

Council– 21 July 2016

Community Cohesion Strategy – report from Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Portfolio: Community, Leisure and Culture

Service: Community Safety

Wards: All

1. Summary

The Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee have carried out a review of community cohesion in Walsall. This review was undertaken by a working group which presented its final report and recommendations to the Committee on 14 April 2016.

The report, copy attached at Appendix 1, provides the working groups findings and conclusions based on a large scale engagement exercise with over 41 witnesses representing different communities of Walsall. Further to this Members engaged with local partners about how they contribute to creating a cohesive place.

One of the key recommendations of the working group was for the Council to create a standalone Community Cohesion Strategy. Members believed that this strategy was so significant that it should be included within the policy framework of the Council Constitution.

As the formal decision making body for plans and strategies Council are asked to consider approving the recommendations of the Committee below.

2. Recommendations

That:

1. A new standalone, community driven 'Community Cohesion Strategy' and action plan be created for Walsall. This strategy and action plan should be ready for delivery by April 2017;
2. The 'Community Cohesion Strategy' should be included in the policy framework as an 'other plan and strategy' under Part 4.01 (a)(ii) of the Walsall Council Constitution;
3. The remaining recommendations of the Community Cohesion Working Group be referred to Cabinet to consider their implementation.

3. Report detail

The Working Group found that the Council and its partners are aware of the importance of creating cohesive communities and their role in creating the right conditions for different demographics to thrive. The plans to create these conditions are currently contained in broad strategy documents. The working group recognise the importance of embedding cohesion and equality across organisations but feel there is a strong need for a specific, standalone community cohesion strategy and action plan based on consultation and available data. It is important that this plan is refreshed and monitored as predicting future changes is of paramount importance. To this end the Working Group recommended that a Community Cohesion Strategy be included as a plan and strategy under the policy framework in the Constitution.

Some excellent projects evidenced that there is a wealth of good work been undertaken building cohesion in the borough. It is also recognised that significant challenges exist which will require a concerted effort and outcome driven plan to ensure that good community relations are maintained.

Walsall is changing at an unprecedented rate in a time when funding and resources are reducing. These changes are impacting on community cohesion and it is clear that tensions do exist through myths, media influenced suspicions of inequality based on misinformation and, at times, simply outright hatred. The impact of the internet has meant that social media has become the source of many facts but also many falsehoods which impact views, especially amongst young people.

Parochial attitudes exist in numerous localities. While these attitudes do have many positives such as pride in an area and motivating people to take social responsibility, equally, it can sometimes have negative consequences. Dependant on the demographics of an area it can reinforce stereotypes and limit social integration with other groups.

While the borough shows a significant increase in becoming a more secular society, it is apparent that within communities the faith sectors are delivering numerous projects that bring people together regardless of faith or no faith. The values of faith are key to the volunteering that occurs in the community, however, there are tensions that do exist between faiths which are often linked to racial heritage. The faith sector do not always share their good work and more should be done to recognise, support and develop their work.

Cultural norms do have an impact on service take up and delivery. These can be from a nationalistic, heritage and locality based perspective. It is important that staff consider cultural barriers and are more informed when considering service delivery and engagement in communities.

The Prevent agenda, and more specifically, media coverage of terrorist atrocities, the Middle East conflict and European refugee crisis linked to Syria has raised suspicion of Muslim communities and the faith of Islam. This has raised safety concerns in those areas around right wing activities. Further to this the working group were of the view that there were levels of distrust with Prevent within Muslim communities and that this was an impediment to community cohesion. Due to time constraints the working group were unable to investigate this issue in

depth and felt that this is a work stream that should be considered in the new municipal year.

The Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community is a very diverse community and not a singular harmonious group. There is enormous pride in their heritage and resistance to change. The ways of the “settled community” remains a tangible barrier to engagement with negative consequences for the health and education of those particular communities.

A broad prejudice against gay communities was expressed and more work is required to break down stereotypes and empower the gay community to engage more in their localities.

Background papers

None associated with this report.

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Community Cohesion in Walsall



As presented to the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 April 2016



Walsall Council

Foreword

Walsall is a borough with a long history of diverse communities settling here and becoming an integral part of this proud and historic town. There is also a history, in the main, of acceptance and good community relations.

While the town's majority population remains white British the town has many ethnicities living within our communities. This diversity is increasing as globalisation occurs and as people travel to learn and work. The Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities have been in Walsall for over 60 years with smaller pockets of Eastern European and European families choosing to settle in Walsall.

We have seen within the last decade a significant increase in European migrants settling in Walsall. These demographic changes have not come without challenges as austerity bites and issues faced by minority groups and equally the indigenous majority groups become more heightened.

The residents of Walsall do often identify themselves as belonging to a district area of the town, for example Bloxwich, Willenhall, Brownhills, Streetly or Aldridge. There are historic reasons for this parochial thinking and that sense of pride has many positives but it does have a negative impact where cohesion is concerned. This is due to people choosing not to mix with other residents from other areas of the borough and thus limiting their experiences and exposure to "others". This creates challenges when the one Walsall community vision is being promoted.

It is said, particularly by the civic and statutory leadership of Walsall that the borough is cohesive. In a world where increased migration is a fact of life and where global incidents are transmitted across the world media in real time to hundreds of millions of people a major question of the working group was whether the borough is as cohesive as we profess and whether community relations are as strong as we think?

The Community Cohesion Working Group (CCWG) was set up through the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on recognition that the borough had been targeted by right wing extremists, who pushed a divisive narrative to try and build mistrust, fear and ultimately hatred amongst communities in Walsall.

I would thus like to thank Cllr Ian Shires for his initial highlighting of the community cohesion issues arising from the English Defence League protest. Cllr Shires correctly raised the concern at the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee which led to the setup of this group.

The question that arose from these demonstrations was what are the actual thoughts and beliefs of our communities regarding minority groups and majority groups? How do communities get on with each other? Were there hidden anxieties and if so how did people respond? Most importantly, what future did these communities see for Walsall and how empowered did people feel to shape that future. Included in this work were stakeholders who delivered key services and who were best positioned to comment on their experiences and thoughts around a future for everyone.

The CCWG spoke to many communities, groups, institutional leaders and practitioners about their work, thoughts, reservations, fears and outlook for the future. It was apparent that some excellent

work was being undertaken that built cohesion and acceptance of others, irrelevant of difference, and this was very positive. There were some worrying attitudes shared which clearly demonstrated anti minority and particularly anti-Muslim rhetoric and beliefs built on myths with the media having a significant impact on shaping negative beliefs. In some cases the attitudes were very shocking and very divisive so much so that members of the CCWG were surprised these attitudes still existed, particularly amongst our youth.

The communities in Walsall do live parallel lives and understanding of each other is mainly gained from what is read and seen in the media – particularly the indigenous community and their knowledge of minority ethnic and religious groups. The understanding of the Muslim faith particularly was very poor amongst many communities and some very challenging attitudes were professed by witnesses against this faith community. However the CCWG found that all faith communities made positive contributions to cohesion in Walsall. The work on cohesion needs to be stepped up, supported and resourced if Walsall is going to be a real cohesive town considering the current demographic makeup and predicted changes over the next 10 years. There is a need to support newer communities so that the issues and in many cases mistakes that affected established minority groups are not repeated.

The CCWG recognised the impact of reduced resources in both the voluntary sector and particularly in the statutory sector. While central government has undertaken their austerity measures it is the case that often this has affected the 'softer' services that statutory bodies and the voluntary sector have worked on in years past. This has impacted negatively and thus cohesion opportunities have decreased as these bodies do not have the resource to do the things they did in the past. It was recognised that the Council cannot do everything on its own and joint work with our partners must be a fundamental foundation of the future cohesion strategy and programmes but it is essential that at all times there is accountability back to the representatives of the people.

It is important to recognise that services provided to the Gypsy, Traveller and Show People communities are at best very inadequate and at worst non-existent. The work, understanding and attitude toward these groups is not acceptable and more needs be done to help these communities who have some very serious underlying issues. Although recognising that some barriers exist through cultural issues it was the view of the CCWG that more must be done to ensure that we have a flexible service provision that meets the needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Show People communities.

Representation of minority groups – in way of faith, ethnicity, disabilities, gender and sexuality – in our statutory bodies was found to be very poor, particularly at senior levels. The Council and other statutory bodies, with the exception of the NHS to some extent, relied on certain individuals from ethnic or faith based communities in their employment to engage with the minority communities of Walsall. This was seen as a failure to instil a proper understanding within all the departments of the Council and other statutory organisations through focussed and effective cultural awareness training. This will inevitably lead to questions on the commitment of the Council and other statutory bodies to deal fairly with minority sections of our communities. Although the leadership of these organisations were seen as committed in a personal sense to promote a diverse workforce and understanding therein, the difference in the intent and the outcome was very stark.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Prevent Programme in my foreword to this report due to the negative impact on such a substantial part of Walsall's population. Prevent, although its stated objective is understood with the threat of terrorism being so visibly real, has led to a feeling that law

abiding British Muslim citizens are being targeted rather than criminal terrorists. This broad brush approach has become a source of anxiety and resentment amongst the Muslim communities. There is a lack of acknowledgment of this resentment and reality with an unwillingness to listen and engage with Muslim communities effectively at a national level, however, it is recognised that the senior officer leadership at the Council is more aware of these feelings. The introduction of the Prevent duty for Schools in what is seen more and more as the policing of Muslims, their views and beliefs has further eroded confidence in institutions dealing fairly and appropriately with the Muslim community and their children. It is thus concerning that a programme that is there to help us to work with our communities in order to protect our towns and cities from those that would harm us has itself become a point of resentment. When this happens then one should examine the programme itself and ask whether it is fit for purpose or indeed detrimental to cohesion within our communities.

I would like to thank and acknowledge Cllr Shires, Cllr Craddock and Cllr Sohal who attended the meetings enthusiastically and contributed fully to the findings and recommendations of this report. The help of Nigel Rowe has been essential in moving this work forward and his input is appreciated. I must make a special mention for Craig Goodall from Democratic Services at Walsall Council. He worked tirelessly with the CCWG and with me as chairman, to ensure that we got as wide an input as possible in this work and report. The amount of meetings and the schedule has not only been difficult for members but also for officers and I would like to thank the officers in particular for their support.

Finally I would like to thank the communities of Walsall who have helped us with the findings of this report and I entrust this report, its findings, conclusions and recommendations to the cabinet and Council who I hope will consider them and implement the recommendations fully and in a timely manner.



Councillor Aftab Nawaz

Lead Member, Community Cohesion Working Group

Contents

SECTION	PAGE NUMBER
Introduction	
Terms of Reference	6
Membership	6
Witnesses	7
Context	8
Current approach to community cohesion	8
Walsall – a changing place	8
Parallel lives	9
Culture and faith	12
Prejudice	13
Myth busting	13
Gypsies, travellers and Roma	14
Good practice	14
Preventing violent extremism	17
Institutions	
Policy approach	18
Awareness of communities	19
Workforces	20
A glass ceiling?	
Conclusion	25
Recommendations	27
Appendices	28
1. Working Group initiation document	

Introduction

The Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) identified the opportunity to review the approach taken to community cohesion by the council and its partners at its meeting on 18 June 2016.

To complete this task a small working group was established.

Terms of Reference

Draft terms of reference were discussed and agreed by a meeting of the working group that took place on 13 August 2015. The terms of reference were subsequently agreed by a meeting of the Committee on 10 September 2015.

The full version of the Working Groups terms of reference can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.

The Working Group was supported predominantly by two Officers:

Nigel Rowe	Community Cohesion and Engagement Lead Officer
Craig Goodall	Committee Business and Governance Manager

Membership

The working group consisted of the following Councillors:

Aftab Nawaz (Lead Member)	Stephen Craddock
Ian Shires	Gurmeet Sohal

Methodology

The Working Group has held 11 meetings during its investigations taking into account the views of 41 witnesses.

Witnesses

The Working Group met and discussed issues or received evidence relating to community cohesion with the following witnesses:

Paul Sheehan	Chief Executive, Walsall Council
Superintendent Andy Bullman	West Midlands Police
Sergeant Richard Jacques	West Midlands Police
Gary Fulford	Chief Executive, WHG
Connie Jennings	Social Inclusion Manager, WHG
Hyacinth Austin	Equalities and Diversity Manager, WHG
Phil Griffin	Planned Care and Market Manager, Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group
Narinder Gogna	Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust
Bob Spencer	PREVENT Officer, Walsall Council
Susan Allman	Trading Standards Officer, Walsall Council
Irena Hergottova	Corporate Consultation and Equalities Lead, Walsall Council
Maureen Lewis	Black Sisters Collective
Sonia Levy	Black Sisters Collective
Stewart Prebble	Black Sisters Collective
Jaspal Singh Sohal	General Secretary of Guru Nanak Sikh Temple, West Bromwich street Caldmore.
Roy Cadman	Independent Living Centre
Marc Wilkes	Community Officer Walsall FC
Anna Rogozinska	Community Organiser, Walsall Housing Group
Elizabeth Kardynal	European Welfare Association
8 young people	Collingwood Centre Youth Group
4 young people	British Muslim Youth Group
10 older people	Walsall Pensioners Convention

Report Format

This report is a broad summary of the working group's findings and conclusion.

Current approach to community cohesion

Increasing protests by right wing groups in the borough drew the attention of Members to the borough's approach to community cohesion. What was it and what plans were in place to improve community relations?

This led to the question 'is the Councils approach and strategy for community cohesion fit for purpose considering the rate of change and increasing diversity in the borough taking into account the impact of austerity on our communities?'.

The working group established that there was not a standalone community cohesion strategy. Rather plans to achieve community cohesion were included within broader plans and strategies, including the:

- Sustainable Community Strategy;
- Corporate Plan;
- Walsall CONTEST Plan
- Institute of Community Cohesion Understanding and Appreciating Diversity and Building Community Resilience

Members noted that recognised methods of achieving community cohesion did fit in with broader plans and strategies. However, given the current climate and concerns over the rise of extremism members suggest that a standalone community cohesion strategy for the borough should be developed to ensure that greater emphasis is placed on creating harmonious communities.

Walsall – a changing place

The 2011 Census provided clear evidence of the rate of demographic change within Walsall and the wider Black Country region between 2001 and 2011. There has been further increased diversity since the 2011 Census was published. For example, the latest school data of January 2016 indicates that in 2016, over 137 languages are spoken in Walsall schools which is a further indication of demographic changes. It is important to note that 33% of Walsall's population are under 25. Of that figure 52% are from an ethnic minority which indicates that as this cohort grows older the demographics of the borough will change. This is before any future immigration or migration is taken into account.

Changes in European legislation and the broadening of the European Union has resulted in increased economic migration to the UK. Walsall is no exception as it has seen a rise in European migrants seeking employment within the borough.

This is not new for Walsall as from the early 1960's the borough has seen South East Asian and West Indian communities arriving and settling in the borough. It is important to note that demographic changes have been greatest in some of the boroughs most deprived areas which offer

affordable housing. However, they can be the areas least equipped to cope with the changes and are the area's which are the most densely populated.

In addition to this there are district centres across the borough that have their own historical characteristics and heritage. The Western areas of Darlaston, Pleck and Willenhall being the traditional old industrial heartlands; the old mining communities of Pelsall, Brownhills and Walsall Wood while the more affluent areas are based to the east in Aldridge and Streetly. The central areas around the town centre have the highest concentration of ethnic minorities: Birchills, Caldmore, Palfrey and Pleck. The working group believe that the heritage of the town and how it has evolved over the years are an important factor to take into account when looking at community cohesion.

Changing communities are a challenge that needs regular and ongoing assessment to ensure community relations improve and the impact of people living alongside one another but yet completely separated by their own cultural bubble is minimised to prevent parallel lives forming.

What is also important to recognise is that data provides only a limited picture. Cohesion is about the here and now life experiences of people. . As an example both Darlaston and Willenhall have area's which include significant clusters of ethnic minorities from a Sikh and Muslim background. Park Hall has a growing Sikh and Hindu community whilst the Waters Keep estate in Goscote has seen an increase in Polish residents. This suggests that minority groups tend to cluster towards area's where they feel most accepted or established.

There has been a significant increase in the level of ethnic diversity in Walsall over the past decade. While 'White British' remains the largest single group at 76.9%, the number of residents from a minority ethnic group has risen to almost one in four. This figure, which equates to 23.1% of residents, is an increase of 8.3% on the 14.8% recorded in 2001. It is also higher than the 19.5% average in England and Wales in 2011. The largest increase is people of Asian background, with a rise from 10.4% in 2001 to 15.2% in 2011. Within this group, those of Pakistani background have increased the most to 5.3% of all residents (although Asian Indian remains the largest minority ethnic group at 6.1%). 2.7% of residents are mixed race. These change have implications for community cohesion, as some areas have seen major changes in their ethnic composition over a relatively short period of time.

Parallel Lives

The concept of parallel lives was first established in the report of the Community Cohesion Review Team (the Cattle Report), which examined the causes of the race riots in Northern towns in England in 2001. It has increasingly become a means by which both the theory and practice of community cohesion can be understood and developed and has begun to be extended beyond the race and faith debate.

The report highlighted separate education, communal and voluntary organisations, employment, places of worship and cultural activities.

It said: "Whilst the physical segregation of housing estates and inner city areas came as no surprise, the team was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation in our towns and cities.

"The extent to which this physical division was compounded by so many other aspects of our daily lives was very evident."

It added: "This means that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives."

Walsall is parochial town in terms of people being proud of where they live and holding onto that identity. Local people tend to associate themselves with their neighbourhoods and district centres rather than 'Walsall' as a whole. This limits the exposure to other communities for local people as different communities tend to live in clusters across the borough and opportunities to naturally mix with residents from other area's is reduced, often by choice. The table below reflects very simplistic demographic percentages in relation to those who are white or Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) broken down by Ward. The table illustrates the point that ethnic groups have a tendency to live in clusters.

Ward	White %	BME %
Aldridge Central and South	93.4	6.6
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	95.1	4.9
Bentley and Darlaston North	72.1	27.9
Birchills / Leamore	79	21
Blakenall	82.9	17.1
Bloxwich East	95.6	4.4
Bloxwich West	85.6	4.4
Brownhills	95.8	4.2
Darlaston South	82.4	17.6
Paddock	53.3	46.7
Palfrey	37.8	62.2
Pelsall	97.1	2.9
Pheasey Park	88.8	11.2
Pleck	44.1	55.9
Rushall – Shelfield	90	10
St Mathews	58.5	41.5
Short Heath	89.5	10.5
Streetly	87.9	12.1
Willenhall North	89.2	10.8
Willenhall South	76.3	23.7

Source: <http://www.ukcensusdata.com/walsall-e08000030#sthash.ggrjByvL.dpbs>

As can be seen from the table, large concentrations of the Asian community live in Caldmere, Pleck and Palfrey. It is also known that there is a cluster of the Polish community in Caldmere. Areas such as Brownhills, Bloxwich, Pelsall and Aldridge are predominately White British. This isn't to say communities do not live together in harmony, however, these community clusters, combined with the Walsall way of neighbourhood and district living, can create a barrier for community cohesion.

The issue of skin colour was discussed with a number of young people across the borough. A group of young white children from Pheasey advised that they had never heard of Caldmere and communicated some very negative perceptions of other ethnic groups. In Palfrey, a group of young

Asian children did not know where Beechdale was and yet communicated a very open and positive perception of the mixed population of the borough.

When the working group met with Walsall FC Community Programme it was explained to Members that the majority of the clubs fans were from WS3 and WS4 post codes. Despite the clubs ground being located in a neighbourhood that had a significant Asian population the number of fans from the immediate local area was low. It was acknowledged that this is similar to other areas in the UK such as Bradford, Birmingham and the East End of London regarding low attendance from ethnic minorities at football matches compared to the local community demographics.

There is a growing Eastern European population arriving in Walsall and the UK. Data in this area is significantly under-reported, for example, the 2011 Census gathered 1% of East European residents, half of those were from Poland¹. However, school census data for English as a Second Language (ESOL) showed increasing numbers of children of Polish, Slovak, Czech, Hungarian, Roma and other ethnicities. This would correlate with increasing numbers of ethnic food shops, cafes and bakeries in the area as well as venues used for entertainment, for example Polish Discos. During interviews with two key service providers to the Polish community the working group noted that more needs to be done to engage with this new community, which is now bigger than the Afro-Caribbean community in Walsall.

Evidence supplied by indicated that migrants from Poland and Eastern Europe have a number of issues impacting on cohesion and service providers including:

- ability to find school places nearby home for primary and secondary schools;
- Under-reporting of domestic abuse;
- Consumption of alcohol in public spaces;
- Increased risks of addiction as a result of crisis (no access to benefits) or displacement, modern day slavery, exploitation, lack of family links;
- Low reporting of racist incidents, low level of awareness of rights and responsibilities of living in UK;
- Increasing racist attitudes linked to Polish and other East European countries' political situation and refugee crisis in Europe;
- ESOL classes need to be more flexible.

Similar issues were identified by the Council-organised seminar with partner organisations, aimed at New Communities in November 2015. The seminar resulted in an action report and there's now a project sponsored by Money, Home, Job and the Equalities team – New to Walsall – focusing on advocating needs, raising awareness of cultures, rights and responsibilities on both sides².

It was noted that Poland had recently elected a mid-right government that was promoting hateful messages through their management of national broadcasting. Slovakia also has a far right party that has recently experienced election success and got several seats in the Parliament. This was noted in social media conversations in the UK which demonstrated an anti-Muslim rhetoric. It is

¹ Walsall Equality Profile 2014 <http://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/themedpages-walsall/equalityprofile>

² People New to Walsall 2015

important that further research take place in this area to increase understanding so the impact of these messages on the streets of Walsall is fully understood and mitigated.

Religious hate crime³ has increased and created unease within Muslim communities, especially by females who are visibly identifiable as Muslim whom are most likely to suffer hate crime. This has resulted in a reluctance to integrate. As a result communities view one another more negatively.

An increase in wider right wing ideology in Europe has seen hardened attitudes by migrant populations recently arriving in Walsall against ethnic minorities, specifically Muslims.

Culture and faith

The working group found that immigrant communities were proud of their backgrounds and would often have a strong attachment to their country of origin and maintain significant cultural habits. This could sometimes limit cohesion and be viewed negatively by the indigenous population. This is something that policy makers need to be aware of when considering recommendations and action plans to improve community cohesion.

Faith plays a strong role in the lives of immigrant communities when compared to the indigenous population. The working group found that faith is seen as a positive influence towards community cohesion and volunteering within faith communities is higher than in the wider general population.

Faith Percentages by Ward⁴

Ward	Religion %						
	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Judaism	Muslim	Sikh	No Religion
Aldridge Central and South	0.1	71.6	1.7	0	0.7	2.0	18.6
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	0.2	71.1	0.2	0	0.3	1.2	20
Bentley and Darlaston North	0.1	53.5	1.9	0	12.6	3.5	21.4
Birchills / Leamore	0.2	54.4	0.5	0	10.0	2.2	26.3
Blakenall	0.2	58.0	0.5	0	7.0	0.8	26.7
Bloxwich East	0.1	66.0	0.1	0	0.5	0.4	25.2
Bloxwich West	0.1	68.8	0.1	0	0.5	0.5	23.7
Brownhills	0.2	67.9	0.4	0	0.4	0.6	24.2
Darlaston South	0.1	60.1	1.8	0	8.2	3.8	23.9
Paddock	0.4	43.1	6.2	0	14.9	17.8	11.2
Palfrey	0.2	31.3	4.6	0	39.6	7.3	10.4
Pelsall	0.1	74.4	0.2	0	0.4	0.4	18.4
Pheasey Park	0.3	69.7	1.3	0	0.9	4.1	17.8
Pleck	0.2	38.7	5.5	0	31.1	5.5	13.1
Rushall – Shelfield	0.2	67.2	0.6	0.1	1.0	2.8	21.4
St Mathews	0.4	44.6	2.5	0	20.4	5.3	19.4
Short Heath	0.1	68.9	0.6	0	0.9	4.2	19.2

³ Hate Crime Statistics

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467366/hosb0515.pdf

⁴ http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/wpo-ward_profiles

Streetly	0.3	69.0	2.0	0	1.4	4.9	16.2
Willenhall North	0.1	67.3	0.5	0	1.0	5.1	19.8
Willenhall South	0.2	54.1	1.9	0	1.5	11.1	24.6

The working group met young people of the Islamic faith who considered themselves to be British. However, the young people felt that the indigenous population sometimes did not consider anyone who was not white to be British. The working group are concerned that young people from the indigenous population had little knowledge of faith and held very inaccurate views around Muslims. Further their world view was negatively skewed against Islam. It was positive that the same group were keen to have accurate information and learn about other faiths and cultures..

Prejudice

The working group spoke to a wide cross section of local people about their views on race, religion or belief, sexuality, disability, gender and age. There was a wide variety of attitudes. At times some worrying views were expressed but generally each element of the community had its own prejudices to a greater or lesser degree. It was noted that BME and minority groups often had some degree of prejudice against homosexuality.

Interestingly it was found that majority groups felt equally disadvantaged and held similar views as minority groups in terms of a feeling that “other” groups were treated differently and better by service providers. There was a view in some communities that being from a BME or minority group brought advantages. This type of attitude has been exploited by right wing groups

Representatives of all groups communicated that they felt that other groups, or communities, received more support than they did from the public sector. The working group felt the reality is, in these times of austerity, there was simply very little to share and no group was advantaged or disadvantaged. It was apparent that facts around resources or finance need to be communicated more clearly with a suggestion that regular meetings with the groups would help in that transparency and accountability. The working group were also informed that new communities were often underfunded as they lacked understanding of the requirements of funding agencies.

Despite different communities living parallel lives, in the main, representatives reported that communities are generally tolerant of one another. This was a good thing but ‘parallel lives’ could cause misunderstanding, distrust and friction between communities and going beyond tolerance should be a key objective.

The question for the working group was how could this distrust and friction be broken down?

Mythbusting

Following a series of interviews with representatives from a variety of communities, the working group felt that work needed to be undertaken to challenge myths that different communities believed about each other. An example of this was a young White British group perceiving that there were over a hundred mosques in Walsall and very few churches.

It is clear that schools play an integral part in shaping opinion and present the best opportunity to provide young people with factual information to promote inter-cultural dialogue, help prevent

discrimination, prejudice and the formation of myths. The ability of the Local Education Authority to influence schools to undertake this exercise was being eroded as more schools become Academies and this was a concern for the working group. That said every effort should be made to do so especially as OFSTED no longer measure community cohesion.

The influence of the media in influencing and demonising certain sections of society was unwelcome and contributed to creating disharmony which should not be ignored. It was apparent from discussions with witnesses that the impact of media coverage of terrorism and the European refugee crisis was evident in views communicated across the borough against Muslims.

Gypsy, travellers and Roma

The working group recognise that the disadvantage and prejudice this very diverse group suffer, especially when they are often grouped together as one community. There are distinct differences between the gypsy and traveller communities with all having strong cultural values and norms which sometimes were at odds with the council's service delivery, policies and legislation.

The significant challenge this creates is shaping services to respond to needs whilst recognising that, in certain situations, needs were difficult to meet due to current working practices. This created tensions and mistrust often from both service users and service providers. Specifically areas of need were noted in health, education and child welfare.

It was noted that changes in legislation in Ireland will see increased demands on services as Irish travellers travel around the UK. Walsall had already seen increased illegal encampments.

School census data has also shown that approximately 100 Eastern European Roma children attend local schools. The working group learned that there is significant prejudice towards Roma in their countries of origin which could be present locally.

Good practice

There is good work taking place within the community to create cohesion.

'Cohesion through Cricket' has seen young people from across the borough getting involved with the sport from fun street cricket all the way to involvement in county cricket. This has increased understanding and reduced suspicion of certain communities by encouraging all young people to become involved and interact with each other.

'Inspire-To-Engage' is an initiative bringing numerous minority groups together at Walsall Football Club to mix in an enjoyable environment to build stronger and longer term relationships. This has resulted in a number of groups with protected characteristics interacting and socialising; increased attendance at football matches. The project is being expanded to build links with the private sector.

The Community Organiser initiative in partnership with WHG has seen increased engagement with Eastern European communities and increased opportunities to mix and build relationships with their new neighbours in the borough

Community Champions - WHG has employed a number of local community activists in a project called "Community Champions". This has worked very well in establishing links to communities to better understand need and build trust between the organisation and its service users. This was clear evidence of the importance of local employers recognising that relationships and trust are key skills in building cohesion.

Faith based projects - A number of faith based projects have encouraged cross faith learning including a faith walk; visits to different places of worship by different faiths and street associations which is a Christian based project which brings neighbours together supported by WHG; The Council and Walsall Multi Faith Forum.

Shaheedee Football and Hockey weekend is an initiative from the Sikh community. An open sports event attracts a diverse participation and audience.

Area partnerships have delivered numerous projects which brought people together and linked in well with minority groups. This ensured that minority groups are more active and engaged in their locality. One of the downsides, however, was some of this excellent work did reinforce parochial thinking due to the fact that each Area Panel is limited to deliver projects within their own wards and thus cross partnership projects were limited.

New to Walsall – public sector initiative led by Walsall Council whose aim is to build links with new communities, their organisations, such as European Welfare Association, Nash Dom and Slovak/Czech Club and their leader. Breaking down communication barriers through printed leaflets, posters and social media. Educating new residents about rights and responsibilities. Also building links with ethnic business and supermarkets. Active on social media Twitter and Facebook educating other practitioners in public/3rd sector about New to Walsall needs and issues.

The Disability Forum carries out a key function, with support from the Council, to ensure that people with various disabilities have a voice and are able to communicate their needs. Based at the Walsall Deaf Centre the group has a strong brand and is trusted by some of our boroughs most vulnerable.

Walsall Pride is an annual event which brings the gay community of Walsall together to celebrate in the town centre. The event has seen increased participation by the wider community year on year and is considered to be a fun and enjoyable day.

The British Muslim Youth Group is a local voluntary youth organisation which undertakes key activities in the community. They engage with minority young people and bring people together to participate in positive activities which builds cohesion and improves interfaith understanding. This has been very effective in the Palfrey area bringing Eastern European young people and local Pakistani heritage groups together.

Walsall Youth Services (under the management of Imran Suddle) developed a project that brought young people from the Birchills and Coalpool areas together to explore attitudes and differences. The project received best practice recognition by the home office as a Prevent project. As part of the work the project looked at extremism and the impact of extremist ideology on attitudes. The project included work with parents, including a parent that was a British National Party voter and was successful in changing some very fixed negative perceptions.

It is recognised that **places of worship** are delivering numerous key activities in communities without which cohesion could be detrimentally affected. This includes **Soup kitchens** which are delivered at various Christian, Muslim and Sikh places of worship or through other venues which provides help to some of the most vulnerable people in society. It also changes perceptions in a positive way.

The Willenhall fixed traveller site had provided a key education and health service in the community building which developed trust and improved health and education outcomes. Concern was expressed by the working group that consultation was also taking place during (insert months) as to whether to remove the building to provide space for another caravan. The working group felt that this could have a detrimental impact on wider outcomes for the site.

The **Black Sisters** deliver a wide variety of projects including housing support, after school clubs, advocacy support, mental health and wellbeing support, counselling, soup kitchen, elderly day care, community events and volunteering and work placements. These services were available to residents from any background.

Preventing Violent Extremism - PREVENT

The working group, in line with the national strategy for social integration, “Creating the conditions for Integration”⁵ recognised the negative impact that extremism and intolerance has on cohesion.

PREVENT, is one aspect of the UKs national counter terrorist strategy which is called CONTEST. The objective of Prevent is to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Further information on Prevent can be found through the following link.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445977/3799_Revised_Prevent_Duty_Guidance_England_Wales_V2-Interactive.pdf;

The threat of terrorism and extremism in Walsall is very real and there is no room for complacency. In February 2016 a number of individuals from Walsall were convicted of terrorism linked to ISIS. Such activity of terrorists and nationalist groups, such as the English Defence League (EDL), has resulted in heightened community tensions. Non-violent extremism is also increasing, and social media is one of the vehicles that extremists use to propagate their messages. It has been noted that Polish nationals are attaching themselves to far right groups both nationally, and locally, using racist rhetoric on social media.

In January 2015, Walsall became a tier 2 priority area based on vulnerability and received funding to appoint a dedicated Prevent Coordinator to coordinate activity and deliver projects to build resilience to extremism.

A key priority for Walsall’s Prevent Plan is to ensure that schools meet their legal duty within the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CT&S Act). The Prevent Coordinator has delivered training called Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent training (WRAP) to over 3000 teachers; support staff and school governors, as well as supporting schools to design specific Prevent action plans. However, some Members of the working group were uncomfortable with the government placing a duty on schools within this programme.

The working group were of the view that there were levels of distrust with Prevent within Muslim communities and that this was an impediment to community cohesion. Due to time constraints the working group were unable to investigate this issue in depth and felt that this is a work stream that should be considered in the new municipal year.

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7504/2092103.pdf

Institutions

The working group met with key public sector partners to develop their understanding of what the corporate direction was to improving community cohesion.

Policy approach

The working group found that organisations were committed to creating the conditions for cohesive communities and ensuring diversity in their workforces. Whilst this should be welcomed, the group, having heard evidence from a number of witnesses, felt there was a gap between policy and practice.

The working group established that a standalone community cohesion strategy did not exist. Instead, plans to achieve community cohesion were included within broader plans and strategies, including the:-

- Sustainable Community Strategy;
- Corporate Plan;
- Walsall CONTEST Plan;
- Equality objectives;
- Institute of Community Cohesion Understanding and Appreciating Diversity and Building Community Resilience.

Whilst the working group could understand (and support) the intention of embedding community cohesion within broad plans and strategies they were of the opinion that during these changing times the borough would benefit from the development of a stand-alone community cohesion strategy that includes an action plan for its delivery. Further to this the working group would like to see a community cohesion taskforce established to oversee the delivery of the strategy which should consist of local partners, community representatives and councillors.

The working group want the new Community Cohesion Strategy to be a high profile strategy and recommend that it is included within the Councils policy framework.

Police

The police have a partnership team and employ a specific officer who builds relationships with minority groups around the borough. Walsall police team have the region's best record of "reporting to conviction" regarding hate crime and consider hate crime to be one of their key priorities. Conversations held in the community indicate that confidence is high in local policing and the reporting of hate related incidents is not related to lack of confidence or trust in the police force.

The proceeds of crime act funding is targeted at projects that build cohesion. It has a history of providing small 'acorn funding' to kick start key projects in the community -especially to area's suffering disadvantage.

The police are often the first agency that pick up on community tensions through their close relationships with key individuals and through contact with both perpetrators and victims of crime. It

was acknowledged that traditional racism occurs. Also historic prejudice can occur at inter faith and inter ethnic minority levels.

Health

The nature of health means that all Walsall communities use health services, however, it is recognised that certain minority groups face specific challenges. Public Health and Walsall Healthcare NHS trust are evidence led in terms of service delivery and ensure that through the commissioning process they ensure that the diversity of Walsall communities is at the forefront of delivery in their cradle to grave approach.

A number of key priorities are starting to have an impact on specific groups who are often disadvantaged. This includes:-

- Reducing obesity – this has focused on BME communities and deprived white communities – some of the targeted work has been around how to cook healthy Asian foods and raising awareness of the dangers of high cholesterol foods.
- Substance misuse remains a predominantly white issue so services are tailored.

Targeting services at 'at risk' communities is an effective model of service delivery.

Awareness of communities

The view was expressed to the working group that there was a significant difference in staff awareness of different communities and cultural norms. Depending on the job role of the staff member and exposure to different community members knowledge ranged from detailed understanding to very little basic awareness of cultural differences. So as an example Polish communities are very proud people and maybe reluctant to seek early intervention or support, equally they may be anti establishment and show resistance to police or local authority enforcement activities or contacting for advice. Staff's understanding of cultural norms was reliant on job role and not structured awareness raising. More should be done to develop staff cultural awareness to challenge any misconceptions, improve service delivery and consider how to improve engagement.

It seemed apparent that senior leadership's view of communities differed from staff carrying out front line duties. It is important that lines of communications improve between front line staff and senior management so that impact can be fully understood and strategic responses are meaningful and have the desired impact. All organisations interviewed have a wealth of experience and understanding which is not always appreciated or used to improve service delivery. It is equally recognised that within the staff of the statutory partnership there is an immense knowledge and understanding of cultural norms and wider knowledge and understanding which is not fully utilised

More work should be done to engage Eastern European and gypsy, traveller and Roma communities in particular.

Workforces

The working group felt that the organisations should develop plans and policies to ensure that their workforces reflected the make-up of the local area. This was considered most important at a senior management level.

Walsall Council

Walsall Councils workforce consists of 3,984 individuals (not including schools). The majority of the workforce is made of women who make up 69.5% (2755) to the total with the remaining 30.5% (1229) male. 46.5% (1281) of female staff undertake part-time roles compared to 4.6% (186) of males.

18.25% (727) of Council staff are some BME backgrounds whilst 4.62% (184) are disabled.

NHS / Public Health

The nature of health means that all Walsall communities require health services. However, it is recognised that certain minority groups face specific challenges. Public Health and Walsall Healthcare NHS trust are evidence led in terms of service delivery and ensure that through the commissioning process they ensure that the diversity of Walsall communities is at the forefront of delivery in their cradle to grave approach.

Generally the respective workforces are very diverse which helps establish trusting relationships between staff and the public, including minority groups.

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust undertook a Workforce Race Equality Standard exercise in June 2015. This revealed that the Trust has 3754 FTE employees. Of this 25.87% of employees were from a BME background. Looking at senior managers the ratios dropped to 23.92% being from a BME background. From June 2014 – June 2015 the Trust employed 689 new individuals. Of this figure 39% were from a BME background. The working group were pleased to note these figures and the effort that was being made to provide a diverse workforce. However, the report notes that this means a white person is 1.8 times more likely to secure a job with the trust. The report also records that employees from a BME background were more likely to feel discriminated than white employee.

However, this is slightly different at senior management levels at the Trust where a recent Equality and Diversity audit reported that further evidence was required to be sure that senior management were committed to equality and not just paying 'lip-service'. Further evidence was also required that recruitment was targeting underrepresented groups. Further work was required at Board level too where only 8.33% of members were from a BME background.

Police

Members recognised good practice with West Midlands Polices' recent recruitment campaign that encouraged applications from individuals from BME backgrounds. The campaign ensured that enough applications were received to ensure that a significant percentage of new police officers were from BME backgrounds. It was recognised that their recruitment processes has seen

significant improvements and yielded excellent results which need to be explored further to gather any learning which could be used in the wider partnership.

Members welcomed the increased target to appoint new recruits from BME backgrounds as analysis of human resources data from March 2015 showed that, of those willing to declare their background, 94.5% of police officers at Walsall Local Policing Unit were from a white or white British background. 4.67% of police officers locally are from an Asian background and only 1.36% from a black or mixed race background. In terms of police staff 88.89% of Walsall staff are from a white or white British background. The working group recognise that the police are aware of the demographic issues they need to address in their workforce and urge them to continue their current direction of travel in diversifying their workforce.

Does the council have a glass ceiling?

The working group questioned whether there was a glass ceiling for BME groups, women and the LGBT community with the Council

Despite women being the dominant gender at Walsall Council, as you go up the pay scales the gender imbalance evens out. In grades 1-5 (£13,500 - £22,212) 76.49% of employees are female. In the higher pay levels grade 14 and above (£56,168 and above) 51.2% of staff are female.

Regarding staff from BME backgrounds the largest number of staff - 22.48% (315) are employed at grades 6-9 (£21,530 - £35,662). This converts to 12.2% (12) of employees at the highest levels and is lower still at the top two tiers.

Staff with disabilities are steady at around 4-5% through the lower and middle grades but drop to 1% at the highest level.

Statistics around sexuality are limited as only 0.65% (26) of council employees were prepared to say they were either lesbian, gay or bisexual. This suggests that employees could be reluctant to state their sexuality in case they face discrimination.

The Councils recruitment data shows that applicants from a BME background are less likely to be appointed to a vacancy than an applicant from a white group. A breakdown of recruitment data shows that applicants from BME backgrounds make up 28% of applicants but only make up 13% of appointee. Whereas applicants from white groups make up 67% of applicants but account for 80% of appointments.

The tables over the next few pages illustrate the above points in more detail.

Ethnic Breakdown (Walsall Council)

Workforce by
ethnicity

Ethnic group	Category	Children's Services (Excludin g Educatio n)	%	Neighbourho od Services	%	Regenerati on Services	%	Resource s & CMT	%	Social Care & Inclusio n	%	Total Council Employee s excluding Educatio n	%	Educatio n	%	Total Workforc e	%
Asian or Asian British Category	Indian	62	7.63%	45	4.17%	64	8.51%	82	11.44 %	41	6.57%	294	7.38%	194	5.29%	488	6.38%
	Pakistani	28	3.44%	13	1.21%	10	1.33%	20	2.79%	7	1.12%	78	1.96%	75	2.05%	153	2.00%
	Bangladeshi	2	0.25%	5	0.46%	1	0.13%	5	0.70%	1	0.16%	14	0.35%	34	0.93%	48	0.63%
	Other Asian	2	0.25%	1	0.09%	3	0.40%	3	0.42%	6	0.96%	15	0.38%	14	0.38%	29	0.38%
Black or Black British Category	Black African	5	0.62%	0	0.00%	2	0.27%	4	0.56%	11	1.76%	22	0.55%	1	0.03%	23	0.30%
	Black Caribbean	59	7.26%	20	1.86%	12	1.60%	30	4.18%	26	4.17%	147	3.69%	26	0.71%	173	2.26%
	Other Black	2	0.25%	5	0.46%	1	0.13%	1	0.14%	7	1.12%	16	0.40%	5	0.14%	21	0.27%
Chinese	Chinese	1	0.12%	1	0.09%	0	0.00%	1	0.14%	0	0.00%	3	0.08%	2	0.05%	5	0.07%
Mixed Category	White and Asian	3	0.37%	0	0.00%	1	0.13%	2	0.28%	2	0.32%	8	0.20%	10	0.27%	18	0.24%
	White and Black African	3	0.37%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	3	0.08%	0	0.00%	3	0.04%
	White and Black Caribbean	15	1.85%	4	0.37%	3	0.40%	4	0.56%	5	0.80%	31	0.78%	19	0.52%	50	0.65%
	Other Mixed	2	0.25%	2	0.19%	1	0.13%	2	0.28%	4	0.64%	11	0.28%	12	0.33%	23	0.30%
White Category	British	571	70.23 %	928	86.09 %	618	82.18 %	534	74.48 %	485	77.72 %	3136	78.71 %	3026	82.59 %	6162	80.57%
	Irish	1	0.12%	3	0.28%	1	0.13%	8	1.12%	4	0.64%	17	0.43%	13	0.35%	30	0.39%
	White - Other European	1	0.12%	2	0.19%	2	0.27%	1	0.14%	0	0.00%	6	0.15%	6	0.16%	12	0.16%
	Other White	11	1.35%	13	1.21%	10	1.33%	9	1.26%	6	0.96%	49	1.23%	20	0.55%	69	0.90%
Other Ethnic Group		1	0.12%	2	0.19%	0	0.00%	2	0.28%	2	0.32%	7	0.18%	5	0.14%	12	0.16%
Not Stated		44	5.41%	33	3.06%	22	2.93%	8	1.12%	14	2.24%	121	3.04%	200	5.46%	321	4.20%
Prefer not to say		0	0.00%	1	0.09%	1	0.13%	1	0.14%	3	0.48%	6	0.15%	2	0.05%	8	0.10%
Total		813		1078		752		717		624		3984	100%	3664	100%	7648	100.00 %

Workforce by gender (Walsall Council)

Disability by grade

Directorate	Grade G5 & Below			Grade G6 to G 9			Grade G10 to G13			Grade G14 and above		
	Headcount	No. Employees declaring Disability	%	Headcount	No. Employees declaring Disability	%	Headcount	No. Employees declaring Disability	%	Headcount	No. Employees declaring Disability	%
Children's Services (Excluding Education)	318	11	3.46%	330	11	3.33%	126	3	2.38%	39	1	2.56%
Neighbourhood Services	574	19	3.31%	382	15	3.93%	96	6	6.25%	26	0	0.00%
Regeneration Services	636	14	2.20%	74	3	4.05%	38	1	2.63%	4	0	0.00%
Resources & CMT	187	18	9.63%	410	29	7.07%	96	4	4.17%	24	0	0.00%
Social Care & Inclusion	361	28	7.76%	205	15	7.32%	52	6	11.54%	6	0	0.00%
Education (School Based Employees)	2216	24	1.08%	894	5	0.56%	439	2	0.46%	114	1	0.88%
Total	4292	114	2.66%	2295	78	3.40%	847	22	2.60%	213	2	0.94%
Total excluding Education	2076	90	4.34%	1401	73	5.21%	408	20	4.90%	99	1	1.01%

Workforce by sexual orientation

Sexual Orientation	Children's Services (Excluding Education)	%	Neighbourhood Services	%	Regeneration Services	%	Resources & CMT	%	Social Care & Inclusion	%	Council Employees excluding Education	%	Education based Employees	%	Headcount	%
Bisexual	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	0.27%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	0.05%	1	0.03%	3	0.04%
Prefer Not to Say	260	31.98%	170	15.77%	207	27.53%	97	13.53%	103	16.51%	837	21.01%	1394	38.05%	2231	29.17%
Gay	3	0.37%	5	0.46%	2	0.27%	3	0.42%	1	0.16%	14	0.35%	2	0.05%	16	0.21%
Hetrosexual	306	37.64%	393	36.46%	410	54.52%	348	48.54%	213	34.13%	1670	41.92%	1408	38.43%	3078	40.25%
Lesbian	6	0.74%	2	0.19%	2	0.27%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	10	0.25%	5	0.14%	15	0.20%
Not Stated	238	29.27%	508	47.12%	129	17.15%	269	37.52%	307	49.20%	1451	36.42%	854	23.31%	2305	30.14%
Total	813		1078		752		717		624		3984	100%	3664	100%	7648	100%

Workforce by gender and grade (Walsall Council)

Directorate	Grade G5 & Below				Grade G6 toG 9				Grade G10 to G13				Grade G14 and above			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
Children's Services (Excluding Education)	23	3.65%	295	8.06%	59	9.20%	271	16.38%	22	10.09%	104	16.53%	9	11.39%	30	22.39%
Neighbourhood Services	230	36.45%	344	9.40%	206	32.14%	176	10.64%	57	26.15%	39	6.20%	16	20.25%	10	7.46%
Regeneration Services	136	21.55%	500	13.66%	35	5.46%	39	2.36%	23	10.55%	15	2.38%	4	5.06%	0	0.00%
Resources & CMT	41	6.50%	146	3.99%	173	26.99%	237	14.33%	45	20.64%	51	8.11%	15	18.99%	9	6.72%
Social Care & Inclusion	58	9.19%	303	8.28%	56	8.74%	149	9.01%	17	7.80%	35	5.56%	4	5.06%	2	1.49%
Education (School Based Employees)	143	22.66%	2073	56.62%	112	17.47%	782	47.28%	54	24.77%	385	61.21%	31	39.24%	83	61.94%
Grand Total	631	14.70%	3661	85.30%	641	27.93%	1654	72.07%	218	25.74%	629	74.26%	79	37.09%	134	62.91%
Total excluding Education	488	23.51%	1588	76.49%	529	37.76%	872	62.24%	164	40.20%	244	59.80%	48	48.48%	51	51.52%

Conclusion

The Council and its partners are aware of the importance of creating cohesive communities and their role in creating the right conditions for different demographics to thrive. The plans to create these conditions are currently contained in broad strategy documents. The working group recognise the importance of embedding cohesion and equality across organisations but feel there is a strong need for a specific, standalone community cohesion strategy and action plan based on consultation and available data. It is important that this plan is refreshed and monitored as predicting future changes is of paramount importance.

Some excellent projects evidenced that there is a wealth of good work been undertaken building cohesion in the borough. It is also recognised that significant challenges exist which will require a concerted effort and outcome driven plan to ensure that good community relations are maintained.

Walsall is changing at an unprecedented rate in a time when funding and resources are reducing. These changes are impacting on community cohesion and it is clear that tensions do exist through myths, media influenced suspicions of inequality based on misinformation and, at times, simply outright hatred. The impact of the internet has meant that social media has become the source of many facts but also many falsehoods which impact views, especially amongst young people.

Parochial attitudes exist in numerous localities. While these attitudes do have many positives such as pride in an area and motivating people to take social responsibility, equally, it can sometimes have negative consequences. Dependant on the demographics of an area it can reinforce stereotypes and limit social integration with other groups.

While the borough shows a significant increase in becoming a more secular society, it is apparent that within communities the faith sectors are delivering numerous projects that bring people together regardless of faith or no faith. The values of faith are key to the volunteering that occurs in the community, however, there are tensions that do exist between faiths which are often linked to racial heritage. The faith sector do not always share their good work and more should be done to recognise, support and develop their work.

Cultural norms do have an impact on service take up and delivery. These can be from a nationalistic, heritage and locality based perspective. It is important that staff consider cultural barriers and are more informed when considering service delivery and engagement in communities.

The Prevent agenda, and more specifically, media coverage of terrorist atrocities, the Middle East conflict and European refugee crisis linked to Syria has raised suspicion of Muslim communities and the faith of Islam. This has raised safety concerns in those areas around right wing activities. Further to this the working group were of the view that there were levels of distrust with Prevent within Muslim communities and that this was an impediment to community cohesion. Due to time constraints the working group were unable to investigate this issue in depth and felt that this is a work stream that should be considered in the new municipal year.

The Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community is a very diverse community and not a singular harmonious group. There is enormous pride in their heritage and resistance to change. The ways of the “settled community” remains a tangible barrier to engagement with negative consequences for the health and education of those particular communities.

A broad prejudice against gay communities was expressed and more work is required to break down stereotypes and empower the gay community to engage more in their localities.

In terms of the workforces of the Council and its partners it is recognised that there is some way to go before the Council, and in particular the Police, have a workforce that reflects the makeup of the local population. By having a workforce that reflects local demographics a greater organisational awareness can be built that will break down barriers and enable improved services to be delivered.

Recommendations

More should happen to bring diverse communities together to share experiences; their beliefs of others and create opportunities to learn from, and about, one another. This can happen by:

1. Creating a new standalone, community driven Community Cohesion Strategy and action plan for Walsall. The strategy and action plan should be ready for delivery by April 2017.
2. The 'Community Cohesion Strategy' should be included in the policy framework of the Council as an 'other plan and strategy' under Part 4.01 (a)(ii) of the Walsall Council Constitution.
3. Partners should pool resources to deliver shared objectives around community cohesion.
4. Community cohesion objectives should be built into commissioning; funding and into wider outcomes related to service delivery.
5. Establishing a Community Cohesion Taskforce of local partners, community representatives and councillors to oversee the delivery of the Community Cohesion Strategy and review it on a quarterly basis.
6. The action plan to deliver the Community Cohesion Strategy should consider creating a Cohesion Centre to be shared by organisations from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds with the focus on learning from each other and educating the wider public.
7. Consideration should be given to establishing a working group in the new municipal year to understand the local impact of the Prevent Programme.
8. Human Resources Services at the Council and Partner organisations should review recruitment and staff development policies to look for opportunities to improve the make-up of their workforces to reflect the demographics of the local community and ensure that senior management positions are more diverse.
9. Staff development at all levels should take place to improve the workforces understanding of minority groups and cultural awareness.
10. Engagement with gypsy, traveller and Roma communities should be improved around education, health and child safeguarding.
11. A campaign of 'mythbusting' around stereotypes of different communities should be undertaken.
12. Recognise that majority white communities are feeling ignored and equally need to celebrate their own heritage.
13. Support for new immigrant communities should be improved.

Terms of Reference

Work Group Name:	Community Cohesion
Committee:	Corporate & Public Services
Municipal Year:	2015/16
Lead Member:	Cllr A. Nawaz
Lead Officer:	Paul Gordon Nigel Rowe Irena Hergottova
Support Officer:	Craig Goodall
Membership:	Cllr S. Craddock Cllr I. Shires Cllr G. Sohal
Co-opted Members:	

1.	Context
	The current priorities for community cohesion have been in place for some time and could benefit from updating. An opportunity to review what the current strategy has achieved and if there are any gaps is welcomed. The working group felt that building a cohesive community in Walsall is vital to the borough maximising its potential achievement. But recognised that there were barriers to creating cohesion such as segregated communities, the rise of right wing views and religious extremism. Members recognise that there is a lot of good work that goes on to promote community cohesion and it would benefit from increased exposure. However, the working group recognised that public funding is diminishing and it was important that scarce resources were used in the most effective way.
2.	Objectives
	What do you want it to achieve? It is important to have clearly defined outcomes at the start to give the working group direction and ensure it adds value. The working group want to make 'community cohesion' a meaningful and real policy that delivers tangible benefits to the borough. The working group will make recommendations to Cabinet on the strategic direction it thinks the Council and its partners should follow in order to create stable and cohesive communities across Walsall. Due to diminishing resources the working group will consider the approach to creating an environment where local people and the voluntary and community sector have the resources to create community

	cohesion.
3.	Scope
	What should be included and excluded? In order to create a cohesive society it is important that focus is given to the whole breadth of community cohesion. Whilst it is recognised that the biggest risk to a cohesive Walsall are right wing organisations and religious extremism Members wish to build a truly cohesive place where people of all ages, genders, races, religions, sexualities and those with disabilities feel fairly treated and engaged. Therefore the working group will seek the views of a wide range of people and not just solely focus on extremism.
4.	Equalities Implications
	There is a legal and moral obligation to ensure that, when undertaking a scrutiny review, the impact of policies; procedures; strategies and activities is considered within the 6 strands of equality (Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion or Belief, and Sexual Orientation) • How will the working group consult with each of these six groups regarding this review and its outcomes? • If an EIA has been carried out for this service\policy then what were its outcomes? Can this be mapped into the review? If no EIA has been carried out by the service is one required and can this be reported to the working group? The working group's entire purpose is to seek to create an environment in Walsall whereby all groups covered by the six strands of equality, namely: age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, are treated without prejudice. The working group will seek to engage with representative groups of each of the six strands of equality and will make whatever reasonable adjustments necessary to engage with them in a fair and equitable way.
4.	Who else will you want to take part?
	Think about who else, other than lead officers and members, it would be useful to include either as part of the working group or to bring information at specific points. For example- partners, stakeholders, other authorities. Representative groups of the six strands of equality – age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

	Chief Executives of: Walsall Council, WHG, NHS, Police, Citizens Advice Bureau Local media editors – newspapers – Express & Star and Advertiser; local radio and television – local and community stations Schools and youth groups Councillors and council staff Hate groups/extremists									
5.	Timescales & Reporting Schedule									
	Needs to be completed within the same municipal year and so should be able to report to full panel by the last meeting at the latest but consider the subject- is there anything else that it may need to tie into (e.g. academic or financial year or to coincide with national/sub-regional developments) How often will update be provided to full panel? 10 September 2015 – Working group terms of reference to be reported to Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee 14 April 2015 – working group final report and recommendations to be presented to the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.									
6.	Risk factors									
	Are there any obstacles that can be predicted? For example, is it dependent on other organisations outside your control and duty to cooperate? Identifying these factors early and how they will be mitigated should help minimise their impact. <table><tr><th>Risk</th><th>Likelihood</th><th>Measure to Resolve</th></tr><tr><td>Raising expectations of large scale action to create community cohesion and combat extremism of all kinds</td><td>Medium</td><td>Working group to be clear throughout investigation that their recommendations must be available within the context of reduced public spending.</td></tr><tr><td>Being able to speak to the right people or groups and/or people/groups not informing the working</td><td>High</td><td>Consider the most effective way to engage each of the identified groups that the working group wishes to speak to.</td></tr></table>	Risk	Likelihood	Measure to Resolve	Raising expectations of large scale action to create community cohesion and combat extremism of all kinds	Medium	Working group to be clear throughout investigation that their recommendations must be available within the context of reduced public spending.	Being able to speak to the right people or groups and/or people/groups not informing the working	High	Consider the most effective way to engage each of the identified groups that the working group wishes to speak to.
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Raising expectations of large scale action to create community cohesion and combat extremism of all kinds	Medium	Working group to be clear throughout investigation that their recommendations must be available within the context of reduced public spending.								
Being able to speak to the right people or groups and/or people/groups not informing the working	High	Consider the most effective way to engage each of the identified groups that the working group wishes to speak to.								

	group of their real views.		

Timetable:

Meeting	Activity
13 August 2015	Discuss and agree draft terms of reference
10 September 2015	Present working group terms of reference to Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval
Sept – Dec 2015	Meet with witnesses. 1. Corporate witnesses on approach and achievements 2. Community representatives on impact of approach
Jan-Feb 2016	Review evidence and follow up leads
March 2016	Draw conclusions and draft final report and recommendations
14 April 2015	Present final report and recommendations to Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee