

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMISSIONING GROUP
13TH MARCH 2007

Attendees:

Bill Edwards (Chair)
Jo Charlan - OMBC
Harji Patel - OMBC
Mary Murphy – OMBC
Cllr Jean Stretton - OMBC
Jane Hughes - VCFP
Yvonne Burtonwood - VCFP
Moira Blood – Housing Block
Jo Farrington - HCOP
Liz Wilson – Cultural Partnership
Chief Inspector Eric Fegan – GMP Oldham Division (SSC)

Apologies: Tim Mitchell – CHYP, Mark Powell - SSC

Business Cases:

The Community Engagement Commissioning Group met to discuss the six business cases submitted.

- Community Cohesion Evaluation Project
- Building Good Relations
- Community Cohesion Advisory Group
- Festival of Diversity
- Oldham Inter Faith Development Project
- Community Engagement in Oldham

It was agreed that there were sufficient non-interested parties in the room in order make fair decisions on projects. It was also agreed that project owners could stay in the room while their projects were discussed, but that they should not get involved the discussion unless asked specific questions.

Community Cohesion Evaluation Project

This project will help build community cohesion by:

- continuing to develop and implement Borough-level community cohesion measures to support the refreshed Community Cohesion Strategy, the LAA and the Thematic Partnerships;
- working with projects and programmes to evaluate their impact on community cohesion;
- producing and disseminating local community cohesion research to inform policy-making and practice;
- supporting dissemination and implementation of the Community Cohesion Evaluation Toolkits and providing advice and guidance about research design, methodologies and tools.

CECG recommendation:

Amount requested £47,000

Amount approved £47,000

Approved with conditions. The group suggested evidence of achievement or evaluation be built in to the project, as it has been running since 2004. The group had concerns over the lack of outputs and agreed that whilst the project was integral to community cohesion, the results of such work are difficult to quantify. It was suggested that a project officer attend a future CECG meeting to clarify any gaps around outputs.

Building Good Relations

This is an extension of work undertaken on Building Good Relations in Oldham, facilitated by Mediation Northern Ireland over the past four years. In 2007/08 the work will focus upon developing community and organisational capacity for conflict prevention and resolution in Oldham. This will build upon the current phase in which a group of trainee mediation practitioners are developing experience in the field of community mediation, and three people in Oldham have been trained as trainers in basic conflict resolution/mediation skills. During 2007/08 the project will;

- Through a Field Manager, provide professional supervision and mentoring to 12 qualified mediation practitioners in delivering casework to build good relations in Oldham;
- Deliver 12 training sessions (9 x 1 day "Identifying Conflict" and 3 x 2 day "Conflict Resolution") to a total of 180 people from service providers and communities;
- Develop a model for the sustainable delivery of Community Mediation Services in Oldham in the longer term, including options around income generation.

CECG recommendation:

Amount requested £32,850

Amount approved £25,000

Approved with conditions. The group agreed that the project has a good track record for training and provided good value for money. Whilst the project has trained a significant number of people in mediation, it is not yet at the stage where it should cease. Such work is also difficult to quantify as it works on identifying and stemming issues before they become problems. The group suggested that it be made clearer who has been trained and how they are being used. They also recommended that trainers be representative of the communities of Oldham.

Community Cohesion Advisory Group

The Community Cohesion Advisory Group (CCAG) is a think tank of representatives that have specialist knowledge of community cohesion issues. The Advisory Group is multi-agency and includes representatives from each of the Oldham Partnership's thematic partnerships. It has representatives on the Oldham Partnership Steering Group, Oldham Partnership Executive. It provides advice and policy direction on a range of cohesion related issues including community engagement, community identity and issues of equality.

The Advisory Group will undertake a number of activities – as detailed below;

- Provide representation on the Oldham Partnership;
- Meet a minimum of 4 times in the year and organising at least 2 workshops/events around cohesion issues;
- Support sub groups addressing; policing, health inequalities and education;
- Provide support in the development of Oldham's Community Cohesion Strategy / the response to the Cattle report, including community involvement in this;
- Oversee the implementation of the Strategy and, working with the Council's Community Strategy & Cohesion Overview & Scrutiny Commission, ensure scrutiny of organisations' contribution to this;
- Advise on the effective incorporation of community cohesion in the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement;
- Provide guidance to all parts of the Oldham Partnership on issues of equality, identity and community engagement;
- Work with the Council, Police and other partners in ensuring an effective response to any emerging threats to cohesion.

Funding will pay for the organisation of events / production of publications.

CECG recommendation:

Amount requested £6,000

Amount approved £6,000

Approved. The group requested a breakdown of the £6,000 of activities be provided, though this should not delay the continuation of the project.

Festival of Diversity

To promote and celebrate cultural diversity and community cohesion in Oldham with the involvement and for the benefit of the community through the management of an annual Festival of Diversity and other similar events or activities. To devise, programme and deliver a Festival of Diversity in Oldham. To work with community groups to build capacity for more people in Oldham to get involved in their communities celebrating cultural diversity through community-based cultural activity that includes people of different cultures and is open to all. As a community-based Festival it is managed through a community partnership of people and groups that are representative of the different communities in Oldham.

CECG recommendation:

Amount requested £55,000

Amount approved £55,000

Approved. The project combines the Festival of Diversity and Festival Co-ordinator projects and therefore provides better value for money. The group requested that OMBC communications be made advantage of in order to promote the Festival as widely as possible.

Oldham Inter Faith Development Project

The work of this project is to build good relations between the different faith communities represented in Oldham, to enable people of those faiths to be strong in their own identities and respectful of others. This project also works with other organisations to address and reduce inequality and to enable people of faith to participate in the decision-making processes of the Borough. It also provides the first point of contact for other organisations in the Borough, in matters affecting all the faiths, for developing inter faith work, for providing mediation to resolve conflict and to provide a coordinated interfaith response to issues.

CECG recommendation:

Amount requested £50,000

Amount approved £35,000

Community Engagement in Oldham

Voluntary Action Oldham will deploy a community engagement team of 4 workers in neighbourhoods identified by area managers, and councillors as needing development and capacity building in order to gain most benefit from the forthcoming community councils. The team will work with community groups, agencies and organisations to design and implement a **Sustainable Community Development Plan**. The team will transfer empowerment skills to community groups and individuals who will:

- Support local people and local groups to find solutions to problems in their community,
- Transfer skills to local community groups to enable them to train and support local people at community councils,
- Develop a support package for community co-optees on community councils.

CECG recommendation:

Not approved. The group felt that they could not support this project based on the business case submitted. They agreed that the project should be continued until 30th June whilst it is decided what work would be commissioned. With this in mind, the group decided to hold an extraordinary meeting on 3rd April to discuss the future of commissioning engagement work. The draft Community Engagement Strategy will be distributed to the CECG prior to this to inform discussions.

Action: MM to send out the draft Community Engagement Strategy, week commencing 26th March.
JC to send out the priorities that the group have chosen.

Date of next meeting

The CECG special meeting will be held on 3rd April at 10.30am, Members Meeting room, Civic Centre.

The next CECG meeting will be held on Monday 16th April at 1pm, Level 14, Civic Centre.