creation of Somali book and music collections in the five City libraries.
- Completion of the Resolving Differences/Building Communities project in March 2004.

### **Housing**

- Housing needs of community recognised in BME Housing Strategy 2004 and Plans.
- Housing Needs Survey (2002) identified large family-sized accommodation as a priority.
- Culture & Regeneration Private Housing Team are responding to disrepair complaints: pro-active inspections in renewal areas.
- The Department now has 5 Somali staff – 3 in Landlord services and 2 in STAR.
- Work to improve tenant participation and representation.
- New regulations from 1 May prohibit access to benefits and the housing register unless people are in work or actively looking for work. Those working *can* still join the register and 18 Dutch Somali households (and 27 Somali refugee households) joined the register between January and March 2005.

- Resettlement support and assistance with integration for asylum seekers and refugees.

### **Leisure and Arts**

- Cultural Strategy Action Plan includes specific arts and media projects.
- Exploration of business opportunities in Somali crafts and artistic skills.
- Project to develop use of media, including Into Africa on BBC Radio Leicester.
- Sports and arts projects to showcase work of the community and promote participation.

### **Employment, Training and Business Development**

- Provision of business support with Leicestershire African Caribbean Business Association, who have appointed a Somali business adviser.
- Launch of Leicestershire Somali Business Association (Lesba) with 50 plus members.
- Significant increase in the number of Somali businesses (40 plus small and medium businesses).
- Promotion of Council's Overseas Qualification Development Project.
- Efforts to improve the employment rate in the community and public services.

### **Community Safety**

- Working closely with the Police to explain the criminal justice system and address community concerns.
- Keeping under review events and incidents relating to the community and its interaction with other communities in the city.
- Monitoring racial harassment through the Crime and Disorder Strategy.
- Activities by Leicester Witness Cocoon in support of Somali families.

### **Chief Executive's Office**

- Providing general advice and support about community relations.
- Support to the Somali Working Party and its objectives.
- Consultation on the needs of the community with emerging leaders.
- Organising mediation with parents.
- Investigating initiatives to create mentoring or shadowing schemes to create positive role models for young people.
- Liaison with Dutch authorities on Somali affairs.
- Ensuring linkages between this work and the wider Community Cohesion Strategy.

## **(b) Meeting and briefing the Somali community**

2.4 Andrew Cozens and Paul Winstone have acted as the main points of contact with community leaders since 2002, with formal and informal meetings to offer advice or assistance, and follow up on representations. Andrew Cozens has spoken at several events organised by or with the community in Leicester.

2.5 Since being reconvened last year, the Working party organised an evening meeting in December to brief some of the leading members of the community on recent work by the City Council, Police, Voluntary Action Leicester and Business Associations. The

event resulted in some lively and animated discussions on funding new groups; advice provision; access to premises for voluntary and community activities; planning policy; employment opportunities; housing; education; policing and racial harassment.

2.6 As a result of that meeting, the Working Party identified the need for more specialist themed events to target different interests and concerns in the community. We were particularly keen to have more contact with women's interests and concerns.

2.7 The first such meeting was jointly organised by the Housing Department and Somali Development Services, a Housing Information Open Day, was held on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March at Moat Community College. Over 300 people attended to find out more about:

- The Private Sector Housing Team
- Housing Options
- Services for refugees
- Services involved in Community Cohesion
- Tenancy Support services
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Team
- Housing Benefit
- Outer and Inner City estates.

2.8 The day raised a number of issues:

- Since May 2004 regulations do not allow access to the housing register or homeless applications from EU nationals. This has had a major impact on the Somali community many of whom have come from Holland and Scandinavian countries. The impact of these regulations is that some families are now, effectively, destitute.
- EU nationals who are non-work seekers and received benefits from before May 2004 will be unable to access housing benefit if there is a break in their claim after May 2004.
- The overall shortage of housing in Leicester.
- Housing benefit not covering full rents in the private sector.
- Private rented properties are in poor condition and 6 months assured short hold tenancies are not providing secure accommodation for families.
- Concerns about the Housing Options Service.
- Complaints about racial harassment and anti-social behaviour on some estates.

2.9 A petition relating to some of these concerns was presented to Council on 31<sup>st</sup> March and was referred to Housing Scrutiny Committee to consider at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April.

2.10 The Working Party plans to organise further events, with partner agencies, on the criminal justice system; education and youth services; planning and licensing arrangements; employment and business development; and using the NHS.

### **African Caribbean Working Group**

2.11 While recognising the particular circumstances that the Somali community is in and the need to direct involvement by the Council, the Working Group agreed at its meeting in



October 2004 that consideration should be given to how the Somali Working Party and the ACWG could work together on the issues of mutual benefit.

- 2.12 A key partner in the Working Group is the African Caribbean Citizens' Forum and over the years there has been much work between the Group and the Somali community, and they are keen to see a more holistic approach to the needs to the African and Caribbean communities of Leicester. They recently put on a Black Futures Day at St. Matthew's Community Centre that attracted a large numbers of both African Caribbean and Somali young people and parents.
- 2.13 More recently, the Space Centre's Festival of Science and Culture 2005 targeted the African Caribbean, Somali and Bangladeshi Community. The event successfully engaged a number of Somali young people in the run up to the festival and during it. On the Saturday and Sunday a number of Somali families attended the event, on the Saturday a mini-bus of 30 Somali parent and children from St Mathews attended.

**(c) Assisting in developing new initiatives and identifying funding sources**

- 2.14 The main focus of most meetings of the Working Party, and of those with community representatives, continues to be access to funding. The Working Party does not have a budget of its own and, therefore, mainly seeks to ensure Council departments, the Leicester Partnership, the NHS and other agencies have regard to the needs of the community in developing services and service planning.
- 2.15 The community has benefited from a number of short-term initiatives, including SRB and NRF funding. In addition Social Care and Health has given temporary funding to Somali Development Services, following the ending of its SRB funding to study the needs of the community, to enable it to continue its community development role. A service level agreement is now in place and this report recommends that this funding be put in place on a rolling agreement basis. Somali Development Services has since become a trusted source of advice, services and advocacy for the community. Established as a social enterprise company, it has drawn in funds from Connexions, European Social Fund, and Social Enterprise East Midlands. Its plans include an expansion of its support and advice, the Young People Support Service, and the establishment of an Employment Agency.
- 2.16 The Cabinet in August 2004 asked the Working Party to follow up the Scrutiny Committee's resolution about the Somali community's access to the Community Cohesion Fund. Three projects have now been approved by the Community Cohesion Team in Regeneration and Culture and contracts are being issued:
- Somali Voluntary Organisations Partnership: £20,000 to support young Somalis to come together in positive and cohesive activities, including after-school clubs and supplementary classes.
  - Somali Development Services: £20,000 for capacity building project to encourage better engagement between the community and the public sector, as well as cross-community engagement particularly in Highfields and St. Matthews.

- Somali Integration & Advocacy Centre: £20,000 to support a project that will further develop links between Somalis in St Matthews, Northfields, and Beaumont Leys and public sector services. The project will result in a number of joint action plans with service providers.

2.17 One other scheme is being developed that, once approved, will result in a community website for the Somali community in Leicester and will facilitate communications across communities.

2.18 The Working Party, working with Voluntary Action Leicester where appropriate, has also lent its support to other bids from Government, national and local charitable projects and trusts.

2.19 Welcome though this very short term funding is, it is, however, very evident to the Working Party that the Council and its partners in the City needs to develop an overarching strategy for new communities in the city, with a costed action plan and pooling of resources to meet it. It is recommended that Leicester Partnership be asked to lead this piece of work.

#### **(d) Monitoring new issues**

2.20 The Working Party has also acted as a forum to share information about new issues affecting the community. Central to these have been the implications of new arrivals in the city for education and the NHS in particular. This has included understanding better the circumstances of their different immigration status and, in particular, those with no entitlement to public assistance through benefits, with housing, or, in some instances, work. We do not have an accurate handle on the numbers involved because, by definition, they are beyond the scope of routine recording. We do feel there is an urgent need for a study of their circumstances.

2.21 Members of the Working Party have established good links with community organisations and these have proved useful in advising the City's Community Cohesion Project Board. Officers are clear that the needs of this, and other new communities in the city, must be addressed as part of an overall approach that ensures fair access to services for all. This has informed our view that the Leicester Partnership should take on the leading role here.

2.22 A good example of the benefits of the Working Party's networks relates to burials. In the early days of the Somali community in Leicester the number of deaths was small and different mosques and Asian Muslims did what they could to help. Problems started when the Somali community assumed (wrongly) that the local authority would pick up burial costs automatically, not making the distinction between local and central government. As a result bills went unpaid and the local mosques were not prepared to accommodate the community and be left with unpaid bills. Similarly the community did not understand the role of the coroner and of post-mortems in their wish to bury the dead within 12 hours according to the custom in Somalia. The idea of a Burial Trust was developed to advise the community and to lend money to relatives to secure the burial before the costs can be reclaimed and repaid.

### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 The Working Party's activities must now be properly mainstreamed. Cabinet is asked, therefore, to:

- (a) note the work described in this report to assist the community to settle, integrate and develop new social and economic networks in the Leicester;
- (b) confirm the service level agreement with Somali Development Services, negotiated on behalf of the council by Social Care & Health Department, that was put in place on an interim basis following the ending of SRB funding;
- (c) ask the relevant scrutiny committees to keep under review issues raised by the community about (respectively) meeting housing needs (particularly of those not entitled to public housing or support); education and youth provision; private fostering; burials; and access to NHS services including primary care and interpreting and translation;
- (d) recommend to Leicester Partnership that it continue the development of a new communities strategy and costed action plan to direct its, and partners' funding, to improving the integration, quality of life, employment and educational opportunities of refugees and asylum seekers in Leicester; and
- (e) support representations to Government for a funding strategy relating to large scale migrations caused by world events, and specifically about the circumstances of those children and families excluded from any public assistance by their immigration status.

#### 4. Financial and Legal Implications

4.1 These are set out in the covering report.

#### 5. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Y	Throughout the report	
Policy	N		
Sustainable and Environmental	N		
Crime and Disorder	N		
Human Rights Act	N		
Elderly/People on Low Income	N		

#### 6. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

Somali Community Development Report by Jawaahir Daahir and Hashim Duale (2002)

Mapping Somali Children's Educational Needs in Leicester – report by Jawaahir Daahir, Mehdi Barghchi and Abdishakur Tarah (2004)

New Arrivals Research Report: Access to Training, Employment and Social Enterprise in Charnwood and Leicester (GOEM 2004)

Report to Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee 14 June 2004

Report to Cabinet 16 August 2004

## **7. Consultations**

Corporate Directors Board  
Somali Community Working Party

## **8. Report Author/Officers to Contact**

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