



Cabinet

10 October 2018

Subject Heading:

One Havering: Community Cohesion Strategy 2018 - 2022

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Damian White, Leader of the Council

SLT Lead:

Jane West, Chief Operating Officer

Report Author and contact details:

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Policy context:

Public authorities, including councils, have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to pay 'due regard' in carrying out their functions, to ensure that they:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

'One Havering' relates to the requirement to foster good relations between local people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

Financial summary:

There are no financial implications associated with approving the Strategy and Charter. However, their delivery and monitoring may have financial implications for the Council and its partners. It is envisaged that these financial implications will be contained within existing budgets of the relevant services but where opportunities arise to attract additional sources of funding (e.g. grants), these will be pursued through the relevant channels.

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

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Is this a Strategic Decision?

Yes

When should this matter be reviewed?

The Community Cohesion Strategy 2018 - 2022 is a four year plan. The action plan will be refreshed annually. The strategy is due to be refreshed by March 2022.

Reviewing OSC:

Overview and Scrutiny Board

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	[X]
Places making Havering	[X]
Opportunities making Havering	[X]
Connections making Havering	[X]

SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet's approval of the 'One Havering: Community Cohesion Strategy' and its adoption across services.

This is Havering's first Community Cohesion Strategy which, in line with the Equality Act 2010, aims to foster good community relations and a complementary union between the Council's stated values and the borough's evolving diversity profile. The Strategy deliberately focuses on the many common experiences, aspirations and values that unite local people as one community, as One Havering. It seeks to make a very clear policy statement about how the Council will go about nurturing and promoting "a cohesive, healthy and optimistic borough, underpinned by modern British values; where everyone experiences dignity and equal life chances, and neighbours, colleagues and different community groups interact with, respect and value each other, regardless of age, colour, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, health status, marital status, nationality, political perspective, religion, sexuality or socio-economic status".

The proposed strategy is framed around four themes:

- **Building** – Enabling new interactions and relationship building between different community groups;
- **Sharing** – Promoting common aspirations and experiences between different people;
- **Protecting** – Activities that promote crime prevention and community safety, and
- **Healthier** – Activities and projects that promote health and wellbeing

The proposed strategy also sets out four overarching cohesion priorities:

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- We will engage with all communities in the further development of this Community Cohesion Strategy via the soon to be established Community Engagement and Cohesion Forum;
- Our residents will safe and protected in their homes and neighbourhoods;
- To ensure our economic and physical regeneration activity supports the creation of safe, strong, cohesive communities, and
- We will reduce inequalities in health and wellbeing across communities in Havering. People who use our services will have a healthy life expectancy and an improving quality of life.

Finally, the proposed strategy has four overarching equality objectives running throughout it:

- Understanding the needs of Havering's diverse communities;
- Improving life chances for all, particularly for the most vulnerable members of the community;
- Removing barriers to accessing the Council, and
- Promoting community relations and civic pride.

The crucial practical element involves the rollout of a series of community-facing projects designed to encourage different community groups to interact and get to know each other. The Corporate Diversity Advisor will work with services, both internal and external, to produce and develop cohesion-related projects across the borough and within available resources. An initial list of projects will be contained in an update report due in April 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet:

1. **Approves** the One Havering: Community Cohesion Strategy (attached at **Appendix A**);
2. **Agrees** to the establishment of the Community Engagement and Cohesion Forum and the proposed Terms of Reference (attached at **Appendix E**), and
3. **Agrees** that monitoring of the Strategy will be undertaken by the Community Engagement and Cohesion Forum with advice from the Corporate Diversity Advisor.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Background

- 1.1 Public authorities, including councils, have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to 'pay due regard' in carrying out their functions, to ensure that they:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 1.2 'One Havering' relates to the requirement to foster good relations between local people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
- 1.3 The evolving demographics and cultural norms of Havering now include diverse families, individuals, community groups and lifestyles. With the level of planned regeneration across the borough it is expected that this diversity will continue to increase. It is within this context that the ethics and functions of the Council remain actively committed to fairness, inclusion and dignity for all, coupled with an unwavering respect for British values.
- 1.4 The borough's increasing diversity will bring new opportunities and challenges, including that of providing high quality services in a climate of greatly reduced budgets and increasing demand. It will also bring the challenge of ensuring that long-standing communities and newer diverse communities live and work in harmony. The development of this important strategy is evidence that the Council intends to play a proactive role in setting the overarching culture and tone of Havering, through its local place-shaping activity; positively influencing the quality of local life and how different communities experience life together.
- 1.5 Community cohesion can be described as an often unseen or unconscious natural mechanism, thread, or chemistry which is present in most places and enables different community groups and individuals to live and work together in harmony. It is present in Havering's streets, schools, offices, shops, market places, housing estates, neighbourhoods, and our bustling town centres and social settings.
- 1.6 Sustained community cohesion is sometimes taken for granted, especially when it appears to be working well on 'auto-pilot'. However, it can become disrupted by a range of different factors, from nuisance neighbours, random or incessant criminal activity, disrespectful or other anti-social behaviour, unfair treatment of individuals or groups, poor civic leadership, disengaged silo communities, and people feeling excluded or rejected or that they do not belong. An actual or perceived breakdown in cohesion can prompt fear and even lead to significant social disorder. Ill-informed comments, negative stereotyping, financial exclusion, discriminatory practices, long-term unemployment, poor housing, poor education, and misplaced assumptions about "other people" can also lead to a weakening of community cohesion.

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- 1.7 Harmonious communities are happier and more productive communities and there are significant advantages for the Council and its residents in proactively seeking to strengthen the mechanisms and spirit of local community cohesion. Although this task can be both simple and complex, many local authorities have embraced this challenge and are engaged in related activities. There is a real risk that if councils don't set the tone in their local areas then other, perhaps objectionable voices, may seek to do so, be they far-right, religious extremists, or otherwise.
- 1.8 Sustainable community cohesion is enabled and secured by determined leadership and the active development of trusting, inclusive community relations. As seen in places impacted by acts of violent extremism, effective civic leadership can help to restore calm and have a positive effect on the public's confidence and sense of wellbeing. It can only be helpful to have strong community relations fully established and in place in advance of such random and unpredictable events.
- 1.9 It is proposed that monitoring of the strategy will take place via the proposed Community Engagement and Cohesion Forum with guidance from the Corporate Diversity Advisor. The Cabinet will be provided with progress updates on a six-monthly basis.
- 1.10 As the strategy is implemented, residents' perception surveys should reflect an improving level of satisfaction with the local area. The proposed Community Engagement and Cohesion Forum as well as survey findings highlight the strong engagement structures in place which enable the Council to better understand the needs and aspirations of local communities. Further examples of good practice include the Youth Council, Older People's Forum and other community forums supported by the Council.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

As set out above, adoption and implementation of the strategy is recommended in order to nurture and promote a unified borough underpinned by modern British values, where everyone experiences equal life chances and is respected regardless of their identity. By adopting and implementing the strategy, the Council can play a proactive role in shaping the overarching culture and tone of the borough and enhance the quality of local life for all its communities. Adoption and implementation of the strategy will also assist the Council in discharging its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Other options considered:

The Cabinet could chose not to adopt the proposed strategy however, as set out above, if the Council does not take the leadership role in setting the tone for community relations and cohesion, this could be disrupted by a range of different factors as described earlier in the report.

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In the absence of a specific Community Cohesion Strategy, other corporate and partnership documents (including, but not limited to, the Corporate Plan, Voluntary Sector Strategy, Volunteering Strategy, Community Safety Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Financial Inclusion Strategy) would still further the cohesion agenda, however the opportunity would be lost to ensure effective joining up of this work and for the Council, in its community leadership role, to make a strong policy statement about its commitment to fairness, inclusion, dignity for all and respect for British values.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no financial implications associated with approving the Strategy and Charter. However, their delivery and monitoring may have financial implications for the Council and its partners. It is envisaged that these financial implications will be contained within existing budgets of the relevant services but where opportunities arise to attract additional sources of funding (e.g. grants), these will be pursued through the relevant channels.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no direct human resource implications for the Council. The project management and implementation requirements will be met by the existing resources of the Council.

Legal implications and risks:

As set out in the report, there is a duty imposed on the Council under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to foster good community relations between different groups. Approval of the strategy is in line with this duty.

Equalities implications and risks:

In line with the Equality Act 2010, the strategy is intended to foster good relations between people who have 'protected characteristics' and those who do not. It has been agreed with Legal that an Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary for this strategy as it is clearly intended to promote inclusion and equality for 'protected' groups and all others.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None