

The Institute of Community Cohesion

Review of Community Cohesion in Oldham

***CHALLENGING
LOCAL COMMUNITIES
TO CHANGE OLDHAM***

**INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY COHESION
REVIEW OF COMMUNITY COHESION IN OLDHAM
FINAL REPORT**

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LOCAL COMMUNITIES
TO CHANGE
OLDHAM**

**OLDHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
REVIEW OF COMMUNITY COHESION**

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TO CHANGE
OLDHAM**

REPORT OF INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY COHESION

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SECTION I

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and its Partners have done a great deal to build Community Cohesion in the Borough since the disturbances in 2001. Community Cohesion is central to the Borough's Community Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan. Working with its Partners, the Council has developed 'Forward Together' - a strategy for strengthening Community Cohesion over the longer-term.
- 1.2 In October 2004, the Council undertook a detailed review of the Impact and Outcomes of 'Forward Together'. This highlighted the need to identify gaps in the programme and areas that might be targeted for further development.
- 1.3 This report was commissioned by Oldham MBC in response to the findings of its 'Forward Together' review and the perceived need to be open to outside opinions. It is an independent external assessment of progress made in building community cohesion in Oldham since 2001 and, hopefully, makes constructive proposals on the way forward.
- 1.4 The review was conducted by the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo). The Institute was established in 2005 to provide a new approach to race and diversity and, in particular, to focus on the development of harmonious community relations. ICoCo is a unique partnership of academic, statutory and non-governmental bodies, as well as the private and voluntary sectors, which combines the expertise of four Universities with practitioners. It constantly strives to develop and improve our understanding of community relations, collating and disseminating best practice and providing a capacity to evaluate cohesion programmes and conduct action research. It also provides a network for all agencies interested in this area so that developments can be shared and constantly updated. Further, the Institute builds capacity at all levels and provides development opportunities, ranging from the training of community leaders to post graduate researched based programmes. Summary biographical details of the ICoCo review team can be found in Appendix II to this report.

2.0 THE BRIEF

- 2.1 The scope of the brief set by Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council was as follows:
 - Assess the current level of community cohesion in Oldham and how this has changed since 2001.
 - Identify issues which need to be addressed, potential threats to cohesion and opportunities for positive change.
 - Review the actions that the Council and its partners have taken to build community cohesion in Oldham, identifying both strengths and areas for development.

- Drawing upon knowledge of best practice elsewhere and the assessment of circumstances in Oldham, make recommendations for the content of an updated Community Cohesion Strategy and Action Plan covering the next three to five years.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 In seeking to meet the objectives of the brief, our approach was as follows:

(a) **Desktop Review**

A desktop review of the extent to which the strategic policies of Oldham MBC and its key Partners contribute to building community cohesion in the Borough. No review could hope to look in detail at all of the activities undertaken over the past five years. Thus a second objective of our initial desktop exercise was to identify key lines of enquiry to be followed up later in the review. The key lines of enquiry were:

- Community Cohesion - vision and values
- Partnership arrangements and working
- Civic and community leadership
- Economic development and regeneration
- Housing
- Education and learning
- Policing
- Community attitudes and engagement

These headings form the structure of our report and are the key issues on which progress is assessed. In addition, we also thought it important to focus on the contribution of women and young people across all of our key lines of enquiry.

(b) **Interviews and Focus Groups**

In order to obtain the views and perceptions of a wide range of policy makers, stakeholders and community groups, one-to-one interviews were conducted with:

- Leading Councillors and board members of the Oldham Partnership.
- Senior and specialist council officers.
- Members of the Community Cohesion Advisory Group.
- Senior officers in public sector partner organisations including the Police, Primary Care Trust, Government Office North West, Further Education Colleges, First Choice Homes and the Housing Market Renewal Partnership.
- Senior officers in key private sector partner organisations including the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, the local press, local firms

represented on the Oldham Economic Partnership and the Asian Business Association.

- Leading members of umbrella organisations within the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors including the Oldham Race Equality Partnership, Voluntary Action Oldham and the Black and Minority Ethnic Network.

We also wanted to canvass the opinions and views of all of Oldham's main communities. Consequently, focus groups, interviews and informal discussions were held with:

- Participants involved with the Peacemaker Project, Asian Women, the African Caribbean Community, the Asian Business Forum, young white and adult residents at various locations, the Derker Community Action Group, the Black and Minority Ethnic Network, the Ethnic Minority Advisory Panel and students at Oldham 6th Form College.

(c) **Best Practice Search**

Our best practice search identified a number of other local authority areas, organisations and sources that could help inform Oldham's approach to community cohesion in the future. Instances of these are scattered throughout the report. However, it also needs to be said that we found numerous examples of best practice in Oldham from which others may learn. These have also been identified in various sections of this report.

(d) **Peer Challenge**

Finally, it was thought that the views and observations of a Peer Challenge Team from other parts of the country would contribute to the overall findings and recommendations of our review by acting as a 'critical friend'. The Peer Challenge Team comprised:

- * Councillor Tony O'Neill – Conservative, Coventry City Council.
- * Councillor Richard Kemp – Liberal Democrat, Liverpool City Council.
- * Councillor Ross Willmott – Labour, Leicester City Council.
- * Robin Tuddenham – Head of Community Safety, Waltham Forest MBC.
- * Sabin Malik – Community Cohesion Officer, Hounslow Council.
- * Daljit Kaur – Project Manager, Institute of Community Cohesion.

Over a three-day period between 14th and 16th December 2005, the Peer Challenge Team undertook a series of interviews with elected Members and Chief and Senior Officers of Oldham MBC. They also conducted interviews with key stakeholders and partnership organisations. The Peer Challenge Team focussed their inquiries on leadership, governance, scrutiny and wider community engagement. Findings of the Peer Challenge Team were fed back to the Leader and Chief Executive of Oldham MBC and are included in this report.

- 3.2 A full listing of documents consulted, interviewees and focus groups contributing to this Review can be found in Appendix I to this Report.

SECTION II

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Both the Review and Peer Challenge Teams were impressed by the effort, thought and resources invested by Oldham MBC, the Oldham Partnership and other stakeholders in responding to the many challenges identified in reports on the causes of the disturbances that took place in Oldham and other northern towns in 2001.
- 1.2 Given the sheer scale of Oldham's problems - communities leading parallel lives delineated by high levels of segregation in housing and schools, reinforced by differences in language, culture and religion – any assessment of progress has to be realistic about what could be achieved in just five years. Indeed, many of those we interviewed were anxious to communicate their frustration with what they perceived as a lack of progress on the ground. Nevertheless, we found that few cities, towns or districts in other parts of the country have done as much as Oldham in seeking to build community cohesion. In short, Oldham has every right to be proud of its record to date and now needs to unlock and make its learning available to other communities.
- 1.3 As requested, we have reviewed the key actions taken by the Oldham Partnership and the Council to promote community cohesion, focusing on overall vision and values, civic leadership and partnership, housing, education, economic development, policing and community engagement.
- 1.4 Detailed findings and recommendations under each of these headings are to be found in later sections of this report, with a complete listing of recommendations on the 'Way Forward' at the end.
- 1.5 In general, we found that a great deal has and is being done. However, there are still gaps and specific areas in which policy and practice could be strengthened and improved.
- 1.6 Certainly, the charge made by one major report in 2001, that the disturbances signified a failure in Oldham's 'political and corporate governance', could not now be sustained. This apart, we found that the Oldham Partnership and the Council tended to be cautious in their approach to tackling segregated communities, ever minded of the potential 'political cost' of more radical initiatives being exploited by far-right groups. This dilemma is not unique to Oldham. It is replicated in other northern towns and in other parts of the country.
- 1.7 More will be said on Oldham's many initiatives later in this executive summary. However, our headline assessment is that the onus for change in building cohesive and integrated communities for the future should now pass to Oldham's many communities.
- 1.8 Both the Review and Peer Challenge Teams were struck by the extent to which divisions within and polarisation between Oldham's many communities continue to be a feature of social relations, and the seeming reluctance of many sections of the community to embrace positive change.

- 1.9 We can understand – and to some extent respect – that reluctance. Change is always difficult, especially when it appears to threaten established ways of life in an uncertain future. But the irony is that Oldham has a great deal to look forward to and there are many aspects of the changes facing Oldham that will stand it in good stead and provide a solid social and economic base for future developments.
- 1.10 However, the community must itself accept responsibility and be prepared to embrace and lead change. Reluctance to change appears to run across sections of all communities. For example, among those we interviewed were a young Muslim mother who was discouraged from mixing with her non-Muslim Indian neighbour, and a white man who did not want to mix with Asian students at his college because he felt they had nothing in common with each other.
- 1.11 Such attitudes are completely untenable as a basis upon which to build cohesive communities. Nobody is suggesting enforced mixing. But all of our team were struck by continuing entrenched divisions, which was as much in the minds of people as in neighbourhood structures and that this was at odds with experience in other parts of the country.
- 1.12 We believe that Oldham has an opportunity to engage with its various communities in new ways and to promote different concepts of ‘community leadership’. We believe that community cohesion must now really engage with longstanding white communities as much as with different minority ethnic groups. This will mean investing in leadership and ensuring that all are represented on partnership and decision taking bodies. Further, we think that there is a real opportunity to enable women to play a far greater role in building cohesion and to capitalise upon their higher level of engagement in everyday community activities. We would also stress the need to engage with young people. We would like to see the development of these proposals on a comprehensive and sustained basis. The new programme must also convey a compelling vision of a united Oldham, which should - of course - attempt to pervade all levels and interests in the community.
- 1.13 Whilst we have highlighted the role of the community, as indicated above, we also believe that the Council, Oldham Partnership and other stakeholders could do more and that there are specific aspects of performance, which we feel could and should be improved. While there are many performance measures relating to community cohesion and equality within the Community Strategy and the Council’s Corporate Plan, we feel that these could be more clearly presented and more stretching in their ambition.
- 1.14 We were particularly struck by the commitment and determination of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. One of our team described this as ‘heroic leadership’ – personal and professional - in which they lead from the front. However, we were concerned that this form of leadership has created a dependency culture where others do not feel empowered to take things forward themselves. This must change. All sections of the statutory, voluntary and business sector must be much more active and prepared to champion change for themselves. We also believe that the community must provide leadership. Nevertheless, we recognise that clear commitment at the top has certainly helped to promote Oldham as a cohesive community and that there are signs that this is becoming a reality.

- 1.15 We have seen a number of really exciting initiatives and would wish to give real credit to them. They are as good, if not better, than any we have seen elsewhere. Some, like the PeaceMaker initiative are receiving national recognition, whilst others, like the cross-cultural work in schools, are setting best practice standards. But more could be done in bringing these initiatives together in a coherent and comprehensive strategy for the future focussed on strategic priorities understood by the community and having real resonance with their experience.
- 1.16 We were also concerned with the plethora of partnerships, which were not arranged in a convincing pattern and did not appear to always hang together or to be mutually supporting and effective. We would have expected to see more by way of a committed private sector presence and a more organised voluntary sector process. We therefore welcome the reorganisation of current partnership structures linked to the five blocks of the new Local Area Agreement.
- 1.17 In terms of regeneration, Oldham is on the cusp of real change. ‘Oldham Beyond’ – a fifteen-year strategy for the renaissance of the Borough - is visionary and some elements are already being implemented. The relationship between Oldham and the rest of the Region - especially Greater Manchester - is clearly critical and we believe that this needs to be developed further, driven by the new Economic Development Strategy. In addition, the Council and its partners need to recognise that they have a real ‘diversity advantage’ in the growing number of young minority ethnic people that can provide an attractive and vibrant labour force to enable businesses to grow and develop. Many partnerships in other part of the country are already doing this, for example Birmingham and Leicester.
- 1.18 ‘Oldham Beyond’ cannot hope to be successful, however, if divisions remain entrenched and community relations suffer from a real lack of trust. Investment on the scale required, will not take place in a community that lacks pride, confidence and the will to transcend the shadow of the 2001 disturbances.
- 1.19 Oldham is not one place. Its districts are far more significant than in many other local authority areas. We believe that this is a strength and not a weakness, providing that Oldham can really share a common vision, as well as promote the diversity of its different areas and communities. We do not believe that a common vision is sufficiently pervasive at present and there needs to be clarity about how community cohesion is promoted within and across communities and districts.
- 1.20 This is not just about changing attitudes and inequalities must be tackled with greater vigour. No town or area can be really cohesive if part of the community feels that it is significantly more disadvantaged than others. In addition, some real structural issues must be faced and it is now essential to begin to break down the segregation in neighbourhoods, especially in terms of housing and education, by giving individuals and families real choices and to at least ensure that clusters and patterns of segregation do not become even more entrenched. The Housing Market Renewal programme provides many opportunities in this respect, but is not in itself a sufficient vehicle for change and certainly not at the level required. A clear programme for mixed communities needs to be developed, based on real choices, a compelling vision of what Oldham will look like in fifteen to twenty years time and an articulation of how to get there. This will take time to be put in place and needs to be done incrementally and in a

way in which communities can relate to and accept. It will also be necessary to tackle inequalities in Oldham and these are not to be found only in minority communities.

- 1.20 But the most immediate impediment to change is the mindset of deeply entrenched communities. However, we recognise that attitudes are changing with a marked reduction in negative views on diversity and community cohesion compared with two years ago. Looking to the future, an imaginative and sustained communications strategy has to be part of the process of promoting more positive attitudes and engaging and mobilising communities.
- 1.21 Oldham today has to a significant extent been defined by the disturbances of 2001. Many young people told us that when they went to other towns or cities and said that they were from Oldham, the immediate response was ‘that’s where the riots were!’ To be fair, the Council and the Oldham Partnership have done a great deal to repair the damage, but must now promote itself more pro-actively as a place that is moving on, facing the future with confidence, backed up by a vision and strategy to deliver real and lasting change.

2.0 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The principal recommendations arising from our review and the Peer Challenge are as follows:

- (1) Based on its current vision, values and wide range of activities promoting community cohesion, Oldham now needs to modify its community cohesion strategy and programme - particularly with a view to setting clear strategic objectives, priorities and targets. There should be a clear indication of what is critical to success and a set of core initiatives around which the new programme is built.
- (2) If there is one area we would highlight above all others in building community cohesion for the future, it is involving, engaging and mobilising Oldham's communities to take greater responsibility for change. As an initial event, we would propose a borough wide conference with the objective of 'Challenging Local Communities to Change Oldham'. This might be preceded by a series of local debates in the wards of each Area Committee. The immediate purpose would be to determine how local people, schools, the voluntary, community, faith and other sectors could contribute to building bridges between communities both at local and borough levels. But the larger goal would be Oldham's communities owning the outcomes of local and borough wide debates. Nor should the challenge be restricted to tackling issues across the divide between white and minority ethnic communities. Black and Minority Ethnic participants will have a key role to play in tackling divisions between their own communities. Building bridges between Oldham's urban and rural communities should also not be overlooked and particular emphasis will need to be placed on involving women and youth from all communities.
- (3) Challenging Oldham's communities would be a new shift of emphasis in building cohesion – a new 'bottom-up' approach with far more importance attributed to local communities taking responsibility for shaping and driving change in their localities. Area Committees could have a vital role to play in this process by co-ordinating local debates on community cohesion, turning the local vision into a plan and overseeing its implementation.
- (4) Backing up and reinforcing this new approach, consideration should be given to developing a common leadership programme in which participants from local government, the public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors come together. As with our proposal regarding the Challenging Oldham's Communities conference, particular emphasis should be given to involving more women and young people, with the clear objectives of widening and empowering the present leadership and also developing the next generation of leaders.
- (5) In addition to and also central to the new approach, Oldham MBC and its partners should review the contribution of their current communications strategy to promoting community cohesion. This is not to say that work is not already being done in this respect, principally through 'Forward Together' Newsletters. But many of those we spoke to in focus groups and informal discussions were

not aware of Oldham's overall vision or what the Oldham Partnership was trying to achieve. The primary purpose of the review would be to determine how the wider public could be better informed and key messages communicated. But attention should also be given to challenging people to think about community cohesion and to promoting pride and confidence in a positive vision for Oldham's future – locally and borough-wide. Consideration should be given to branding community cohesion literature and initiatives with an easily identifiable logo or symbol that could be used by the Council, the Oldham Partnership and other stakeholders. Perhaps schools and colleges might be challenged to design this logo through a borough wide competition.

- (6) In developing a comprehensive economic development strategy for the Borough, Oldham MBC and the Economic Partnership will need to demonstrate how they intend to tackle race equality and the gap between Oldham's least and most deprived wards. This is all the more pressing given projected changes in the composition of Oldham's population and workforce over the next two decades. Rather than a negative, a diverse, cosmopolitan and cohesive community can be a positive factor in attracting inward investment to the benefit of all. Oldham needs to determine how the composition and characteristics of its population and workforce can be turned into a competitive advantage.
- (7) Oldham's approach to tackling ingrained segregation in housing needs to go beyond the Housing Market Renewal project. A long-term strategy should be developed founded on a positive and compelling vision for the future of Oldham with more integrated communities. This must cover all housing areas and will require widening the involvement of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), private sector landlords and local estate agents. But RSLs also have a key contribution to make in being far more active in developing imaginative community cohesion programmes in their own housing areas. Rather than reacting to population change, Oldham's approach will need to be pro-active – particularly in winning the confidence of local communities.
- (8) A similarly long-term, but determined approach - which goes beyond twinning and related activities - needs to be taken in tackling continuing segregation in schools. Oldham's proposed new schools will have a key role to play in this respect by attracting pupils from all communities. Much is to be learned from Oldham Sixth Form College in getting pupils to better relate to each other during school hours. In addition, a great deal more needs to be done in engaging and involving parents from all communities in school based initiatives such as the Link Schools Project. Consideration should also be given to other ways of building bridges between schools including more teacher swaps, pupils of different schools coming together across a wider range of subjects and more inter-school sport and leisure activities.
- (9) Oldham's local Police Force now needs to develop an overall rationale and approach to winning the confidence of all communities. This will be particularly important if the Police is to make significant progress in tackling Oldham's youth gangs and drugs problem.

- (10) All of Oldham's public sector partners need to make a sustained effort to improve representation of all disadvantaged groups in their workforce – particularly at senior and management levels.
- (11) Finally, the Oldham Partnership will need to sustain its efforts in developing a framework for evaluating community cohesion projects and programmes with particular emphasis on capturing local learning and rolling out best practice across departments, partner organisations and localities. At a strategic level, there is also a need for a more robust performance management framework assessing overall progress against objectives, milestones and targets. Many local authorities and partnerships have developed long-term relationships with local Universities to help tackle these issues.

2.2 Oldham is at the cusp of real change and now needs to demonstrate sustained progress in tackling what are extremely difficult issues. In place of a borough associated with riot and ethnic strife, Oldham needs to further transform itself into the borough that defeated segregation and ethnic conflict - a beacon for best practice in building cohesion across all its communities. If this new Oldham is to become a reality, accelerating the pace of change is critical. Oldham will experience dramatic changes in the composition of its population over the next two decades, with its white population declining and its BME population increasing. All – the Council, the Oldham Partnership, the local media and local communities – will need to make a concerted effort to ensure that the pace of change in building community cohesion is not overtaken by the potential for conflict.

SECTION III

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A great deal has already been written on the disturbances in 2001. In the immediate aftermath, the Home Office recommended that Oldham MBC, the Greater Manchester Police and Police Authority jointly commission an Independent Review of what had happened in Oldham and what needed to be put right.¹
- 1.2 At national level, the Home Secretary established a Review Team to seek the views of local residents and community leaders - in those towns affected by the riots but also in other parts of England - on issues that needed to be addressed to bring about social cohesion.² In addition, an inter-departmental Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion was also established and asked to report to the Minister on what Government could do to minimise the risk of further disorder and to help build stronger, more cohesive communities.³
- 1.3 These were by no means the only inquiries into the 2001 disturbances. Local inquiries were undertaken in both Burnley⁴ and Bradford.⁵ Moreover, the Commission for Racial Equality undertook a detailed investigation of segregation in the North West of England.⁶
- 1.4 The findings and recommendations of these reports are too numerous to recount here. However, almost all identified a common underlying theme: 'The physical segregation in our towns and cities and the depths of polarisation to which this led between communities. Whether in respect of separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, many communities were operating on the basis of a series of parallel lives. Often, these lives did not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap or promote meaningful interchanges'. (Report of the Independent Review Team)
- 1.5 The scale of the problem of segregated and polarised communities – if anything – was more pronounced in Oldham than in many other towns and cities. Nevertheless, it is fair to say, that Oldham has both recognised and risen to the challenge.
- 1.6 In response to the findings and recommendations of particularly the Ritchie and Cante Reports, community cohesion has been made a key priority of the Oldham Local Strategic Partnership and Oldham MBC.
- 1.7 The Council and the Oldham Partnership have developed and adopted a clear statement setting out their vision and values in respect of community cohesion – 'Forward

¹ Oldham Independent Review – One Oldham One Future. December 2001.

² Community Cohesion. Report of the Independent Review Team. Chaired by Ted Cante. Home Office 2002.

³ Building Community Cohesion: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion. Chaired by John Denham. Home Office 2002.

⁴ Lord Clarke – Burnley Task Force. 2001.

⁵ Community Pride not Prejudice – Making Diversity Work in Bradford, Sir Herman Ouseley, July 2001.

⁶ Racial Segregation in the North of England and its implications for a Multi-Racial Society. CRE 2002.

Together.’⁷ This is reflected in the Community Strategy⁸ for the Borough and in the Council’s Corporate Plan.⁹

- 1.8 A Community Cohesion Partnership (now the Community Cohesion Advisory Group) was established to drive and co-ordinate progress. Within Oldham MBC, the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have taken responsibility for leading the Council’s contribution on this issue.
- 1.9 There is good evidence to indicate that key departments within the Council are implementing the Council’s Vision and Values on Community Cohesion. Instances of these will be explored further in the body of this report.
- 1.10 There is also good evidence to indicate that key Partners within the Oldham Partnership are also implementing the shared vision and values within their own organisations e.g. the Greater Manchester Police and the Oldham Primary Care Trust.¹⁰
- 1.11 Oldham has demonstrated a willingness to bring in external skills and expertise to help tackle issues central to building community cohesion for the future. For example, the development of ‘Oldham Beyond’, which sets out a Vision and Strategy for the renaissance of the whole Borough - with masterplans for Oldham Town Centre, Werneth/Freehold and a network of key sites - was led by external consultants.¹¹ Similarly, a recent report on ‘Population Forecasts for Oldham’, which projects population change within the Borough to 2028.¹²
- 1.12 Oldham has also demonstrated a willingness to work with and learn from other bodies including cross-community projects in Northern Ireland, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Office, Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Local Government Association, Institute of Community Cohesion, Rochdale MBC and other Councils.
- 1.13 Nor has the Council ignored local views and concerns in the development and implementation of its community cohesion vision and values. Between February and July 2005, the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive undertook an extensive ‘Listen and Learn’ Programme involving eighteen different groups across the Borough.¹³
- 1.14 Moreover, the Council has recently conducted an extensive review of the ‘Impact and Outcomes of its Community Cohesion Strategy – Forward Together’.¹⁴

⁷ Forward Together. Formally adopted by full Council 14th April 2004.

⁸ Oldham’s Community Strategy – Planning for Sustainable Communities 2005-2020.

⁹ Oldham Corporate Plan 2005-2008.

¹⁰ Cottoning On: Addressing Health Inequalities in Oldham. Oldham Primary Care Trust. November 2005.

¹¹ Oldham Beyond: A Vision for the Borough of Oldham. April 2004. Oldham Beyond: The Heart of Oldham. A Masterplan for Oldham Town Centre, Werneth Freehold and Oldham Net. May 2004 - URBED and S333 with Comedia, King Sturge and WSP.

¹² Draft Population Forecast for Oldham. September 2005. CCRS – University of Manchester.

¹³ Draft 3 – Listen and Learn Programme. Oldham MBC February-July 2005.

¹⁴ Forward Together: Building Community Cohesion in Oldham, Impact and Outcomes. Oldham MBC October 2004.

1.15 This report takes into consideration the findings of the 'Listen and Learn' Programme as well as the Council's review of 'Forward Together'. It is intended to provide an independent external assessment of progress on building community cohesion in Oldham since the disturbances and to help indicate the way forward.

SECTION IV

1.0 COMMUNITY COHESION – VISION AND VALUES

1.1 What is community cohesion? National Guidance issued by the Local Government Association (LGA) in 2002 notes that community cohesion ‘...goes beyond and incorporates the concept of race equality and social inclusion’. It defines a cohesive community as one where:

- * there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- * the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
- * those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- * strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.’¹⁵

1.2 The guidelines stress that it will be for each authority - based on a baseline assessment of its circumstances - to determine what strategies and plans are necessary to promote community cohesion within their areas. It also stresses the new positive duty placed upon authorities to promote race equality. That is to have due regard in everything they do, to:

- * tackle racial discrimination;
- * promote equality of opportunity; and
- * promote good relations between people from different racial groups.¹⁶

1.3 The definition of community cohesion agreed by the Council and the Oldham Partnership following consultation is consistent with LGA guidelines. It defines a cohesive community as a community:

- * to which people are proud to say they belong;
- * where people from different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds and with different incomes live side-by-side in peace and safety;
- * which is not disfigured by racism or other forms of prejudice, and where people treat each other with courtesy and respect;
- * where people support each other when they are in need, and where conflicts can be resolved rather than festering or growing;
- * where people receive, and feel they receive, fair treatment from organisations providing services, facilities and employment opportunities; and

¹⁵ Guidance on Community Cohesion. LGA 2002

¹⁶ Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

- * people are able to contribute to decisions which affect their lives, and to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of the community.
- 1.4 There is also a commitment to ‘Work together to reduce inequalities with the aim of ensuring that everyone in the Borough enjoys a decent quality of life.’ Within the Council this is backed up by a Corporate Equality Policy and a Race Equality Statement and Scheme – a requirement under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
- 1.5 The Community Cohesion Strategy for the borough – ‘Forward Together’ identifies seven challenges for the borough:
- * Building good community relations;
 - * Targeting resources to reduce inequality;
 - * Cultural sensitivity – meeting the needs of individuals and communities;
 - * Community engagement;
 - * Creating understanding and respect and challenging racism and all forms of discrimination and prejudice;
 - * Creating a balanced workforce which is representative of the communities of the Borough;
 - * Enhancing the best practice in civic leadership.
- 1.6 A wide range of initiatives has been taken to tackle these challenges and these will be addressed in subsequent sections of this report.
- 1.7 However, the number one challenge for the Borough, identified in most of the reports following the disturbances, is the degree to which communities remain divided.
- 1.8 The Borough of Oldham remains highly segregated residentially. According to the 2001 Census, 13.9% of the population are of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) heritage. The overwhelming majority of this population is concentrated in just four of the Borough’s twenty wards - i.e. those immediately surrounding Oldham Town Centre, namely, Coldhurst, Werneth, Alexandra and St. Mary’s. Co-terminus with this spatial distribution is BME concentration – to different degrees - in primary and secondary schools. These divisions reinforce differences in culture and religion and are part of the process by which communities may be said to lead separate and parallel lives in other areas such as social, leisure and community activities. These divisions are deep seated and unlikely to change - in any fundamental sense - over the short to medium term.
- 1.9 It is reassuring that the scale of the problem of segregated communities is recognised in the recent review of Oldham’s ‘Forward Together’ community cohesion strategy.¹⁷

¹⁷ Forward Together – Building Community Cohesion in Oldham: Impact and Outcomes. Oldham MBC October 2004.

- 2.0 However, central to the way in which Oldham has and intends to continue tackling segregated communities is the commitment to ‘Integration and Choice’. More specifically, ‘Forward Together’ is committed to “Support the development of an integrated society by encouraging people from different social and cultural backgrounds to choose to live, work, study and enjoy life together, while respecting their freedom to choose whether they do so.”
- 2.1. Given this approach, it is critical that Oldham’s community cohesion strategy is able to deliver realistic choices for all its communities. It is equally important that the Council and its partners are able to promote a positive vision for the future of the Borough in which integrated communities are seen as a valued outcome.

3.0 FINDINGS

- 3.1 Our findings regarding Oldham’s vision and values on community cohesion are as follows:
- (a) Oldham MBC and its partners now have an overall vision and a clear sense of purpose and direction on what needs to be done to promote more cohesive communities within the Borough.
 - (b) There is genuine commitment amongst senior officers and elected Members within Oldham MBC and those involved in the Oldham Partnership to the Borough’s vision and values.
 - (c) Under the six challenges for the Borough, we found a wide range of activities and projects tackling most of the key areas of concern identified by reports following the 2001 disturbances. Some of these projects have won wider and national acclaim as exemplars of good practice. At a national level, it would be difficult to find a single authority that could be said to be doing all that needs to be done on community cohesion. Nonetheless, in the range and scope of its activities, Oldham would compare with the best.
 - (d) Oldham has anticipated many of the key issues likely to have a major impact on building community cohesion for the future and has brought in external expertise to help.
 - (e) However, we also found that while activities intended to promote community cohesion were wide ranging, it was difficult to identify strategic priorities, clear long-term objectives, milestones and targets within what could be described as a single coherent community cohesion strategy and programme.
 - (f) We were not certain that Oldham’s overall vision and values on community cohesion or the priority ascribed to the policy area was

well understood at middle management level or by front-line service teams in Oldham MBC and by implication its partner organisations.

- (g) One view advanced during interviews with voluntary and community sector representatives, was that equality – in particular race equality – has now become subordinate to community cohesion. Whilst we do not necessarily agree with this point of view, our review of the literature provided did indicate a degree of ambiguity between the two policy imperatives. In our opinion, community cohesion and equality are two sides of the same coin. One is unachievable without the other. Even the perception of ambiguity is unhelpful and likely to be counter-productive.
- (h) Oldham is committed to tackling segregated communities through a policy based on ‘integration and choice’. We would certainly support this approach. Nevertheless, we believe that a key message that needs to be communicated by Oldham MBC and its partners, is that segregated and divided communities – whether enforced or self-imposed - are untenable as a basis for valuing and respecting diversity, creating a common sense of belonging, tackling inequality and attracting investment for the future. For example, the overall vision for the future outlined in Kirklees community strategy is entitled ‘Harnessing the strengths of diversity’. This is seen as one of Kirklees ‘greatest strengths’, but can only be successfully harnessed through a ‘joint response to the challenges of the next ten years’. Central amongst these challenges is minimising disadvantage and ‘building united communities’.
- (i) Oldham’s problem of segregated communities is deep seated and notwithstanding the efforts of the Oldham Partnership and the Council, is unlikely to change in the short to medium term. We found in our interviews - particularly with community and voluntary sector groups - a general frustration with the pace of progress on the ground. There is a pressing need to better inform the wider public of Oldham’s achievements and to cultivate realistic expectations with particular stress on the unavoidable message that all in Oldham are in this for the long-term.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Based on its current vision, values and wide range of activities promoting community cohesion, Oldham now needs to modify its community cohesion strategy and programme - particularly with a view to setting clear strategic objectives, priorities and targets. There should be a clear indication of what is critical to success and a set of core initiatives around which the new programme is built.

- (2) Greater stress needs to be given to tackling inequality within the Borough as a whole whether based on neighbourhoods or ethnicity. It has to be accepted by all that community cohesion initiatives will not succeed while stark inequalities across and between communities remain. However, it is to be noted that community cohesion is an overarching theme in Oldham's round two Local Area Agreement, a major focus of which is reducing inequalities.
- (3) Oldham's commitment to tackling the Borough's problems of segregated communities through an approach based on 'integration and choice' is to be commended. However, this approach needs to go hand in hand with a clear and constant message that segregated communities are an untenable basis upon which to build social cohesion and is likely to be detrimental to the image, quality of life and prosperity of the Borough – particularly when compared to other nearby northern towns. Oldham's approach could also be strengthened by a clear and positive vision of a future for the Borough with more integrated communities. Moreover, the Oldham Partnership and the Council must seek to ensure that real choices exist for individuals and families making decisions in respect of housing and education.
- (4) A major factor in building community cohesion in Oldham over the next two decades will be projected population change within the borough and in particular the relative growth in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage population. The potential risk is that the pace of change in building community cohesion and regenerating the borough may be overtaken by the potential for population change to generate division and conflict. Oldham will need to demonstrate that its vision and strategy for a positive future is at ease with and indeed built on projected changes in the make up of its population.

SECTION V

1.0 PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS AND WORKING

- 1.1 One of the most important conclusions of the Ritchie Report was that there ‘...has been a lack of opportunity for people to meet and talk across the community divides. As a panel, we have probably done more listening to people views about community relations within Oldham than has been done in a long time’.¹⁸
- 1.2 Since the disturbances in 2001, Oldham has put in place a comprehensive Partnership structure bringing together the public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors.
- 1.3 The Oldham Partnership was formed and accredited in 2002. It is at the centre of a network of Thematic Partnerships – each representing a key theme in the borough’s Community Strategy. These themes are Oldham Against Crime, Health and Social Care, Economic Development, Local Learning, Culture, the Environment, Children and Young People, the Voluntary, Community and Faith sectors and Local Housing.¹⁹ The former Community Cohesion Partnership was recently reconstituted as a Community Cohesion Advisory Group.
- 1.4 This network is led by an Executive Group responsible for decision-making and a Steering Group responsible for the co-ordination, management and monitoring of partnership work.
- 1.5 The Partnership is linked to Community Empowerment and Area Networks. There is also a series of People’s Panels linked to Thematic Partnerships and providing a forum for Voluntary, Community and Faith Groups to debate issues.
- 1.6 The Community Cohesion Partnership was established in January 2002 to work with Oldham MBC in leading and co-ordinating actions to build community cohesion. It was responsible for producing the ‘Forward Together’ Community Cohesion strategy. In reconstituting as an Advisory Group it has clarified that its role is to assess progress, develop policy and advise and influence the Oldham Partnership, rather than itself delivering a programme of community cohesion activity. Its membership includes representatives from Oldham MBC, many of the thematic partnerships, the Oldham Race Equality Partnership, Voluntary Action Oldham, the BME Network and the Inter-Faith Forum.
- 1.7 However, each Thematic Partnership is also responsible for building community cohesion in its own domain. Part of the role of the Community Cohesion Advisory Group is to liaise with Thematic Partnerships and take a

¹⁸ Oldham Independent Review – One Oldham One Future. December 2001

¹⁹ A Guide to the Oldham Partnership. June 2005

wider view. It also takes a lead responsibility for promoting and raising awareness on the need for local people and organisations to contribute.

2.0 FINDINGS

- (a) Oldham MBC has radically changed its attitude and approach to working in partnership.
- (b) Where in 2001 Ritchie found few opportunities for people to meet and talk across the community divide, there is now a comprehensive partnership network where community leaders and representatives of the Voluntary, Community and Inter-Faith Sectors not only meet, but contribute to the policy making process, working alongside senior officers and representatives of the Primary Care Trust, the Police and the business sector. Indeed, the Oldham Partnership won the Local Government Chronicle 2006 Partnership Award for Sustainable Communities and was acclaimed by the judges for its work in helping communities to get involved in decision-making.
- (c) We found genuine commitment within the network of Partnerships for achieving Oldham's vision for community cohesion. Partner representatives felt they were being involved.
- (d) However, many of those we interviewed expressed concern that Oldham's Partnership structure was now far too complicated and may not be sustainable over the longer-term. It is to be noted that at the time of our review, the Oldham Partnership was looking at the possibility of reducing the number of, and realigning its Thematic Partnerships with key themes in its emerging Local Area Agreement. One consequence of this was the Community Cohesion Partnership changing to an Advisory Group.
- (e) Many of those involved did not understand how the network of Thematic Partnerships fitted together or which committee or partnership had overall and final responsibility for community cohesion. Hopefully, this has now been clarified with the Community Cohesion Partnership being reconstituted as an Advisory Group concerned with developing policy and assessing progress rather than programme delivery, and with overall responsibility for community cohesion being vested in the Oldham Partnership Executive Group.
- (f) Representatives sitting on different bodies often felt over- stretched and that there was duplication between the work of different Thematic Partnerships.
- (g) Some Thematic Partnerships are perceived as more effective than others e.g. the Local Learning and Oldham Against Crime. Others were perceived as working in silos e.g. the Economic Partnership.

CASE STUDY: EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT IN MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The progress made by Oldham Council and the Oldham Partnership in better meeting the needs of local people is evidenced by a number of recent awards and achievements:

- The Oldham Partnership won the national Local Government Chronicle **2006 Partnership Award for Sustainable Communities**. The judges said that the Oldham Partnership *"was a great example of training and capacity building to help communities get involved in decision-making. It showed a level of evidence of partnership training that set it out from the competition."*
- Oldham Council's achievements were also recently recognised at the **Greater Manchester Employer Coalition Awards**. The Council was overall winner in the Large Employer of the Year category, which recognises employers of more than 250 people who champion diversity and equality. It was also a finalist in the Lifelong Learning Employer of the Year, which is awarded to organisations which recognise that investing in staff learning and development gives a competitive edge and that their staff are their most valuable asset.
- The outcome of two recent assessments also provide evidence of the way in which the Council is improving its performance as an employer and service provider. Recently, the Council became the first organisation in the country to receive **Corporate Investors in People** under the new tougher version of the standard, and has been awarded all three IiP modules - Recruitment and Selection, Work Life Balance, and Leadership and Management Development.
- Also, at the end of March 2006 the Council achieved **Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government**. The Standard, which runs from level 1 to level 5 (the highest) was developed by the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the Employers' Organisation for local government, with the Audit Commission. It measures progress of all parts of the Council in building equalities into all aspects of service delivery and employment. Comparatively few local authorities have yet reached this level of performance on equalities.

- (h) Many of those interviewed considered Thematic Partnerships as consultative rather than decision-making bodies, with key policies and initiatives being formulated by Oldham MBC.
- (i) We found that the underlying relationship between the Oldham Partnership and Area Committees – potentially a key mechanism in delivering Oldham's Vision for building community cohesion - was not clear.
- (j) We found little by way of Action Plans and measurable outcomes for community cohesion by which individual Partnerships could evaluate and assess progress.

- (k) We also found little evidence of the impact of individual community cohesion projects and initiatives being assessed in a systematic way. It should be noted that steps were being taken to address this with the establishment of a cohesion evaluation project. However, work is still at an early stage.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) We found that leadership was a key factor in the reported effectiveness of individual existing partnerships but so also was the degree of officer support. As part of the process of review and change within the Oldham Partnership, attention should be given to how individual Partnerships and Advisory Groups can be supported by partner officers and staff.
- (2) Attention should also be given to breaking down silos between Oldham's Thematic Partnerships.
- (3) Area Committees have the potential to make a major contribution to building community cohesion at local level in the future. It is important that a clear vision is developed for the role of Area Committees in this respect and that their relationship with the Council and the Oldham Partnership is clarified.
- (4) Finally, the Oldham Partnership will need to sustain its efforts in developing a framework for evaluating community cohesion projects and programmes with particular emphasis on capturing local learning and rolling out best practice across departments, partner organisations and localities. At a strategic level, there is also a need for a robust performance management framework assessing overall progress against objectives, milestones and targets in a modified community cohesion strategy. Many local authorities and partnerships have developed long-term relationships with local Universities to help tackle these issues.

SECTION VI

1.0 CIVIC AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

- 1.1 Ritchie in his report of 2001 identified ‘...a major failure of political and corporate governance’ as a significant factor in the lack of Community Cohesion in Oldham.²⁰ The Cattle Report observed that a ‘significant component in the breakdown of community cohesion appears to be the extent to which a clear and consistent message has been evident from the principal political and community leaders, at a local level over a substantial period of time.’²¹
- 1.2 Oldham has come a long way in this respect since the disturbances. In Oldham MBC there is cross party support for the Oldham Partnership’s vision for building community cohesion. The Leader of the Council holds the Cabinet portfolio for community cohesion and the Chief Executive is the lead officer. In order to keep community cohesion at the forefront of Council affairs, time is set-aside at the start of each meeting of the Full Council to discuss and consider presentations. There is a Community Strategy and Cohesion Overview and Scrutiny Commission responsible for evaluating progress and contributing to policy development. Moreover, no far right candidates have been elected in successive elections since 2001. This is not to say that the threat has disappeared. Far right political parties continue to be active within the Borough and have managed to retain a core vote.
- 1.3 There was also evidence of partner representatives undertaking leading roles within Oldham Thematic Partnership, particularly in the Local Learning, Voluntary, Community and Faith, and Economic Partnerships. The contribution of the Community Cohesion Partnership since its inception is particularly worthy of mention. Working with Oldham MBC it was instrumental in shaping the ‘Forward Together’ strategy for community cohesion, and commissioning the “Building Good Relations” project. Similarly, working with the Inter-Faith Forum, the BME Network and others, it has also played a key role in mobilising a positive response to incidents likely to cause tensions, for example, the ‘Standing Together’ event following the London bombings.
- 1.4 Both Oldham MBC and the Oldham Partnership have taken steps to promote a positive message on community cohesion through Newsletters, Council Publications, campaigns, conferences and events celebrating diversity.
- 1.5 Though not formally part of the Oldham Partnership, the Oldham Chronicle has gone to some lengths to develop a more balanced approach to reporting race and diversity issues since the disturbances.

²⁰ Oldham Independent Review – One Oldham One Future. December 2001

²¹ Community Cohesion. Report of the Independent Review Team. Chaired by Ted Cattle. Home Office 2002.

- 1.6 Oldham has also begun to tackle the issue of building leadership around community cohesion through the second phase of the Building Good Relations Project facilitated by Mediation Northern Ireland.

CASE STUDY: BUILDING GOOD RELATIONS PROGRAMME

The Building Good Relations programme was initiated by the Council and the Community Cohesion Partnership in 2002. It arose from a recognition of the need to develop leadership on community cohesion, and to adopt a proactive and preventative approach to community relations problems. Working with Mediation Northern Ireland, the Oldham Partnership the programme concerned with three broad issues:

- Conflict prevention – a greater capacity for the prevention of communal conflict.
- Conflict resolution – a greater capacity to respond effectively to any future communal conflict.
- Building Good relations – an ethos and approach shared amongst key practitioners who support the development of effective relationships among individuals and groups who are strategically significant for the social stability of Oldham.

Initially Mediation Northern Ireland were commissioned to deliver a series of development workshops, through which a group of around 35 people from the Council, partner organisations and local communities explored a range of difficult issues, including segregation and policing, under “Chatham House rules. Further work was then done with civic leaders – from the Council, partner organisations and people active in communities - to strengthen leadership on community cohesion.

Most recently, a group of 26 people, drawn from the Council and other statutory and voluntary organisations, have undertaken training in conflict awareness and intervention skills. This has provided a cadre of people with mediation skills, who can assist in preventing and managing conflict in Oldham – both in their own day-to-day work and as a resource for the Borough as a whole. Over time it is planned to enhance the capacity for preventing and resolving conflict, through both increasing the number of people with such skills, and developing the expertise and experience of this group.

2.0 FINDINGS

- (a) We have been particularly struck by the commitment and determination of the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council. One of our team described this as ‘heroic leadership’. Their leadership has certainly helped to promote Oldham as a cohesive community and there are signs that this is becoming a reality. However, we were concerned that others - both within the Council and amongst its partners – felt that they needed to do very little. In other words, that the

leadership of the Leader and Chief Executive seemed to promote a dependency culture where others did not feel empowered to take things forward themselves. Clearly, this must change. All sections of the statutory, voluntary and business sector must be much more active and prepared to champion change for themselves – not only within the Oldham Partnership but also in their own organisations and sectors.

- (b) We were uncertain on whether the degree of commitment demonstrated by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive was in practice shared by all elected Members. There was also concern regarding the role and contribution of the Community Strategy and Cohesion Overview and Scrutiny Committee – in particular, whether it ‘added value’ by being proactive in influencing Cabinet policy on cohesion and the extent to which it actively monitored performance against milestones and targets.
- (c) Notwithstanding the progress made by the Council and the Oldham Partnership, it was felt by some we interviewed that their leadership was still uncomfortable discussing race issues and tended to be cautious in tackling some of the more deep-seated problems of segregation within the Borough. The explanation most commonly advanced was fear of a white backlash – in particular, that far-right groups might exploit a more radical approach.
- (d) We found that leaders of the Voluntary, Community and Inter-faith sectors were restricted to a small cadre of established representatives who often felt over-stretched and unable to cope with the volume of meetings, reports and requests for consultation. There is a pressing need to widen representation to include women and young people and to invest in the next generation of leadership – including community leaders from largely white estates and outlying areas - possibly through a common programme of residential and other training involving all sectors.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) As part of the process of re-organising the Oldham Partnership more needs to be done in empowering individual Thematic Partnerships to champion change for themselves.
- (2) The role and function of Oldham’s MBC Community Strategy and Cohesion Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be reviewed to determine how it could best ‘add value’ to the policy debate and play a more decisive role in driving performance.
- (3) Consideration should be given to developing a common leadership programme in which participants from local government, the public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors come together. Particular emphasis should be given to involving more women and

young people with the clear objectives of widening and empowering the present leadership and also developing the next generation of leaders.

- (4) Elected Members should also receive training on how they might better contribute to building cohesive communities locally – through Area Committees - and in respect of their roles on Scrutiny Commissions.
- (5) The Voluntary, Community and Inter-Faith sectors and BME Network should be challenged to demonstrate how representation could be widened and mechanisms developed to capture the contribution of women and youth.

SECTION VII

1.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

- 1.1 Oldham has traditionally been a low wage, low skill economy. At the time of the disturbances, Oldham was the 38th most deprived of 354 local authorities areas in England, with seven wards in the 10% most deprived. While deprivation affects many within the borough, it impacts most severely on youth and the BME population.
- 1.2 In tackling deprivation, Oldham has been very successful in attracting UK and EU regeneration funding. Much of this funding is area based and a major concern at the time of the disturbances was the lack of an overall regeneration strategy for the borough in addition to the deep resentment felt by sections of the white community that only Asian areas ever benefited from regeneration funding.
- 1.3 Since the disturbances, Oldham MBC and its partners have invested in comprehensive baseline surveys and assessments more accurately mapping the borough's economy and key challenges for the future. Amongst the many findings – the following are particularly worthy of note:
- * With the decline and virtual disappearance of the textile industry, the borough has been successful in diversifying its manufacturing base, which still accounts for 23% of employment compared to 15% nationally.
 - * In maintaining and even increasing overall employment, the borough has seen significant growth in construction, the service sector, food, publishing, electrical and medical equipment.
 - * However, much of the growth experienced has not been at the value end of the sectors concerned and the Borough still has a concentration of employment in business areas forecast to decline nationally, many of which require few skills and pay low wages.²²
- 1.4 With change and diversification, there is evidence that Oldham's economy and its local communities have benefited in recent years. Oldham has moved from the 38th most deprived local authority area in England in 2000 to the 43rd most deprived in 2004. In respect of the concentration of deprivation in particular wards, Oldham has moved from the 18th most deprived in the 2000 Indices of Deprivation to the 26th most deprived in 2004. Over the same period, unemployment rates have also declined, as has the gap between the Borough's most and least deprived wards.²³

²² Oldham Beyond – A Vision for the Borough of Oldham. A report by URBED, Comedia, S333, King Sturge and WSP. April 2004

²³ Forward Together: Building Community Cohesion In Oldham. Impact & Outcomes. 2004

2.0 FINDINGS

- (a) We found that the Council and the Oldham Partnership have made a concerted and determined effort to tackle economic regeneration since the disturbances in 2001. In ‘Oldham Beyond’, the Oldham Partnership sets out a comprehensive and challenging fifteen-year vision for the renaissance of the Borough as:

‘A confident place, at ease with itself and celebrating in its diverse communities and landscapes – from the tight-knit terraced communities to the wild moors and valley villages to the east. A Borough that is proud of its industrial past but which has reinvented its economy by making the most of the creativity and drive of its young people. The world will see the borough as a place transformed and people will be attracted to live and work in the borough by the quality of life that it offers and by its reputation for tolerance and diversity.’

- (b) Six themes underpin this vision - Wealth Creation, Liveability, A Learning Community, Common Ground, Sustainability and New Oldham. Some of the key proposals under these themes include.

- * Getting the basics right – better street cleansing, improved services and support to existing business.
- * Promoting two major new business locations – at the Hollinwood M62 and A62 Junction and the Mumps Enterprise area within Oldham Town Centre.
- * An inter-cultural borough - through new ways of addressing ethnic diversity based on communities identifying differences on the one hand alongside what unites them on the other. The Housing Market Renewal process is expected to make a major contribution to this process in helping to breakdown ethnic segregation – particularly in Werneth/Freehold, but also by creating Zones of Exchange or common spaces where Asian and white communities can meet and trade.
- * An educated population based on the new University Centre but also by tackling educational achievement in secondary schools.
- * Attracting people to settle in the borough and improving links with Manchester through the extension of Metrolink,

- (c) We found that there was widespread support for the vision and strategy set out in ‘Oldham Beyond’.

- (d) In response to the misplaced historical resentment expressed by sectors of the white communities that only Asian areas benefited from regeneration funding, Oldham has adopted a new thematic and needs based approach to its regeneration programme, replacing its former

area based approach. However, this change of emphasis was not as yet fully understood or accepted.

- (e) The Oldham Partnership continues to experience problems in engaging the Business Sector – particular the borough’s large employers – in both the Economic and wider Partnership.
- (f) Concerns were expressed amongst those Partnership representatives we interviewed that the Economic Partnership tends to work in a silo and did not value sufficiently the potential contribution of the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- (g) While community cohesion is central to ‘Oldham Beyond’, there was little evidence of a rationale and programme indicating how all communities would benefit. In addition to youth across the Borough and the economic isolation of some white estates, the Asian workforce has not been as successful as others in penetrating some of the new growth sectors in the local economy. Birmingham, for example, sees the increasing diversity of its workforce as presenting ‘opportunities and challenges to everyone in the city - for business as much as for public services’. Its community strategy goes on to state that ‘for businesses, increasing diversity is creating new markets and bringing new perspectives; as employers recognise, it also presents challenges - for example, for recruitment and employment practices. A range of initiatives, such as DiverCity, shows how employers are recognising these benefits and tackling these challenges’.
- (h) Not only is the ethnic composition of Oldham’s population projected to change over the next two decades, so also is the composition of its workforce. The proportion of the population of working age who are white is projected to fall from 87% in 2001 to 73.5% by 2021. While the proportion of the BME population of working age are projected to rise from 11.5% in 2001 to 23.8%. The potential risk is population change overtaking the pace of change within the local economy and communities feeling increasingly left out of Oldham’s renaissance.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) In developing a comprehensive economic development strategy for the borough, Oldham MBC and the Economic Partnership will need to demonstrate how they intend to tackle race equality and the gap between Oldham’s least and most deprived wards. This is all the more pressing given projected changes in the composition of Oldham’s population and workforce over the next two decades. Rather than a negative, a diverse, cosmopolitan and cohesive community can be a positive factor in attracting inward investment to the benefit of all. Oldham needs to determine how this can be turned into a competitive advantage.

- (2) Some of the main sectors in which the local economy has grown in recent years - e.g. construction – appear to have little appeal to the borough’s Asian workforce. More needs to be done in encouraging and equipping the Asian working population – and in particular Asian women - to widen their employment opportunities.
- (3) Oldham MBC has made significant progress in increasing the diversity of its workforce since 2001.²⁴ Indeed, the Council recently achieved level three of the Equality Standard for Local Government. This needs to be sustained and replicated amongst partner organisations – particularly at senior and management levels.
- (4) At the time of our interviews steps were already being taken by the Economic Partnership to identify new ways of engaging with the wider business sector. Given the importance of this sector in breaking down long-standing employment and occupational barriers within the borough, we would urge a continued and sustained effort in this respect.
- (5) Much more needs to be done in communicating Oldham’s’ thematic and needs based approach to regeneration and how - in fact - regeneration funds are allocated.
- (6) The Economic Partnership will need to address concerns with regards working more closely with other Partnerships and in particular how it could tap the potential contribution of the Voluntary, Community and Inter-Faith Sectors.
- (7) The Economic Partnership should consider how it could better promote Oldham’s economic profile at Greater Manchester and regional level.

²⁴ The percentage of the Council workforce who are from Black & Minority Ethnic groups has risen from 2.6% in 2001 to 7% at the end of 2005/06.

SECTION VIII

1.0 HOUSING

1.1 Housing is acknowledged as one of the key priorities in Oldham for addressing community cohesion. Access to good affordable housing, which meets the needs of families and individuals regardless of their background and economic circumstances, is a fundamental element to achieving substantial progress in Oldham. In particular tackling the legacy of:

- (i) **Segregation** – with a concentration of BME households in private sector terraced housing in central Oldham, many living in overcrowded conditions and much of the accommodation of a poor standard. This contrasts with peripheral or out of town centre estates, mainly social rented, which are predominantly, if not exclusively, white and seen by many BME families as “no-go” areas.
- (ii) **Dysfunctional Housing Markets** – similar to other northern towns where the oversupply of poor quality, small terraced properties has impacted upon the housing market, and yet different from other areas as abandonment is not evident and land availability for new development is constrained.
- (iii) **Lack of choice** – whereby Oldham’s lack of larger sized accommodation – three bed plus, and a poor supply of good quality suburban-type housing to buy, acts as a disincentive to attract people to move to the area and for others to stay.²⁵

1.2 From this background, the Council and other housing agencies has set out a powerful vision:

*“Oldham’s housing market will be confident and thriving, offering real choice and providing good standard accommodation which meets the needs and aspirations of all who want to live here. Obsolete housing will be eradicated with local people influencing the design and taking more responsibility for the management of neighbourhoods in which they have a stake, and living in harmony in communities which respect diversity in a Borough in which they are proud to reside.”*²⁶

1.3 To turn this vision into reality, Oldham’s approach has been wide ranging:

- * Over 4000 properties have been brought up to Decent Homes standard in the last two years.

²⁵

Forward Together. Building Community Cohesion in Oldham. Oct.2004

²⁶

Oldham’s Community Strategy – Planning for Sustainable Communities 2005-2020

- * Key partnerships are now in place involving Oldham MBC, First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) and Registered Social Landlords operating in the borough.
- * Council tenant satisfaction with its ALMO managing agency - FCHO - has increased.
- * FCHO has a two star Audit Commission inspection rating with promising prospects for the future.
- * Housing Market Renewal plans are underway through Oldham Rochdale Partners in Action with the initial focus on Werneth and Derker where the housing market is weak and dysfunctional.
- * All housing plans and strategies are directly linked to the wider community cohesion strategy.
- * A Private Finance Initiative scheme is planned to improve and upgrade the sheltered housing stock in partnership with Housing 21, including the development of eight special extra care schemes across the borough for the frail elderly.
- * The Tenancy Support Team within FCHO has had considerable success in settling and supporting BME families moving into areas with a low BME presence. The scheme won a RaceActionNet Award in 2005 – a national award scheme recognising innovative work in supporting victims of racial harassment and communities that have been marginalized.
- * There are examples of good practice in establishing mixed communities through AKSA Housing Association, a successful BME Registered Social Landlord in Oldham.
- * There is no dedicated BME Housing strategy – instead BME issues are mainstreamed in the primary housing strategy.
- * “Oldham Beyond” sets out key innovative housing proposals for Oldham Town Centre, redundant mills and disused industrial estates.
- * Housing features as a key element of the Local Area Agreement proposals.

2.0 FINDINGS

- (a) Our review highlighted numerous housing projects and schemes delivered through a variety of agencies all targeted at realising the Vision. Furthermore, housing is acknowledged as a major factor by all partners and parties in addressing segregated communities and thus

critical to addressing community cohesion. However, in sheer “impact” terms, it will be the HMR plans, which will have the most value in Oldham. Over its planned fifteen-year life, the HMR will have the most significant opportunities and robust plans to begin to tackle segregation and the “poor” mix of housing stock. As such it is important that community cohesion is a main theme throughout HMR strategy and plans.

- (b) The HMR programme is still in its infancy and we are aware that the first stages have not been without difficulties, particularly in terms of responding to community concerns. Looking at the Scheme update papers for 2006 – 08, it appears lessons learnt in the early stages are being addressed and certainly there is stronger emphasis on community engagement. That said, balancing the local needs of individual communities against the wider objectives and pressures imposed through HMR whilst taking account of population forecasts, regional demands and economic factors will inevitably be challenging for the Partnership and the individual agencies. What does emerge from the work to date though is a real commitment to be innovative, to be as flexible as the HMR programme allows and to ensure that community views and needs are given high priority not just by the partnership but by contractors and developers who are delivering the programmes.
- (c) At this point in time though, our review would acknowledge the progress made across the range of housing issues which need to be addressed. It has taken some time for HMR to deliver progress ‘on the ground’, but 100 homes are now under construction and 200 have been demolished. However much still needs to be done. While HMR could exert a strategic influence on the local housing market, its influence is likely to be most pronounced in the Borough’s inner wards. This is not the whole picture. Given projected changes in the composition of Oldham’s population over the next two decades, the concern is that the divided nature of settlement in Oldham may continue without a step change in the attitudes of local communities.
- (d) Creating realistic and balanced housing choices for families and individuals where different communities are segregated along ethnic lines is a tough problem. As yet there is not an agreed methodology or set of criteria for measuring the degree to which different communities are geographically clustered by ethnicity. However, there is an emerging body of literature providing some guidance on tackling housing segregation. For example, the Chartered Institute of Housing Guide, the Institute of Public Policy Research reports on ‘New Towns to Growth Areas’ and ‘Gateway People’ and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s work on ‘Mixed Communities’. The Surma Housing Co-operative based in Rochdale has also had some success in this area.

CASE STUDY: “TRANSFORMATION & COHESION” HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PATHFINDER

Promoting community cohesion as one of the six objectives of the Oldham & Rochdale Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder– Transformation & Cohesion. In the Oldham part of the Pathfinder area, the programme is tackling the problems of a “dysfunctional” housing market characterised by:

- A shortage of good quality homes with modern facilities and too many poor quality, older terraced houses. These do not fit existing requirements, never mind meet the future demands of an increasingly diverse population;
- Large single tenure estates with concentrations of empty properties and inappropriate house types;
- Migration out of the Pathfinder area by those who can afford to do so, leaving a concentration of poverty and deprivation;
- Constrained housing choices for the Asian heritage population with overcrowding in some areas and avoidance of some adjacent areas.

Over fifteen years, HMR aims to address these problems through a large scale programme which includes: building thousands of modern, good quality new homes; demolishing some derelict, poor quality or unpopular homes; refurbishing some existing homes; and improving neighbourhood environments.

The programme aims to build in cohesion in a variety of ways:

- supporting housing developments with a mix of properties of different tenures, build type and size, interspersed and all of high quality. This will facilitate the creation of communities which are more integrated in terms of people from different income groups, ethnic groups and family composition. This will, for example, help to reduce concentrations of poverty and deprivation;
- opening up neighbourhoods to each other and to Oldham Town Centre. Many of the HMR neighbourhoods are physically isolated or enclosed by barriers such as the by-pass, the railway line, cul-de-sacs, etc. The masterplans for Werneth and Derker aim to open up those neighbourhoods and increase their permeability, and provide safe, attractive areas for people to meet and interact, such as homezones;
- supporting communities through the difficult process of change. A Community Links Team are working with the HMR Neighbourhoods Teams to support the engagement of all sections of the community in HMR (including, for example, young people and Asian women), provide support for vulnerable residents including older people and people moving into “non traditional areas”, and using leisure and social activities to build contacts between residents from different neighbourhoods and different parts of the community. Community Links is part of the mechanism for tackling problems of myths and misinformation about HMR.

The HMR programme has delivered on its programme in the first two years and change is now starting to be visible in Oldham. For example, around 100 homes are now under construction in Derker and Coppice, over 300 properties have been acquired for redevelopment and detailed planning is in progress for the second phase of the programme.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Oldham's approach to tackling ingrained segregation in housing needs to go beyond the Housing Market Renewal project. A long-term strategy should be developed founded on a positive and compelling vision for the future of Oldham with more integrated communities. This must cover all housing areas and will require widening the involvement of Registered Social Landlords, private sector landlords and local estate agents. But RSLs also have a key contribution to make in being far more active in developing imaginative community cohesion programmes in their own housing areas. Rather than reacting to population change, Oldham's approach will need to be pro-active – particularly in winning the confidence of local communities.
- (2) Supply pressures arising from the HMR programme i.e. providing decant accommodation, will need to be tackled if this is not to frustrate process in building community cohesion.
- (3) More should be done in tackling the concerns of, and involving resident groups in the HMR progress.
- (4) Workforce representation issues within housing organisations still need to be addressed.

SECTION IX

1.0 EDUCATION AND LEARNING

- 1.1 A key focus of Oldham's approach to community cohesion has been in the field of education and learning. "One Borough, Forward Together" acknowledges the aim of:

"A borough which gives everyone a chance to live, work study and enjoy life together when and where we choose."

- 1.2 Whilst recognising the scale of the task, all educational bodies in Oldham appear strongly committed to positive change and in recent years not only have positive OFSTED reports been achieved for the LEA, Oldham College, Oldham 6th form College and the Youth Service, but also many projects and initiatives have achieved wider recognition including:

- * The Schools Links Project.
- * Oldham College's Celebrating Diversity Competition.
- * The Youth Club twinning project.
- * Establishment of the new University Centre.
- * Positive outreach projects between colleges and schools.
- * Oldham College's partnership with Tameside College in developing an Asian Underachievers programme.

- 1.3 There is also a high degree of co-operation and joint working between the different organisations and across Council Departments where the client group is common, for example, Social Services working with the Oldham Mosques Council and the Oldham Inter Faith Forum to develop a training programme that supports people who teach or care for children, about issues of child protection. The programme is delivered through a newly established multi-faith parenting forum and gives parents and Imams advice on how to listen to children, how to involve children in decisions that affect them, how to encourage good behaviour with consistency and by remaining calm, and how to develop a praise and reward system. Training extends to parents and religious leaders who work with children across Islamic, Christian and Hindu faiths. Initial courses have been with Madrassas, Islamic schools with thirty-two Imams and teachers taking part.

- 1.4 Similarly, special training projects seek to tackle some of the underlying tensions – the Anti Discriminatory Practice Programme, promoting positive identities in children drawing on black perspectives, also sexuality, religion and culture programmes. Similar work is delivered through a proactive Youth Service and its network of twenty-two youth clubs and projects across the borough including three mobile youth clubs. In addition plans for a new inter-cultural secondary school aimed at mainstreaming community cohesion are both ambitious and demonstrate commitment to change.

- 1.5 Perhaps even more significant is the evidence of commitment and focus on sustaining projects over the long-term. For example, the Unity Project, which is funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) until 2007 and currently involves over fifty primary and secondary schools in a twenty-week programme. Altogether some twelve hundred young people from years 5-7 have taken part. The value is recognised and it is hoped that once NRF ceases, the programme will continue through mainstream funding by schools.
- 1.6 Likewise the emphasis of both Colleges and the LEA in encouraging and supporting more people into Further and Higher Education is important. For example, the Junior University programme provides mentoring and other support for pupils to help them improve their GCSE attainment and improve progression into further and higher education. This links to new initiatives such as the Oldham University Centre partnership with Huddersfield University, or the outreach work by the colleges working in local communities, all recognise the importance of raising attainment levels of future generations as a key aspect of promoting community cohesion.

2.0 FINDINGS

- 2.1 In terms of promoting positive approaches to cultural differences, the educational establishments are playing leading roles. The Schools Link Project which started in October 2000 with six primary schools under the Racial Harmony & Diversity programme, was increased substantially after the 2001 disturbances and has expanded in terms of focus and range of activities – which include art, drama, outdoor activities and the environment. The project has also developed some degree of parental involvement and whilst there is little evidence of increased contact between children of different cultures outside of school, the expansion of the programme is positive and this could well be emerging as an area of best practice. In secondary schools, a project around mediation based on the Northern Ireland model has been established. The overall aim of the mediation initiative is that the young people involved will themselves become facilitators for workshops in Oldham Secondary schools and will eventually contribute to expanding the number and range of future community leaders. Possible ways of further extending the Links Project seem sensible e.g. encouraging teacher swaps, stronger links between urban and rural schools and working class and middle class schools.
- 2.2 Emerging and innovative practice in this respect from other part of the country would include the ‘Shared Spaces’ initiative in Bradford - promoting positive encounters and respect for difference through visits to places of worship. The DVDs and CD-ROMs created for the project is used by teachers and pupils in participating schools with very positive results. We would also point to a programme for twinning between predominantly mono-cultural schools in Peterborough. This programme includes workshops from brainstorming cross-cultural issues and lessons exchanges. The School Development and Support Agency is also researching the potential of the schools curriculum to reflect the experiences of African Caribbean and Muslim pupils - CREAM.

CASE STUDY: OLDHAM SCHOOL LINKING PROJECT

Although there has been an increase in the number of ethnically diverse primary schools in Oldham, most still have pupil populations which are either disproportionately either White or of Asian heritage. The Oldham School Linking Project was established (prior to the disturbances in 2001) as a means of providing interaction between children with different cultural backgrounds, to compensate for the absence of integrated schools.

The project involves pairing schools of significantly different ethnic intakes from different geographical areas and devising programmes of activity, which allow children to meet and share a range of positive experiences both within the schools and off site. The process of coming together allows the children to begin to gain an understanding of each other's culture and identity – their differences and their similarities. Racism can impact on children's attitudes at a very young age and it is crucial to build the foundations of trust and friendship before attitudes crystallise. Through the linking project relationships can be forged not only between children but also between teaching staff, governing bodies and parents.

Starting with 6 primary schools in 2000, the project now involves 50 of Oldham's 95 primary schools, and 7 secondary schools. It has given nearly 4000 children opportunities to meet and mix with those of a different social and cultural background. The project is delivered through a partnership between schools and Councils, with the involvement of a wide range of other organisations including: M6 Theatre Company, Opera North, Royal Exchange Theatre and Gallery Oldham..

The Council commissioned a local evaluation of the work, and latterly has also involved Manchester University in this. Schools and pupils are generally highly positive about the opportunities the project provides. Many parents offer positive support for the project, though there has been some resistance to it. A number of primary school Ofsted reports have commented favourably upon the linking work. For example:

“The Linking Schools Project has given pupils a close link with a local primary school which has a high multi-ethnic intake. This relationship has given pupils from both schools the opportunity to be involved in joint...activities which have greatly helped in raising pupil's awareness of the cultural diversity of the local community and is helping to break down barriers.” Limeside Primary School Ofsted Report, February 2004.

It is as yet too early to tell what impact the project is having in influencing the attitudes of Oldham's children and young people.

- 2.3 Looking at these trends across the range of educational establishments is equally important. For example within the 6th Form College some 80% of attendees now go onto Higher Education. In turn, this has supported the establishment of the University Centre. In Oldham College, the Celebrating Diversity competition now attracts three to four hundred students to produce artistic and drama pieces. Also the Oldham College outreach work is having a

marked effect in attracting people from BME communities to engage in Further Education through local community facilities.

- 2.4 The different educational providers come together through the Lifelong Learning Partnership, which ensures a very strong approach to joined-up working and planning of services. The Forum is also looking to strengthen links with the Business sector, with particular programmes such as Skills for Life and Modern Apprenticeships being developed to meet local business needs.
- 2.5 Overall performance and attainment levels continue to improve and whilst levels of attainment for Bangladeshi and Pakistani male students are less than others, even that trend is improving. Of particular importance is the work of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Team in developing curriculum materials aimed at promoting community cohesion learning and discussion in schools.
- 2.6 Certainly the educational sector appears to be very positive and proactive in tackling the underlying issues and promoting the community cohesion agenda. That remains important, but despite all the progress and successes, some stakeholders believe that there are still significant problems to address. For example, the Oldham Trade Union Congress (OTUC) in its written submission to our review drew attention to the ‘preponderance of Oldham schools dominated by one ethnicity’ and one area in which schools were either entirely populated by pupils of either Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage. In the view of the OTUC, even where schools had mixed intakes, conflict and division still occurred between pupils and much remained to be done in resolving these issues.²⁷
- 2.7 Our own findings were somewhat less pessimistic, though there were clear echoes of these views in our interviews and focus groups with young people. We would agree that tensions do still exist and need to be addressed, along with other factors such as the absence of Church Schools in the Local Learning partnership. Also the need for the HMR programme to work closely with educational providers as choice of schools may influence future housing markets. Finally, the implications of population change within schools and local communities are likely to have a significant impact in Oldham.

²⁷

Community Cohesion In Oldham: What Progress since 2001? A Report by Oldham Trades Union Council submitted to Ted Cantle. December 2005.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) There is evidence that the degree of segregation in Oldham's primary and secondary schools in overall terms is changing for the better with six primary schools becoming less diverse but fourteen secondary schools becoming more diverse in recent years. These changes would appear to be the result of shifts in the pattern of settlement within the Borough. However, if this trend is to continue, a long-term and determined approach is needed which goes beyond twinning and related activities. Proposed new schools need to be attractive to all communities. In addition, much more needs to be done in engaging and involving parents from all communities in school based community cohesion initiatives such as the Link Project. Consideration should also be given to other ways of building bridges between schools including more teacher swaps and pupils of different schools coming together across a wider range of subject, sport and leisure activities. The ultimate aim must be to create more mixed intake schools in which there is a sustained programme to tackle conflict and division in addition to building bridges between schools dominated by a single ethnicity with particular emphasis on the potential contribution of children and parental networks.
- (2) Oldham MBC and the Learning Partnership should renew their efforts to involve established faith schools in tackling segregation and community cohesion. Without the participation of these schools, whether intended or not, the impression is given that segregation is acceptable.
- (3) Oldham MBC and the Learning Partnership will need to give particular attention to increasing the representation of BME governors on School Governing Boards and also in challenging existing Boards on how they can contribute to building community cohesion in the future.
- (4) There is a pressing need to improve the representation of BME teachers in Oldham's schools and colleges.

SECTION X

1.0 POLICING

- 1.1 In the strategy “One Borough, Forward Together” one of the key aims is to provide:

“A Borough in which people feel safe and secure.”

- 1.2 As with many other aspects of life in Oldham considerable energy has gone into turning this aim into reality and, based on published information and interviews, substantial progress has been made.
- 1.3 Of particular note is the establishment of the Community Reassurance project, which began as a pilot in St Mary’s and Failsworth West focussing on swift action to tackle litter, graffiti, abandoned vehicles and fly-tipping and is now being rolled out to the whole borough. The project has received national recognition and relies on effective local planning and working between the police, the local authority and local communities.
- 1.4 For Oldham, the experiences gained from the Community Reassurance project has informed more recent developments around neighbourhood working and when linked with other local initiatives – on the street policing, closer working with local communities through Area Committees, introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and the use of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) – the borough has seen a steady reduction in crime, for example a 17% fall in overall crime reported since April 2005.
- 1.5 Within the overall figures there are specific trends worthy of note:
- * violent crime reduced in the last three years
 - * 36% reduction in domestic burglary in 2004/05
 - * 52% decrease in vehicle crime
 - * reported hate crime reduced from 1350 in 2001 to 450 in 2005.
- 1.6 The progress made in Oldham has resulted in the borough being recently designated an ASBO Action Area by the Home Office, due to its successful approach to tackling nuisance problems.
- 1.7 In part, the success achieved by Oldham has been a result of the introduction of sixty Police Community Support Officers, (nineteen of which are funded by the Council), with many recruited from within local communities and seen more as community support rather than police representatives.
- 1.8 Perhaps a more accurate barometer of progress in this area was the feedback from the recent “Listen and Learn” sessions undertaken by the Council Leader and Chief Executive. Most meetings reported a broad appreciation of the improvement in many aspects of policing and community safety. However, young Muslim groups raised concerns about drug dealing and abuse and the

impact this was having on families and communities. Most of those participating in these sessions thought that a great deal could be achieved through the police working more closely with local people. One of the recommendations arising from the “Listen & Learn” sessions was that a senior Council Officer and a leading Police Officer should revisit several of the communities that were particularly concerned about policing and community safety issues. They would review existing practices with the local community with the intention of drawing up specific plans to address the identified problems of those neighbourhoods. Initial focus is to be on Primrose Bank, Royton, Westwood, South Chadderton, Failsworth, Glodwick and Werneth.

- 1.9 In terms of partnership working, whilst some concerns were expressed at the lack of Police involvement at strategic borough-wide level, their role was acknowledged - and indeed praised - at working locally. Policing structures have been remodelled around Area Committee boundaries, as have the Police Community Support Officers.
- 1.10 At a service specific level, the Police working in partnership with the Local Authority and other key partners through the Oldham Against Crime Partnership, appears strong. Also joint working through the various teams – Community Safety Unit, Anti-Social Behaviour Team, and Crime Reduction Team – is similarly strong and has led to a range of initiatives including alley gating, Street Safe, Cab Safe and Student Safe. Similarly government funding has been used with good effect in creating safer neighbourhoods e.g. the New Deal for Communities funded Police Team.
- 1.11 The Police themselves acknowledge that much remains to be done, for example, the local force does not reflect local communities and there is no local recruitment approach other than for Police Community Support Officers.
- 1.12 Some criticism has been made that the Police treat all incidents with BME involvement as racist crime. The police acknowledge there are concerns on how such crimes are classified and work is ongoing to ensure the system is compliant with the National Crime Recording system. Also steps have been taken to review reporting practices and locations and that they are well publicised with communities. The police also acknowledge more work is needed to address cultural issues within the Force and recognise that whilst they have good networks within white communities they find it difficult to engage with BME communities. These issues are considered by the Racist Crimes and Incidents Task Force and the Hate Incidents Management Group, which meets regularly and is attended by the Police, the Council, Oldham Race Equality Partnership and others.

2.0 FINDINGS

- 2.1 The Community Reassurance model has been a notable success and the lessons of engagement with local communities and local planning to meet particular needs and priorities are lessons which can have a wider application in taking forward community cohesion.
- 2.2 The restructuring of Police operational boundaries to be co-terminus with the Council's Area Committees will also improve local working. More importantly, it is a clear demonstration of partnership working, which has been evidenced by local communities.
- 2.3 The meetings to assess disorder risks across the borough and the involvement of key partners in these meetings has added value and demonstrates good practice in a joined-up approach between key agencies through sharing information.
- 2.4 The development of the Police Community Support Officer resource has been speedy and effective at local level. The financial support to increase this resource to enable full ward coverage is to be commended.
- 2.5 That said it is noted that neither PCSOs nor the regular Police Force are representative of the local communities they serve and this should be an area for further review and action.
- 2.6 Whilst criticism of the Police involvement at a strategic level was noted in the course of our review it was also acknowledged that this is starting to change at a senior level and should be encouraged.
- 2.7 It was also noted that there is no Independent Advisory Group in Oldham (as recommended by the McPherson report into the death of Stephen Lawrence) and further consideration should be given to such a forum rather than the ad-hoc arrangements that currently exist in engaging with community leaders.

CASE STUDY: TACKLING AND PREVENTING HATE INCIDENTS

In the months preceding the 2001 disturbances in Oldham there was a substantial rise in the number of racially motivated attacks and other incidents. Since then the Police, Council and other partners have worked closely to improve systems for reporting and responding to these, and to develop ways of anticipating and preventing potential community relations problems. Some examples of the work in Oldham are:

- an inter-agency Hate Incident Management Group (HIMG) meets weekly to assess the threat of disorder, review hate incidents and identify any additional action which is needed. This takes account of local, national and international issues which potentially impact upon community relations in Oldham. If a significant risk is identified action is taken to prevent any escalation of problems. Particular examples of this are in response to a serious assault on a young White man in August 2004, and in the period following the London bombings in July 2005;
- an annual “There’s No Place for Racism in Oldham” campaign, which aims to raise awareness of the issue, and is used to publicise the systems for reporting racist incidents;
- An independent Racial Harassment project based at Oldham Race Equality Partnership;
- as part of a wider “Cabsafe” project, working to reduce the attacks and abuse faced by taxi and private hire drivers. For example, work has been done to respond to problems linked to customers of particular pubs and to deter attacks and improve conviction rates using in-car CCTV systems;
- support for Asian heritage tenants of First Choice Homes Oldham moving into estates where almost all the tenants are white. The support available prior to a move includes accompanied viewings, introductions to neighbours and residents groups, and security surveys of properties. Regular on-going contact is provided in the period following the start of a tenancy, and there is an Out of Hours Support Service for victims of Racial Harassment.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Oldham’s local Police Force now needs to develop an overall rationale and approach to winning the confidence of all Oldham’s communities. This will be particularly important if the Police is to make significant progress in tackling Oldham’s youth gangs and drugs problem.
- (2) The establishment of an Independent Advisory Group on Policing in Oldham should be considered as a priority.
- (3) Ways of ensuring that the local Police Force better reflect the communities it serve should be addressed.

SECTION XI

1.0 COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND ENGAGEMENT

1.1 Following the initial desktop review and, in particular, rereading the many reports on the 2001 disturbances, the Review Team were firmly of the view that engaging communities and changing community attitudes continues to be of central - if not - critical importance to building Community Cohesion in Oldham.

1.2 In this context, the report of the Oldham Independent Review in 2001 noted that:

*‘There are huge challenges in this report for policy makers and programme managers; for major institutions such as the Council and the Police, housing associations, the Health Authority and the Government, but above all for people’s own attitudes. It is very easy to point at an institution and say “You must change”, and we certainly do not duck from saying that where it is necessary. However, one of the most striking things we encountered in Oldham was people’s propensity from all communities, to say “The Council must do this, the Council must provide additional resources here, the Council must organise us to do something”. There is a willingness to put responsibility unto the shoulders of officialdom, which too easily can be a reason for people not to shape up to their own responsibilities, beginning with their own attitudes. People must be prepared to look hard and honestly at these and where they need to change to decide to change them and then do so’.*²⁸

1.3. The Cattle Report into Community Cohesion in 2001 similarly noted that:

*‘It is easy to focus on systems, processes and institutions and to forget that community cohesion fundamentally depends on people and their values’.*²⁹

1.4 As a consequence, we thought it important to canvass opinions and views from all of Oldham’s main communities through focus groups, interviews and informal discussions in a variety of settings. A full list of the groups involved is to be found in Appendix 1.

1.5 We also wanted to find out what had been done to engage communities, tackle polarisation and whether there was any objective evidence of change in community attitudes.

2.0 FINDINGS

²⁸ Oldham Independent Review – One Oldham One Future. December 2001

²⁹ Community Cohesion. Report of the Independent Review Team. Chaired by Ted Cattle. Home Office 2002.

- 2.1 We found that a great deal of the impetus for change immediately following the disturbances originated in the voluntary and community sector. Not only did this drive development of community cohesion initiatives and an overall vision for the borough, it also helped transform the way in which the Council worked in partnership and with communities.
- 2.2 The sector has recently reorganised with the establishment of a new Voluntary, Community and Faith Partnership supported by Voluntary Action Oldham. These new bodies have replaced VOICE and ODACA (Oldham Development Agency for Community Action). It is also to be noted that both the Oldham's BME Network and Inter-Faith Forum are active within the new Partnership.
- 2.3 Reference has already been made recognising the extensive involving of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Partnership (VCFP) across Oldham's Thematic Partnerships. Significantly, this includes representation on the Panel responsible for taking decisions on Neighbourhood Renewal and European funding. Moreover, both the BME Network and organisations within the VCFP are now represented on the Council's Leader Advisory Group on Equalities and Oldham's BME Network now provides representatives for the Council's Ethnic Minority Panel. However, concerns were expressed regarding the capacity of the VCFP to exercise strategic leadership within both the sector and the Oldham Partnership.
- 2.4 Representatives of community and voluntary sector organisations also expressed concern that the shift in policy emphasis regarding Main Programme Grant and Regeneration Funding in favour of community cohesion could disadvantage organisations focused upon meeting the needs of specific ethnic groups. This was not an objection in principle. Organisations – particularly those based on a single ethnic group or nationality and many long established - wanted more information on the implications of community cohesion and more time to adjust.
- 2.5 Looking beyond the organised Voluntary, Community and Faith sector, Oldham MBC and its Partners have taken steps to promote respect for diversity amongst the wider community through events like the 'Festival of Light' celebrating Diwali, Eid and Christmas. Other activities include a Diversity Festival, the Oldham Mela and 'Party in the Park' – a May Bank Holiday weekend event celebrating the reopening of a transformed Alexandra Park, previously characterised in the local press as a 'no-go' area for white people.
- 2.6 Crucially, Oldham has also recognised that community cohesion cannot be built simply by valuing only the contribution and cultural heritage of BME communities. Research commissioned by the Community Cohesion Partnership in 2003, highlighted feelings of resentment and fear within the white community that their cultural heritage was being overlooked.³⁰

³⁰ Research into Community Cohesion – commissioned by the Community Cohesion Partnership and Oldham MBC. Jennie Lynn 2003

2.7 In a borough where neighbourhood and district identity and allegiance commonly take precedence over identification with the borough as a whole, it is not difficult to see how this could act as a major constraint in building community cohesion and tackling segregation.

2.8 The Council and the Oldham Partnership have addressed this issue by opting for a strategy aimed at turning a negative into a positive. Outlined most clearly in its Community Strategy but also evident in other key policy documents, Oldham envisages:

‘A Borough of diverse neighbourhoods, smaller towns and villages, each with its own vibrant centre creating a sense of community and providing local services. To symbolise this, the heart of each of these communities will have been’ marked’ with a landmark building, public space or sculpture. These communities will be proud of their history but will welcome people from different backgrounds and there will a much broader ethnic mix throughout the Borough. There will, however, be neighbourhoods that remain Asian in character. These will be part of Oldham’s appeal because their shops and restaurants attract people from across the Borough and further afield.’³¹

2.9 A key instrument by which this vision could be delivered is through Oldham’s network of Area Committees. From speaking to Area Managers and other officers, we found good evidence to indicate that key agencies across the public sector were working well together at area level. However, there was little evidence of Area Committees tackling community cohesion and the vision outlined in the Community Strategy in a consistent and systematic way. In addition, while Area Committees were clearly part of the Council’s internal structure, they were expected to act as local partnerships, though few had developed the necessary scope of representation.

2.10 Oldham MBC is currently looking at its overall approach to devolving decision-making and service delivery down to local level.³² In developing policy in this respect, it is critical that the potential of Area Committees and Neighbourhood Forums to building community cohesion across Oldham’s many divides is recognised. For example, the ‘OUR PART’ (Participating Action Research Team) initiative in Northumberland trains local residents to design and carry out research on local issues that affect policy decisions in their communities. Team members include young people and adults from different backgrounds coming together to tackle common problems.

2.11 At grassroots level, we found many instances of good work being done to build bridges between communities. Examples would include the Council’s Youth and Sports Development Service in forging positive links and shared identities between young people across the borough. Also Mediation Northern Ireland and their work to equip elected Councillors and staff with skills to conduct difficult conversations and negotiations in tense localities. Similarly,

³¹ Oldham’s Community Strategy – Planning for Sustainable Communities 2005-2020. The Oldham Partnership.

³² Introducing Localism. Report of the Head of Corporate Policy. Oldham MBC October 2005.

the Peacemaker Community Project and its work with young people of school and college age to tackle racism, stereotypes, myths and misconceptions. The work being done by Fatima Women's Association in equipping women from different backgrounds with the confidence and skills to engage at a local level is also worthy of mention.

2.12 Our own interviews, informal discussions and focus groups with residents identified a number of issues.

- (a) There was little grass roots understanding of the 'Oldham Beyond' strategy or how it was going to improve neighbourhoods. Communication was seen as weak, with community organisations given little up to date information about changes afoot and the impact of initiatives. Even when there was some understanding of community cohesion, people were not clear about how to engage others from different backgrounds or communities. But they were strongly of the opinion that a bottom up approach is a 'must'.

'Rely on the trustworthiness of local workers and use them in a professional way to get across the difficult and complex messages. Word of mouth is much better than glossy publications.'

(Werneth resident)

'Cohesion work is a two way street. Don't look for a one size fits all set of solutions. You won't find one'.

(Werneth resident)

- (b) There was a particular concern that equalities issues seemed to be relegated in significance within the community cohesion agenda, for example the difficult issue of a thematic needs based as opposed to area based approach to funding. This was highlighted in many focus groups and was a source of real anxiety for some.
- (c) Capacity building was also seen as a major issue for voluntary organisations providing services to local communities.
- (d) Concern was expressed that some present community leaders are only representing their biraderi and sect rather than the whole community in their areas.

'If the Asian communities are not cohesive then how can we promote community cohesion with white communities'

(Asian Women Focus Group)

An additional concern with regard leadership within communities was that where 'new faces' were invited to join decision-making boards, it was often without adequate training or support.

- (e) Women highlighted language barriers and the lack of appropriate childcare as major stumbling blocks in seeking training, employment and attending community events and meetings.
- (f) A common theme was more provision for young people within neighbourhoods.
- (g) Groups drew attention to the need for cultural awareness training within the voluntary and community sector. People wanted to ask questions around faith and culture, but were afraid to do so because it might be thought 'politically incorrect'.
- (h) A focus group with Asian women stressed the need to engage with and encourage the participation of women overall, as community leaders and advocates of change. A voluntary sector women's Forum for all - irrespective of race or background - was suggested. So also was a leadership programme, mentoring, support and advice enabling women to influence change.
- (i) It was encouraging to note that people were pleased with the proactive approach taken by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council with their Listen and Learn Sessions and wanted to see others also taking the lead.

2.13 While many of these messages are positive and constructive, our overall impression and that of the Peer Review team – most from different parts of the country – was that segregation and divisions between Oldham communities is still deeply entrenched. This is as much in the minds of people as in neighbourhood structures and is at odds with experience in many other areas of the country. Hence our view that if you want to change a community, the community must want to change. In short, polarised communities continue to be a significant feature of relations across all sections of Oldham society. For example, a young Muslim mother told us:

“My neighbour is Indian and my Muslim community tell me off for speaking with her. They say, I should speak to her if I am getting her to embrace Islam – otherwise no.”

Similarly, a young white male told us that:

“I have nothing to do with them (Asians) at my college. We have nothing in common and we would not want to get involved with each other. We are happy as we are”.

2.14 This view was reinforced during a focus groups with white, Asian and African Caribbean young people. The team was struck by the extent to which participants accepted segregated schools as a 'given', and even where schools and colleges were mixed, pupils tended to stick to their own ethnic groups.

- 2.15 A focus group with members of the African Caribbean community reported that while they got on with adults in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, this was not the case with the younger generation.
- 2.16 Many participants in our focus groups and informal discussion felt that racism and intolerance was on the increase in some neighbourhoods and needed to be challenged.
- 2.17 Many were also concerned with the growth and rivalry of neighbourhood gangs across all communities and their association with drugs. Further, tensions between urban and rural communities - in particular negative stereotypes – continue to be a feature of Oldham society.
- 2.18 However, there is hard evidence that attitudes within and between communities in Oldham are beginning to change. Comparisons between a 2003 MORI survey and provisional findings from a similar survey in 2005 indicate significant reductions in the percentage of respondents reporting:
- * negative attitudes towards ethnic diversity, and
 - * negative perceptions about inter-ethnic relations within their neighbourhood and the Borough.
- 2.19 Whilst caution must be exercised in making direct comparisons between the findings of both surveys, as neither the individuals nor the range of questions are always the same, there are grounds to indicate shifts in public opinion on the following issues:
- When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that their ‘neighbourhood is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together’, 37% of respondents in 2003 disagreed compared with 20% in 2005.
 - A similar shift in public opinion is indicated in response to the statement ‘having a mix of different people in my neighbourhood makes it a more enjoyable place to live.’ 43% of respondents disagreed in 2003 compared with only 20% in 2005.
 - There has also been some movement in public perceptions of diversity at borough wide level. Asked for their views in response to the statement that ‘Oldham Borough is a place where residents respect ethnic differences between people’, 77% of respondents in 2003 disagreed compared with 51% in 2005.
- 2.20 There would appear to be much less movement in public opinion when asked whether relationships between people of different ethnic backgrounds had changed over the last twelve months. 56% of respondents in both the 2003 and 2005 surveys thought that relations had remained the same or got worse at neighbourhood level. At borough level 76% thought it had remained the same or got worse in 2003 compared with 73% in 2005.

- 2.21 On a more positive note for the future, when asked whether they thought it was possible for people of different backgrounds to get on well together, 58% of respondents answered yes in 2003. By 2005, this percentage had increased to 70%.³³

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) If there is one area we would highlight above all others in building community cohesion for the future, it is involving, engaging and mobilising Oldham's communities to take greater responsibility for change. As an initial event, we would propose a borough wide conference with the objective of 'Challenging Local Communities to Change Oldham'. This might be preceded by a series of local debates in the wards of each Area Committee. The immediate purpose would be to determine how local people, schools, the voluntary, community, faith and other sectors could contribute to building bridges between communities both at local and borough levels. But the larger goal would be Oldham's communities owning the outcomes of local and borough wide debates. Nor should the challenge be restricted to tackling issues across the divide between white and minority ethnic communities. Black and Minority Ethnic participants will have a key role to play in tackling divisions between their own communities. Building bridges between Oldham's urban and rural communities should also not be overlooked and particular emphasis will need to be placed on involving women and youth from all communities.
- (2) Challenging Oldham's communities would be a new shift of emphasis in building cohesion – a new 'bottom-up' approach with far more importance attributed to local communities taking responsibility for shaping and driving change in their localities. Area Committees could have a vital role to play in this process by co-ordinating local debates on community cohesion, turning the local vision into a plan and overseeing its implementation.
- (3) In addition to and also central to the new approach, Oldham MBC and its partners should review the contribution of their current communications strategy to promoting community cohesion. This is not to say that work is not already being done in this respect, principally through 'Forward Together' Newsletters. But many of those we spoke to in focus groups and informal discussions were not aware of Oldham's overall vision or what the Oldham Partnership was trying to achieve. The primary purpose of the review would be to determine how the wider public could be better informed and key messages communicated. But attention should also be given to

³³ Comparisons between the 2005 'You and Your Community Survey' and the Oldham Way 5th Citizens' Panel Survey on Community Cohesion 2003. Oldham MBC March 2006.

challenging people to think about community cohesion and to promoting pride and confidence in a positive vision for Oldham's future – locally and borough-wide. Consideration should be given to branding community cohesion literature and initiatives with an easily identifiable logo or symbol that could be used by the Council, the Oldham Partnership and other stakeholders. Perhaps schools and colleges might be challenged to design this logo through a borough wide competition. . Examples of emerging good practice in this area would include the 'Our City - Our People' campaign in Coventry, which communicates positive messages and images of the city's diverse communities. Evidence from a recent household survey indicates a significant measure of popular support and recognition for the initiative. The 'Media Savvy' project in Stoke-on-Trent is also worthy of note. This involves a six-week training programme empowering community leaders to work with the press and media in producing positive news stories about their communities. The project is funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and supported by local editors.

- (4) Build capacity within the Voluntary and Community sector as a key component in promoting skills, competence, confidence and the capability to change.

SECTION XII

THE WAY FORWARD

This is a listing of all our recommendations from the preceding sections of the report.

Community Cohesion – Vision and Values

- (1) Based on its current vision, values and wide range of activities promoting community cohesion, Oldham now needs to modify its community cohesion strategy and programme - particularly with a view to setting clear strategic objectives, priorities and targets. There should be a clear indication of what is critical to success and a set of core initiatives around which the new programme is built.
- (2) Greater stress needs to be given to tackling inequality within the Borough as a whole whether based on neighbourhoods or ethnicity. It has to be accepted by all that community cohesion initiatives will not succeed while stark inequalities across and between communities remain. However, it is to be noted that community cohesion is an overarching theme in Oldham's round two Local Area Agreement, a major focus of which is reducing inequalities.
- (3) Oldham's commitment to tackling the Borough's problems of segregated communities through an approach based on 'integration and choice' is to be commended. However, this approach needs to go hand in hand with a clear and constant message that segregated communities are an untenable basis upon which to build social cohesion and is likely to be detrimental to the image, quality of life and prosperity of the Borough – particularly when compared to other nearby northern towns. Oldham's approach could also be strengthened by a clear and positive vision of a future for the Borough with more integrated communities. Moreover, the Oldham Partnership and the Council must seek to ensure that real choices exist for individuals and families making decisions in respect of housing and education.
- (4) A major factor in building community cohesion in Oldham over the next two decades will be projected population change within the borough and in particular the relative growth in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage population. The potential risk is that the pace of change in building community cohesion and regenerating the borough may be overtaken by the potential for population change to generate division and conflict. Oldham will need to demonstrate that its vision and strategy for a positive future is at ease with and indeed built on projected changes in the make up of its population.

Partnership Arrangements and Working

- (5) We found that leadership was a key factor in the reported effectiveness of individual existing partnerships but so also was the degree of officer support.

As part of the process of review and change within the Oldham Partnership, attention should be given to how individual Partnerships and Advisory Groups can be supported by partner officers and staff.

- (6) Attention should also be given to breaking down silos between Oldham's Thematic Partnerships.
- (7) Area Committees have the potential to make a major contribution to building community cohesion at local level in the future. It is important that a clear vision is developed for the role of Area Committees in this respect and that their relationship with the Council and the Oldham Partnership is clarified.
- (8) The Oldham Partnership will need to sustain its efforts in developing a framework for evaluating community cohesion projects and programmes with particular emphasis on capturing local learning and rolling out best practice across departments, partner organisations and localities. At a strategic level, there is also a need for a robust performance management framework assessing overall progress against objectives, milestones and targets in a modified community cohesion strategy.

Civic and Community Leadership

- (9) As part of the process of re-organising the Oldham Partnership more needs to be done in empowering individual Thematic Partnerships to champion change for themselves.
- (10) The role and function of Oldham's MBC Community Strategy and Cohesion Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be reviewed to determine how it could best 'add value' to the policy debate and play a more decisive role in driving performance.
- (11) Consideration should be given to developing a common leadership programme in which participants from local government, the public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors come together. Particular emphasis should be given to involving more women and young people with the clear objectives of widening and empowering the present leadership and also developing the next generation of leaders.
- (12) Elected Members should also receive training on how they might better contribute to building cohesive communities locally – through Area Committees - and in respect of their roles on Scrutiny Commissions.
- (13) The Voluntary, Community and Inter-Faith sectors and BME Network should be challenged to demonstrate how representation could be widened and mechanisms developed to capture the contribution of women and youth.

Economic Development and Regeneration

- (14) In developing a comprehensive economic development strategy for the borough, Oldham MBC and the Economic Partnership will need to demonstrate how they intend to tackle race equality and the gap between Oldham's least and most deprived wards. This is all the more pressing given projected changes in the composition of Oldham's population and workforce over the next two decades. Rather than a negative, a diverse, cosmopolitan and cohesive community can be a positive factor in attracting inward investment to the benefit of all. Oldham needs to determine how this can be turned into a competitive advantage.
- (15) Some of the main sectors in which the local economy has grown in recent years - e.g. construction – appear to have little appeal to the borough's Asian workforce. More needs to be done in encouraging and equipping the Asian working population – and in particular Asian women - to widen their employment opportunities.
- (16) Oldham MBC has made significant progress in increasing the diversity of its workforce since 2001. Indeed, the Council recently achieved level three of the Equality Standard for Local Government. This needs to be sustained and replicated amongst partner organisations – particularly at senior and management levels.
- (17) At the time of our interviews steps were already being taken by the Economic Partnership to identify new ways of engaging with the wider business sector. Given the importance of this sector in breaking down long-standing employment and occupational barriers within the borough, we would urge a continued and sustained effort in this respect.
- (18) Much more needs to be done in communicating Oldham's thematic and needs based approach to regeneration and how - in fact - regeneration funds are allocated.
- (19) The Economic Partnership will need to address concerns with regards working more closely with other Partnerships and in particular how it could tap the potential contribution of the Voluntary, Community and Inter-Faith Sectors.
- (20) The Economic Partnership should consider how it could better promote Oldham's economic profile at Greater Manchester and regional level.

Housing

- (21) Oldham's approach to tackling ingrained segregation in housing needs to go beyond the Housing Market Renewal project. A long-term strategy should be developed founded on a positive and compelling vision for the future of Oldham with more integrated communities. This must cover all housing areas and will require widening the involvement of Registered Social Landlords, private sector landlords and local estate agents. But RSLs also have a key

contribution to make in being far more active in developing imaginative community cohesion programmes in their own housing areas. Rather than reacting to population change, Oldham's approach will need to be pro-active – particularly in winning the confidence of local communities.

- (22) Supply pressures arising from the HMR programme i.e. providing decant accommodation, will need to be tackled if this is not to frustrate process in building community cohesion.
- (23) More should be done in tackling the concerns of, and involving resident groups in the HMR progress.
- (24) Workforce representation issues within housing organisations still need to be addressed.

Education and Learning

- (25) There is evidence that the degree of segregation in Oldham's primary and secondary schools in overall terms is changing for the better with six primary schools becoming less diverse but fourteen secondary schools becoming more diverse in recent years. These changes would appear to be the result of shifts in the pattern of settlement within the Borough. However, if this trend is to continue, a long-term and determined approach is needed which goes beyond twinning and related activities. Proposed new schools need to be attractive to all communities. In addition, much more needs to be done in engaging and involving parents from all communities in school based community cohesion initiatives such as the Link Project. Consideration should also be given to other ways of building bridges between schools including more teacher swaps and pupils of different schools coming together across a wider range of subject, sport and leisure activities. The ultimate aim must be to create more mixed intake schools in which there is a sustained programme to tackle conflict and division in addition to building bridges between schools dominated by a single ethnicity with particular emphasis on the potential contribution of children and parental networks.
- (26) Oldham MBC and the Learning Partnership should renew their efforts to involve established faith schools in tackling segregation and community cohesion. Without the participation of these schools, whether intended or not, the impression is given that segregation is acceptable.
- (27) Oldham MBC and the Learning Partnership will need to give particular attention to increasing the representation of BME governors on School Governing Boards and also in challenging existing Boards on how they can contribute to building community cohesion in the future.
- (28) There is a pressing need to improve the representation of BME teachers in Oldham's schools and colleges.

Policing

- (29) Oldham's local Police Force now needs to develop an overall rationale and approach to winning the confidence of all Oldham's communities. This will be particularly important if the Police is to make significant progress in tackling Oldham's youth gangs and drugs problem.
- (30) The establishment of an Independent Advisory Group on Policing in Oldham should be considered as a priority.
- (31) Ways of ensuring that the local Police Force better reflect the communities it serve should be addressed.

Community Attitudes and Engagement

- (32) If there is one area we would highlight above all others in building community cohesion for the future, it is involving, engaging and mobilising Oldham's communities to take greater responsibility for change. As an initial event, we would propose a borough wide conference with the objective of 'Challenging Local Communities to Change Oldham'. This might be preceded by a series of local debates in the wards of each Area Committee. The immediate purpose would be to determine how local people, schools, the voluntary, community, faith and other sectors could contribute to building bridges between communities both at local and borough levels. But the larger goal would be Oldham's communities owning the outcomes of local and borough wide debates. Nor should the challenge be restricted to tackling issues across the divide between white and minority ethnic communities. Black and Minority Ethnic participants will have a key role to play in tackling divisions between their own communities. Building bridges between Oldham's urban and rural communities should also not be overlooked and particular emphasis will need to be placed on involving women and youth from all communities.
- (33) Challenging Oldham's communities would be a new shift of emphasis in building cohesion – a new 'bottom-up' approach with far more importance attributed to local communities taking responsibility for shaping and driving change in their localities. Area Committees could have a vital role to play in this process by co-ordinating local debates on community cohesion, turning the local vision into a plan and overseeing its implementation.
- (34) In addition to and also central to the new approach, Oldham MBC and its partners should review the contribution of their current communications strategy to promoting community cohesion. This is not to say that work is not already being done in this respect, principally through 'Forward Together' Newsletters. But many of those we spoke to in focus groups and informal discussions were not aware of Oldham's overall vision or what the Oldham Partnership was trying to achieve. The primary purpose of the review would be to determine how the wider public could be better informed and key messages communicated. But attention should also be given to challenging people to think about community cohesion and to promoting pride and

confidence in a positive vision for Oldham's future – locally and borough-wide. Consideration should be given to branding community cohesion literature and initiatives with an easily identifiable logo or symbol that could be used by the Council, the Oldham Partnership and other stakeholders. Perhaps schools and colleges might be challenged to design this logo through a borough wide competition.

- (35) Build capacity within the Voluntary and Community sector as a key component in promoting skills, competence, confidence and the capability to change.

KEY POLICY AND OTHER DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Forward Together – Building Community Cohesion in Oldham, Impact and Outcomes. Oldham MBC October 2004.

Oldham Beyond – A Vision for the Borough of Oldham. A report by URBED, Comedia, S333, King Sturge and WSP. April 2004.

The Heart of Oldham – A Masterplan for Oldham Town Centre. A report for Oldham Local Strategic Partnership and North West Development Agency by URBED and S333 with Comedia, King Sturge and WSP. May 2004

Oldham's Community Strategy – Planning for Sustainable Communities 2005 – 2020. Oldham Partnership.

Oldham Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008. Oldham MBC

Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Audit Commission Inspection Report. December 2004.

Population Dynamics within Rochdale and Oldham – Population, household and Social Change. Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research (CCSR). University of Manchester. May 2005.

Draft Oldham Economic Strategy. OMBC. 2005

Oldham Economic Assessment 2005. Report to Oldham Economic Partnership. SQW Ltd – Economic Development consultants.

A Guide to the Oldham Partnership. June 2005.

Striving for Excellence. First Choice Homes. July 2005.

Cottoning On: Addressing Health Inequalities in Oldham. Oldham Primary Care Trust. November 2005.

Forward Together Listen and Learn Programme. Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. February - July 2005 Draft 3.

Community Cohesion In Oldham: What Progress Since 2001? A Report by Oldham Trades Union Council submitted to Ted Cattle. December 2005.

INTERVIEWS

Oldham MBC

Cllr. David Jones	Leader of the Council
Cllr. David Hibbert	Cabinet Member – Regeneration
Cllr. Mohammed Uddin	Opposition spokesperson on Community Cohesion
Cllr. Peter Dean	Cabinet Member – Housing, Partnerships & Cohesion
Cllr. Howard Sykes	Leader of Liberal Democrat Group
Cllr. John Hudson	Leader of Conservative Group
Cllr. Kay Knox	Mayor
Andrew Kilburn	Chief Executive
Mike Chambers	Deputy Chief Executive
Andrew Fletcher	Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate Policy
John Bird	Executive Director – Regeneration
Veronica Jackson	Executive Director – Social Services
Michele Carr	Head of Corporate Policy
Bruce Penhale	Corporate Policy Manager
Craig Russell	Head of Diversity and Cohesion
Margo Kane	Head of Organisational Development
Alan Caddick	Head of Housing Strategy
Ken Rose	Policy and Partnership Co-ordinator for the Economy
Mark Lester	Town Centre Manager
Shashi Mohandas	Area Manager
Lisa MacDonald	Area Manager
Jan Joshi	Area Manager
Zain Khan	Area Manager
Mark Simmons	Area Manager
Richard Gore	Education Department
Katharine Rhodes	Schools Link Project Manager
Neil Gibson	Senior Policy Officer Voluntary Sector
Lisa Stacey	Community Sports Development Manager
Pam Griffin	Principal Youth Officer
Cath Millington	Children’s Fund
Howard Ford	Co-ordinator Children’s Partnership
Shamin Miah	Equality Standard for Oldham MBC
Adele Smail	Community Cohesion Evaluation Officer

Partner Organisations

Rev. Phil Sumner	Acting Chair – Community Cohesion Partnership
Nick Brown	Chair Oldham Partnership and Principal Oldham 6th Form College
Caroline Ball	Chief Supt. – Divisional Commander, Greater Manchester Police
John Taylor	Inspector – Police Local Authority Liaison Officer
John Tummon	Director Oldham Race Equality Partnership
Mohammed Azam	Chair Voluntary Action Oldham
Sue Crabtree	Co-ordinator – Oldham Children and Young People’s Alliance
Moira Blood	Co-ordinator Oldham Housing Investment Partnership
Fazal Rahim	Co-ordinator Oldham Inter-Faith Forum

Bing Findlater	African Caribbean Project and BME Network
Tahmeena Khan	Community Empowerment Team
Alastair Graham	Director Housing Market Renewal Programme
Hugh Broadbent	Chief Executive First Choice Homes Oldham
Abdul Malik Ahad	Deputy Director of Development and Finance – First Choice Homes
Sajjad Hussain	AKSA Housing Association
Raja Miah	Peacemaker Project Oldham
Pasha Shar	Peacemaker Project Oldham
Sharon Wilkinson	Head of Diversity and Cohesion Unit – GONW
Jim Williams	Editor Oldham Evening Chronicle
David Lafferty	Editor Oldham Advertiser
Carol Hopkins	The Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
Elma Plant	Member Voluntary, Community and Faith Partnership and Oldham Partnership Steering Group
Gordon Roscoe	New Deal for Communities – Hathershaw & Fitton Hill
Joyce Hatton	New Deal for Communities – Hathershaw & Fitton Hill
Gareth Barber	New Deal for Communities – Hathershaw & Fitton Hill
Sajjad Hussain	AKSA Housing Association
Paula Bushell	Chief Executive Voluntary Action Oldham
Trevor Taylor	Chairman Coulshaw Green Bowling Club
Alan Higgins	Oldham PCT
Dave Benstead	Chair Economic Partnership and CEO Zetex
Julie Davies	Director of HR - Oldham College.
Joan Griffiths	Director of Student Services and External Communications - Oldham College;
Carl Morrison	Manager Adult & Community Partnerships - Oldham College

FOCUS GROUPS AND INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS

Werneth Youth Alliance
 Derker Community Action Group
 Oldham 6th Form College Students
 South Chadderton Youth Centre
 Fitton Hill/Hathershaw Rugby Club
 Peacemaker Project
 Asian Business Forum
 Coldhurst and Westwood Asian Women's Group
 Fatima Women's Association
 African Caribbean Project
 Ethnic Minority Advisory Panel
 BME Network

ICC Review Team Biographies

Professor Ted Cantle has over 30 years experience in public service spanning a wide range of senior positions in local government but also serving on a number of national bodies. He has led many challenging action research projects and has contributed over two hundred articles and publications on subjects including social capital, housing defects, race and housing, sustainable development, leadership and community cohesion – which is the subject of his new book '*Community Cohesion: A New Framework for Race and Diversity*'.

Ted was Chief Executive at Nottingham City Council from 1990 to 2001. He was Director of Housing at Leicester City Council from 1988 to 1990 and at Wakefield MDC from 1979 to 1983. Between 1983 and 1988, he was Under Secretary at the AMA and has also worked for Manchester City Council.

In August 2001, Ted was appointed by the Home Secretary to Chair the Community Cohesion Review Team and to lead the review the causes of the summer disturbances in a number of northern towns and cities. The Report – known as 'The Cantle Report' was produced in December 2001 and made around seventy recommendations. The concept of 'community cohesion' outlined in the report was subsequently adopted by Government and Ted was asked to chair the Panel which advised Ministers on implementation.

Ted Cantle is presently an Associate Director at the I&DeA and is also a member of the Board of the Environment Agency for England and Wales. In 2005, he established the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo), which is supported by Warwick, Coventry, Leicester and DeMontfort Universities in addition to a number of other partners. The Institute is presently conducting research on a wide range of issues sponsored by various governmental and non-governmental departments and agencies. Ted is also a visiting Professor at Nottingham Trent University and Professor and Chair of the Institute of Community Cohesion. He was awarded the CBE in 2004.

Daljit Kaur is currently on secondment to the Institute of Community Cohesion, where her key role is to work with the public, private and voluntary sectors to provide practical solutions to the Community Cohesion Agenda.

Prior to this Daljit has 18 years work experience in Training and Organisational Development, Human Resources, Equalities and Diversity with Sheffield City Council.

Daljit was also an integral part of the IDeA's Community Cohesion team in Leicester, and assisted the IDeA's work with Blackburn with Darwen, Tameside, Plymouth, Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Brent and Sunderland in identifying strategic priorities and action planning for community cohesion. She also assisted in delivering Modern Member modules on community cohesion and leadership.

She was also the IDeA's advisor for Beacon Councils on the theme of Social Care and worked with Westminster, Tower Hamlets and Gloucestershire Councils. Daljit was also part of the team advising the ODPM on the Race Equality theme for Beacon Councils.

In a voluntary capacity Daljit for the last 15 years has been a strong activist in Sheffield in the following organisations:

- 1 Vice Chair of Black Community Forum Ltd – representing 102 BME affiliated groups.
- 2 Secretary of Black-CARD (Community Agency for Regeneration and Development).
- 3 Secretary Roshni Asian Women's Resource Centre
- 4 Treasurer of Ashianna.
- 5 Board member of Voluntary Action Sheffield.
- 6 Chair of Association of Community Languages.
- 7 Transnational European UDIEX member/advisor on social inclusion on behalf of Sheffield Positive Action Training Consortium.

Her particular interests are in community cohesion, equality and diversity in service areas such as education, employment and housing and in broader areas of social and economic development. She is experienced in community involvement, policy development, service delivery in the area of employment programmes, facilitation and training and development.

She is a graduate of the Common Purpose and 20:20 programmes, Matrix and Power Dynamics, and is currently studying for an MSc in Urban Regeneration.

Daljit was also a member of the Cattle Review team in 2001.

Chris Dallison has over 20 years senior management experience in both public and private sector organisations. In his last position as Executive Director of Regeneration & Corporate Management at the London Borough of Ealing, he led on Corporate Strategy, Planning and Partnerships, Regeneration, Best Value, Innovation and Performance Management. Prior to this he was Director of Housing with Ealing between 1994 and 2001. Chris is an independent consultant in his own right and an Associate with the Institute of Community Cohesion. He has been part of Community Cohesion Teams in Leicester and Burnley.

Andrew Wiggans has 30 years experience as a senior manager, researcher/trainer, and practitioner in statutory and non-statutory organisations at local, regional and national levels. In his last position as Executive Director with Rochdale MBC, he had corporate responsibility for a wide range of community-based services. This included leading the Council's work in addressing performance in diversity and community cohesion. He was Director of Recreation and Community Services in Rochdale from 1996 until 2002. He now acts as an independent consultant, as well as being involved in a voluntary capacity in a number of local organisations.

Mohammed Athar has over 15 years senior management experience in both local authority and housing association sectors. In his last position he was Chief Executive of Ashiana Housing Association, operating throughout the North West. Athar is now an independent consultant in his own right, working primarily in housing and community cohesion. He is an Associate with the Institute of Community Cohesion and was recently appointed as a Neighbourhood Renewal Adviser by the ODPM. He has been part of Community Cohesion Teams in Burnley.

Harris Joshua is presently an associate consultant with the I&DeA, SOLACE and ICC. He has over twenty years experience at senior management level in local government ending as Assistant Chief Executive at a major Unitary English Authority with responsibility for neighbourhood regeneration, community strategy, corporate policy, partnership and EU issues. Harris led a major review of the state of community cohesion in the City of Leicester. Major publications include 'To Ride the Storm – The 1980 Bristol Riot and the State' Heinemann 1983.