

## **Cabinet – 16 March 2011**

### **Community Integration - Moving Forwards**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Zahid Ali, Communities and partnerships

**Service:** Public Safety

**Wards:** All

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Forward Plan:** No

#### **1. Summary of Report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed changes to the PREVENT agenda from April 2011 and the implications for this important activity to promote integration and continue to build resilience against violent extremism post 31 March 2011 when the current funding ends.
- 1.2 It also addresses the current position of the available budget remaining to promote integration and challenge extremism and seeks approval from Cabinet to carry forecasted underspends forward into 2011/12 to complete activities that support the Prevent agenda and to commission future activity around community integration.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet consider the proposed changes to the PREVENT strategy post 31 March 2011 to ensure that the available funding is prudently allocated to maximise the effectiveness of the remaining funding through 2010/11 and 2011/12.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve :
  - a) carrying forward into 2011/12 an underspend of £121,000 of remaining PREVENT funding
  - b) delegation of decision making on commissioning of community integration activity to the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Chair of the Safer Walsall Partnership Board using agreed evaluation criteria based on local priorities
  - c) an early allocation of £25,000 of this proposed community integration funding to the Caldmore Village Festival Group to contribute towards the estimated £90,000 total project cost

### **3. Background Information**

- 3.1 In 2007 the national PREVENT strategy was launched in response to the international terrorist threat which had a devastating effect in the UK on 7 July 2005. The document was published in June 2008 and a number of local authorities received funding based on the percentage of Muslims living in the local authorities' area.
- 3.2 Walsall Council has received a total of £595,122 Area Based Grant funding over the 3 year period from September 2008 until 31 March 2011. This was split into
- £163,292 for 2008/09
  - £193,292 for 2009/10
  - £254,830 for 2010/11
- 3.3 Initially, a partnership group was developed consisting of key local partners; key individuals and key community groups to develop a local narrative and action plan, shaped and agreed by Government Office West Midlands. Due to the late allocation; initial consultation and agreement on the initial action plan, a carry forward of a substantial amount of the 2008/9 allocation of £110,960 was agreed for 2009/10.
- 3.4 An executive group was subsequently set up of key individuals and chaired by the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services meeting monthly to consider funding applications and commissions against an agreed criteria matched against the local action plan and the Prevent objectives. This was then considered by the Safer Walsall Partnership Board on a retrospective quarterly basis.
- 3.5 Projects agreed received a grant agreement with funding allocated and were administered upon receipt of monthly or quarterly grant claims with evidence substantiating the claim.

### **4.0 The new agenda**

- 4.1 Although the current threat level in the United Kingdom is severe, which means a terrorist attack is highly likely, and this work remains a key priority, the new coalition government have proposed a different approach that might make the programme for combating counter terrorism more effective.
- 4.2 Since November 2010 a nationwide review of the Prevent programme has been underway, with a public announcement of a new agenda scheduled for the end of March 2011. There are clear indications that there will be a separation of activities to prevent violent extremism and those which promote integration activity.
- 4.3 Also it is anticipated that the new agenda will differ from the current one in terms of responsibility and funding allocations. The new agenda will cover all aspects of terrorism, and while Islamic Al Qaeda inspired terrorists remain the largest threat in the UK, other terrorist activity such as Irish paramilitaries, right wing terrorist organisations and animal rights activists will now be included.

4.4 It is expected that there will be a split regarding responsibilities.

- **Terrorism** The Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT)

It is envisaged that the majority of central funding allocation will be given to OSCT and it will be prioritised to areas deemed as vulnerable to terrorist activity. It is unlikely that Local Authorities will receive any funding towards tackling terrorist activity and Walsall would not be considered as one of the priority areas, as the Government seeks to be more focused in specific areas and sectors where propagandists for terrorism are known to be operating.

- **Extremism and Integration** Communities and Local Government (CLG)

Publication of a new integration strategy is expected in May by CLG. This will include challenging non violent extremism such as groups like the English Defence League who are currently growing and who have been active in Walsall. Additionally, this work will include those groups who show aggression towards other groups rather than terrorist activity. The intention is to focus on common values of all different cultures and for society to challenge extremist ideologies and groups. There has been no indication whether funding will be allocated to this area of work. However, it is known that if there is any allocation it will be substantially lower than funding towards counter terrorist activity.

DCLG may have the responsibility of ensuring integration can be delivered within other government policies.

4.5 There is a clear change in language around key priorities and moving away from the concept of community cohesion and towards integration. Implementing the range of actions recommended in the ICOCO commissioned report, which researched the diversity of the Muslim communities of Walsall and wider cohesion issues within the Borough will fit closely into this new integration agenda

## 5. Resource Considerations

### 5.1 Financial:

5.1.1 Based on project monitoring it is forecast that there is a potential sum of £121,000 available as of December 2010 arising from unallocated or unspent allocation.

5.1.2 In recognition of the vulnerability of some areas of Walsall identified through the Counter Terrorist Local Profile; the sustainability of new and existing groups / projects, and the envisaged changes outlined in paragraph 4, it is proposed that a carry forward of £50,000 of the above underspend is approved to complete those activities that are already identified around the Prevent agenda. In addition, it is proposed that a carry forward of £70,000 of the above underspend is

approved for activities commissioned through the Safer Walsall Board to promote integration and build resilience to extremism. The transparent commissioning process to be applied by the Safer Walsall Partnership Board through the implementation of a Community Integration Action Plan will ensure prudent and effective expenditure which prioritises integration and challenges extremism in line with the new strategy published in March 2011.

5.1.3 It is proposed that the appropriate authority to allocate funding for these integration activities be delegated to the Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Chair of the Safer Walsall Partnership Board.

5.1.4 A request to support the Caldmore Village Festival celebrations in May 2011 has been received. This popular community event has attracted around 10,000 thousands of visitors to the area and promotes precisely the principles of community cohesion that the new government integration agenda supports. It is proposed that funding for this integration activity be approved as an early project from the £70,000 funding allocation.

## 5.2 **Legal:**

5.2.1 There are no known direct legal implications arising from the implementation of the new Prevent agenda.

## 5.3 **Staffing:**

5.3.1 The commitment of elected Members; senior staff; strategic partners; front line delivery staff and the community will be required to ensure delivery of any integration activity and counter terrorism activity

## 6. **Citizen Impact**

Citizen impact is expected to be positive should the recommendations be agreed. There is a risk if not supported that disengagement with key individuals and groups could arise which may increase vulnerability to extremism and jeopardise new partnerships which have been created and established.

## 7. **Community Safety**

Impact on community safety is expected to be positive, particularly where this is raised as a priority issue for our customers. Through our close partnership working with West Midlands Police a new Community Integration Action Plan for Walsall will be developed to complement their own local plan post 31 March 2011.

## **8. Environmental Impact**

Impact upon the environment is likely to be positive, particularly in finding and engaging local people in developing sustainable approaches to protecting and maintaining their environment. Through this involvement integration will be promoted as people are empowered to make a difference in their community.

## **9. Performance and Risk Management Issues**

### **9.1 Risk:**

9.1.1 Risk will be managed as part of the overall project approach.

9.1.2 There is a risk that diversion of the budget under-spends into general funding might disengage minority groups and promote dis-integration leaving areas and individuals more vulnerable to extremist activity.

### **9.2 Performance Management:**

9.2.1 Performance of the various delivery partners will be monitored and managed by the community cohesion coordinator reporting to the Safer Walsall Partnership Board.

9.2.2 The activities being funded are specifically designed to improve service take up by all our customers promoting improved understanding and shared experiences to build respectful and sustainable relationships which challenge all forms of discrimination through a safe and respectful manner.

## **10. Equality Implications**

1 The new strategy will impact positively on improving our performance on equalities by seeking; considering and acting upon the views and needs of minority or vulnerable groups. The data collection activities and planned activities will contribute to the Equality Framework for Local Government and promoting integration with a view to ensuring that the Council complies with Equalities legislation.

## **11. Consultation**

The Institute of Community Cohesion has undertaken consultation over the last 9 months to identify relationships between communities. The report has made a number of key recommendations which has helped shape activities and will form part of the decision making regarding the remaining allocation through the Safer Walsall Partnership Board.

## Background Papers

Walsall's Building Resilience Plan 2009 -2011

Institute of Community Cohesion - Understanding and Appreciating Diversity and Building Community Resilience Report

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4 March 2011

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4 March 2011