

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Cabinet

**Date:** 14th July 2008: 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008

**Subject:** Community Cohesion - Embracing Change

**Report of:** Chief Executive

**Contact officer:** Siân Jay x6151

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**Purpose / summary:** This report summarises recent work in developing a new Local Strategic Partnership framework for community cohesion in the borough. It seeks members' views on the implications for the Council, both officers and councillors, in their service delivery and community leadership roles. It asks for endorsement of the approach outlined and for guidance on consulting more widely with Elected Members on the framework.

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** Existing strategy on community cohesion does not accord with recent government guidance (following publication of the Our Shared Future report). This new approach is being actively supported by LSP partners.

**Recommendation / decision:** That Elected Members endorse the principles and approach set out in this report.

That the Council takes a lead on facilitating debate around core values through the Local Strategic Management Group.

That the Council continues to support the work of the Wigan Borough Partnership in promoting cohesion principles across all partners.

That a briefing event is organised to engage Elected Members in this debate.

**Key Decision:** This report involves a key decision within ground(s) Ground 3.

The decision made as a result of this report will

be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed, i.e. before 14th July 2008

This item is included in the Forward Plan.

**Risks / Implications:**

Financial:	Within existing Council and partner resources
Staffing:	Within existing Council and partner resources
Policy:	New policy
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Yes
Wards affected:	All

**Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?**

No

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?**

A full diversity impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as an appendix to this report.

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

A diversity impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as an appendix to this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution?	<b>Yes /</b>
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Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget?	<b>Yes /</b>
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Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	<b>No *</b>
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\* delete which applicable

**For Cabinet reports only:**

Categorisation of the report:	<b>x</b>
Discussion leading to a decision	<b>x</b>
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	<b>x</b>
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	

## Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
			31 <sup>st</sup> March 2008
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2008	24 <sup>th</sup> July 2008	

## Background Papers

**Embracing Change** – the report of Wigan Borough Partnership Community Cohesion Commission (Appendix 1 to this report)

**Our Shared Future** – Report of the National Commission on integration and Cohesion. [www.integrationoncohesion.org.uk](http://www.integrationoncohesion.org.uk)

**Vision 2026** – The New Sustainable Community Strategy for Wigan.  
[www.wigan.gov.uk/services/communityliving/partnerships/vision2026.htm](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/services/communityliving/partnerships/vision2026.htm)

**Wigan Borough Partnership Board Meeting Minutes** – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008  
(contact Simon Dale at [s.dale@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:s.dale@wigan.gov.uk))

Proper Officer Sue Johnson

Date 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008

## **1.0 Introduction**

During 2007, the Wigan Borough Partnership Board (WBP) formed a Cohesion Commission to allow a more in-depth analysis of the state of cohesion in Wigan, to gather the views of key stakeholders on what a cohesive Wigan would look like; and to make recommendations on how the Partnership should take forward a new cohesion strategy.

In October 2007, the Commission made its recommendations in their report “Embracing Change” (a copy is attached at Appendix 1). The Board then asked a cross service Cohesion Group to consider the report's recommendations and to develop a framework for taking the work forward.

At their meeting on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008, the Board endorsed the work carried out so far, including a proposed framework for a Cohesion Delivery Plan and made recommendations for adopting its principles by all Senior Management Team (SMT) partners.

In May 2008, the Council's Senior Management considered the implications of Embracing Change for the Council and recommended it to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet as the basis for the Council's new policy framework for cohesion. SMT felt strongly that cohesion needed to be a key policy area for the Council and its partners and this was a clear opportunity for community leadership in action.

This report summarises the conclusions drawn by the WBP Commission in their report and considers, in particular, the leadership role of the Council in relation to cohesion.

## **2.0 Background**

The six members of the WBP Commission interviewed decision makers in the Borough at a senior level within the Council (including Arm's Length Organisation), Ashton, Leigh and Wigan Primary Care Trust, Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust, Police, Fire Service, Probation Service, College, Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council and commissioned focused work with frontline staff across a range of services, facilitated by an external consultant.

It set its objectives as;

- to improve understanding of what the term 'community cohesion' means to key stakeholders in the Borough
- to increase knowledge of current community cohesion activity and practice
- to learn what stakeholders see to be the existing or developing barriers to achieving cohesion

## 2.1 Drivers for change

The WBP Commission identified a number of drivers for change on cohesion policy, both locally and nationally.

### *Local frustration and confusion*

The WBP Board commissioned this work as a response to reports of unrest and conflict in areas of the borough experiencing a change in their level of diversity. There is a feeling that this is more about attitude and language than extremism and violence.

Previous work in this area had suggested confusion and disagreement amongst practitioners on what we mean by community cohesion locally.

### *Changing demographic*

The school census for 2007 suggests that 51 languages other than English are now spoken as a first language by pupils in Wigan schools. The latest figures of national insurance registrations by non-UK nationals in Wigan show that the number has increased 170% since 2002/3 and by 20% since 2006.

### *National policy*

As a result of the social impact of economic, political and cultural imports into Britain (and in particular the events of the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005) the Government established a national Commission on Integration and Cohesion which published its final report, 'Our Shared Future', in June last year. A wide range of new government guidance and policy has been developed as a result which local authorities are being asked to respond to.

## 2.2 Conclusions drawn by the Commission

The Commission identified common themes, areas of agreement on partners' key issues and priorities for action;

- **race** is significant, although there is disagreement as to whether it is the key issue for Wigan.
- persistent and unacceptable **inequality** goes to the heart of integration and cohesion
- we need to improve our knowledge and **monitoring** of who our communities are
- visible and audible **leadership** is needed to ensure that our shared values are understood and acted on
- cohesion is a **mainstream** issue and we need a community plan that recognises this
- we need to encourage, if not provide, more opportunities for interaction and **participation**

The Commission also identified three key challenges to the development of a cohesive Wigan that it felt the WBP Board should play a particular role in addressing;

- the '**traditional**' nature of Wigan society. Many participants described a Wigan community that is insular and anachronistic – a strong sense of community but a history that doesn't adapt well to change.
- the extent of **racism** in Wigan. The Commission was concerned that we appear to have significantly different experiences in relation to the prevalence of racism in the borough and different views on the damage being caused.
- how best to address our collective **lack of experience** of diversity. Many of the decision makers interviewed by the Commission suggested that staff, and volunteers, are uncertain how to identify and respond to different needs.

### 3.0 Proposals

#### 3.1 Principles

3.1.1 The cohesion framework puts forward six 'outcomes' as the principles the borough should work towards - it is proposed that these outcomes or principles be used to determine the action needed to enhance cohesion in the borough. They are based on a definition of cohesion offered by the national Commission on Cohesion and Integration that reported in summer 2008 (Our Shared Future 2008). These are that;

- People in communities know their rights and responsibilities and act in responsible ways that respect the rights of others
- People from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment
- People have a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly and have a stake in the vision for their community
- People in communities recognise the contribution of those who have newly arrived (migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers)
- People have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common
- People are connected and have positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other settings within neighbourhoods.

3.1.2 Along side of this it is important to emphasise that our local definition of cohesion has at its core the need to address inequality and exclusion across all social groups i.e. Age, Belief, Class, Disability, Gender, Race and Sexual Orientation. For us a cohesive Wigan is more than simply an inclusive one but if citizens are unable or unwilling to participate, cohesion cannot be achieved.

## **3.2 Leadership**

- 3.2.1 "Embracing Change" identifies the need for enhanced leadership as the clearest message resulting from the WBP Commission's work.

The Council has a clear and defined role as a community leader and a duty to engage communities in developing a shared vision for our area. It is important that a refreshed strategy on cohesion is owned and championed by the Council as a major employer in the area and deliverer of local services. Putting leadership into practice is a key challenge in this work. The Local Strategic Management Group (the executive arm of the WBP) is considering the future direction of the cohesion framework, and how it can be embedded across all LSP partners.

- 3.2.2 It is perhaps in the area of democratic leadership that the Council can and should be most effective in promoting cohesion. The delivery framework needs to take account of how ward members can be effectively supported in their community leadership role. Members will need a specific opportunity to influence the development of the delivery framework and in the engagement of wider communities in the debate.
- 3.2.3 The current consultation programme for the Sustainable Community Strategy (Vision2026) is identifying local issues that are clearly relevant to the cohesion framework. There is also a need to raise local awareness of the specific principles within it and to allow for open and constructive debate.
- 3.2.4 Cohesion can be a sensitive issue - it was the clear view of the WBP Commission that a public debate on values was necessary to allow for the development of a local consensus.
- 3.2.5 The Place-Based Survey due later this year will test out how are communities feel about their neighbours, and their community leaders, and the outcome of this work will be a significant driver for the Comprehensive Area Assessment. We have an opportunity, through the cohesion framework, to develop a sense of shared values across Wigan communities.

## **4.0 Conclusions**

- 4.1 Elected members are asked to reflect on the issues identified by the work to date and on the specific Community Leadership role of Council members and officers.

We suggest that there are three key elements to taking the cohesion framework forward;

- facilitating a public debate on values, through a series of conversations that engage local people in developing cohesive communities.
- embedding cohesion as a mainstream activity, relating it to everything we do
- Wigan Borough Partnership (including a particular role for the Council) demonstrating visible and audible leadership.

4.2 There is clearly a significant role for elected members in achieving the outcomes from the framework and we seek your views on how to best support this work. This may include an opportunity to assist in developing the next stage as described at 4.1. above.

## **5.0 Recommendations**

That Elected Members endorse the principles and approach set out in this report.

That the Council takes a lead on facilitating debate around core values through the Local Strategic Management Group.

That the Council continues to support the work of the Wigan Borough Partnership in promoting cohesion principles across all partners.

That a briefing event is organised to engage Elected Members in this debate.

**Diversity Impact Assessment form**

Section:
Business Transformation

Policy/Service Area: Cohesion and Equalities
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Person Completing Form: Siân Jay	Date: 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2008
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Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race			Disability		
Ethnicity			Gender		
Age			Religion		
Class			Sexual Orientation		

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?
The importance of addressing the actual or potential disadvantage of all social identities is evidenced in the report of the WBP Cohesion Commission, Embracing Change.

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?
By a specific commission formed by the LSP Board and supported by council officers. Consultation was undertaken with all the key decision makers for public services in the borough and with a range of frontline officers working with social groups.

Action Plan – <i>What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?</i>
A cohesion delivery plan is under development.

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?
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Yes

Timescale	
Responsibility	
Comments	

**Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?**

Departmental Service Plan	
Section/Team Plan	
Other (Specify)	

Date for further review

# "Embracing Change"

Report of the Wigan Borough Partnership  
Community Cohesion Commission

September 2007

working  
together

**WIGAN**BOROUGH**PARTNERSHIP**

## 1.0 Introduction

This report is both a summary of the work of the WBP Community Cohesion Commission and a statement of action needed to enhance cohesion in the Wigan borough. It considers;

- the **methodology** adopted by the WBP Commission
- the **drivers** for change on cohesion policy, both internal and external
- the key **messages** the Commission has received during its work
- the **challenges** facing WBP in enhancing cohesion in the Borough
- a set of **objectives** proposed by the Commission as the basis of a refreshed cohesion strategy
- early **actions** needed to move the Borough forward

## 2.0 Methodology

The WBP Board formed a Cohesion Commission to allow a more in depth analysis of the state of cohesion in Wigan, to gather the views of key stakeholders on what a cohesive Wigan would look like and to make recommendations on how the LSP takes forward a new cohesion strategy.

The six members of the commission have;

- commissioned two focus groups with frontline staff across a range of services, facilitated by an external consultant
- commissioned a series of additional interviews with frontline officers undertaken by members of the Council's Community Engagement Team
- interviewed fifteen decision makers in the Borough at a senior level within the Council (including ALOs), PCT, NHS Trust, Police, Fire Service, Probation Service, College, Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council

In total, more than 40 individuals have given their views and had these recorded. More than 60 were invited to take part.

The WBP Commission set its objectives as;

- to improve understanding of what the term 'community cohesion' means to key stakeholders in the Borough
- to increase knowledge of current community cohesion activity and practice
- to learn what stakeholders see to be the existing or developing barriers to achieving cohesion

### **3.0 Drivers**

The WBP Commission has identified a number of drivers for change on cohesion policy, both internal and external.

#### *3.1 Local frustration and confusion*

The WBP Board commissioned this work as a response to reports of unrest and conflict in areas of the borough experiencing a change in their level of diversity. These reports were largely anecdotal and the Board asked for a more considered view on how this was impacting on the borough's communities. Whilst the Commission found little evidence of open conflict, this report will reflect on a level of frustration and dissatisfaction that is damaging to cohesion locally. There is a feeling that this is more about attitude and language than extremism and violence.

The Board also asked the Commission to reflect on how the borough's cohesion strategy might be updated and refreshed. Previous work in this area had suggested confusion and disagreement amongst practitioners on what we mean by community cohesion locally. The work of the Commission underlines this issue and specific recommendations are made in this report to address this (6.1)

#### *3.2 Changing demographic*

The borough is clearly undergoing significant and rapid demographic change. The school census for 2007 suggests that 51 languages other than English are now spoken as a first language by pupils in Wigan schools. The latest figures of national insurance registrations by non-UK nationals in Wigan show that the number has increased 170% since 2002/3 and by 20% since last year.

There is anecdotal evidence that the borough demographic is changing in other ways too, with some estimates suggesting that the overall population is increasing and growing older. In discussion, many contributors to the work of the Commission suggested that they are experiencing new and different issues relating to a changing population. Much sophisticated data is available to WBP in planning and delivering services but there are clearly still gaps. This report recommends some action on this (6.2).

#### *3.3 Global changes*

Of course, this demographic change is reflected worldwide and is not specific to Wigan (although our particular lack of 'experience' of multi-culturalism is an issue covered by this report). As a result of the social impact of economic, political and cultural imports into Britain (and in particular the events of the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005) the Government has established a national Commission on Integration and Cohesion which published its final report, 'Our Shared Future', in June this year. Many of the recommendations made by the national commission reflect the conclusions drawn locally and, where appropriate, these are illustrated in this report.

## 4.0 Messages

The WBP Commission has received a number of clear messages from those contributing to its work. None of these are contradictory, but it is clear that individuals and organisations apply different levels of emphasis according to their own experiences and priorities. Cohesion appears to be seen as a more significant issue by those organisations who have specific targets and responsibilities relating to it.

There are common themes – areas of agreement in terms of key issues and priorities for action;

- **race** is significant, although there is disagreement as to whether it is pivotal
- persistent and unacceptable **inequality** goes to the heart of integration and cohesion
- we need to improve our knowledge and **monitoring** of who our communities are
- visible and audible **leadership** is needed to ensure that our shared values are understood and acted on
- cohesion is a **mainstream** issue and we need a community plan that recognises this
- we need to encourage, if not provide, more opportunities for interaction and **participation**

### 4.1 Race

Integration and cohesion is no longer a special programme or project. It is also not about race, faith or other forms of group status or identity. It is simply about how we will all get on and secure benefits that are mutually desirable for our communities and ourselves.

*Our Shared Future July 2007*

There is a clear, and heartfelt, difference of opinion on whether cohesion is largely about race or about a range of social identities. What most can agree on is that we expend too much energy constantly revisiting the debate.

Amongst contributors who work in 'frontline' positions, there was a roughly equal split between those who felt cohesion is an issue wider than race and those who feel that approach does not take sufficient account of the consequences of racism. All of the decision makers interviewed were clear that cohesion needed to be considered in its broader sense. The Commission wants to see a clear and unambiguous resolution to this issue (6.1).

Contributors wanting a strict race definition were concerned about the vulnerability of those experiencing racism in the Borough and the need to concentrate resource and leadership in this area. All respondents, when asked, acknowledged the presence of racism, and expressed a commitment to tackle it where and when it occurs, but decision makers were unable to quantify or evidence its degree. The Commission feels that this inconsistency needs further investigation (6.4).

"The fact is the BNP is operating here and it has never really been responded to .....they have got a foothold.....and what I've looked for is direction"

*Focus Group April 2007*

We had to remove graffiti 'kill all asylum seekers' – it was obviously written by an adult. Children are coming in with baggage and opinions from home which confuse them.

*Interview July 2007*

#### 4.2 *Inequality*

There is universal understanding amongst contributors that a cohesive society is an inclusive one – the terms are not interchangeable (cohesive means more than inclusive) but if citizens are unable or unwilling to participate, cohesion cannot be achieved.

During the work of the commission many dimensions of social identity were identified as potentially excluding for people living and working in the Borough. It is accepted that this has been understood and acted on by WBP. However, contributors were consistent in identifying the need for further work – some social conditions and characteristics were seen to need additional emphasis; young men were identified as perhaps the most excluded group; women are seen to be particularly disadvantaged by traditional values; health inequalities are described as unacceptable.

The compound effect of inequalities was described by many participants – that those lacking in the basic skills for participation find their position quickly entrenched. Some suggested that a simple identity model, that does not take account of complex circumstances and generational deprivation, does not help us to engage so-called 'hard to reach' individuals. All participants felt in some way that we need to re-energise our approach to social inclusion – the Commission feels that the new Local Area Agreement needs to take account of this (6.4).

A recent Equalities Review, commissioned by Government, has suggested that the causes of chronic and persistent inequality include;

- a combination of outdated attitudes and complacency
- lack of agreement about what needs to happen
- uncertainty about who should act
- the tools we have are not fit for purpose

and these themes are echoed in the work of the WBP Commission.

20,000 households in the borough are in financial difficulties, suffering financial and social exclusion. This creates divisions in society.

*Focus Group May 2007*

Equality of opportunity requires unequal effort if we want similar life opportunities for all.

*Decision maker June 2007*

Gender politics is a real issue, a reflection of old industrial hierarchy, too many traditional gender roles.

*Decision maker June 2007*

White, working class, disaffected and disengaged young men have a major impact on our communities in terms of aspiration and negativity.

*Decision maker June 2007*

We need to accept that supporting those who have complex needs is very intensive, personalised and resource heavy.

*Decision maker June 2007*

#### 4.3 *Measurement*

The general consensus is that we need to be more sophisticated in how we gather, use and monitor data and information about who our communities are. We need new ways of finding out who is living here and what their needs are. Community leaders, including elected members, need 'facts at their finger tips' both to help them involve people effectively and to counter myth and supposition. We also need a common set of indicators to measure our level of cohesiveness and the impact our targeted work has, linked to a common set of objectives for this work.

This information needs to be more than statistical data (though to have this at neighbourhood level is vital) and needs to look at how amenities and community facilities are used. Doctors, churches and schools are all thought to have empirical data that we are not sharing in a useful and constructive way. This needs to be used to identify potential 'rubbing points' that could lead to conflict.

The Commission is making specific recommendations about information gathering and feels that it the role and responsibility of the WBP Board to regularly monitor this data. It is also recommending a specific role for the borough's Diversity Champions group in implementing strategic objectives (6.0)

The Commission also feels that it would be helpful to WBP to work with an 'external' challenge group. It feels that the Community Empowerment Networks, particularly those working with specific communities of interest, could perhaps develop this role. (6.3).

Very little measurement and monitoring is undertaken to assess the impact of the efforts made to ensure appropriate behaviour and actions.

*Interview June 2007*

#### 4.4 *Leadership*

There's something about being honest and biting the bullet and showing it like it is and being clear what you're going to do about it.

*Focus Group April 2007*

The clearest message resulting from the work of the commission, which all participants made reference to in some form, is the need for **enhanced leadership**. In particular, frontline workers and decision makers alike want to see a single clear message on cohesion that is promoted very publicly.

The Commission feels that a common definition of cohesion for the borough is an essential starting point. The existing governmental definition of cohesion was shared by the Commission with all the decision makers interviewed and they were content with adopting this for the Borough. Some participants were keen to see reference to 'rights and responsibilities' being added as part of the definition.

The national commission has had this debate too and they have proposed a new definition, building on the existing one;

*An integrated and cohesive community is one where:*

- There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country
- There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they expect in turn.
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, access to services and treatment.
- There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny.
- There is a strong recognition of the contribution of both those who have newly arrived and those who already have deep attachments to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common.
- There are strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and other institutions within neighbourhoods.

*Our Shared Future July 2007*

The WBP Commission has other recommendations relating to 'setting a tone' for cohesion locally that include;

- a public debate on values (6.5)
- a WBP wide communication policy, to include co-ordinated and systematic 'mythbusting', being transparent and clear about resource allocation (6.1)
- a positive campaign that promotes the value of diversity, about what it means to belong productively to local areas, and how difference has inspired creatively and innovation (6.5)

People are confused about the difference between UK born minorities, settled migrants from the past, current legal migrants, asylum seekers and illegal immigrants; with a tendency among some to see a person from any of these groups in the most negative way possible. Settled communities are worried about the fair allocation of public services – with some thinking migrants and minorities are getting special treatment.

*Our Shared Future July 2007*

I'm concerned about getting leadership...senior officers and Members need to say what vision they want for cohesion.

*Focus Group April 2007*

We get frustrated by the lack of overall strategy and we feel on our own. People from all types of disadvantaged backgrounds trust us, and we do our best, but we need support from the rest of the Borough.

*Interview July 2007*

Community cohesion doesn't just happen because you ask people to get on. We need to make demands on people living in communities, not allow them to export their difficulties. Mutuality is essential, we need to understand that we're dependant on each other. Lets ask uncomfortable questions, let views and prejudices rise to the surface so we can tackle them openly.

*Decision maker June 2007*

#### 4.5 *Mainstreaming*

Many participants in the review expressed frustration at the lack of resource, and co-ordination of activity, around cohesion work. This was described as 'piece meal' and subject to the availability of short-term funding – there was a strong feeling that cohesion work needed to influence our day-to-day approach to the delivery of services. The new Community Plan and Local Area Agreement provide an excellent opportunity to identify resources, targets and a line of accountability for community cohesion in the borough.

Participants in the work of the Commission, at all levels, identified the potential for the Community Plan to be clear on the shared values for the Borough. The planned consultation for the renewed Plan provides an opportunity for a public debate on these values (6.1).

Cohesion policy and approaches should be part of services' fundamental approach to policy and service delivery, and that delivery should be the responsibility of individual services and agencies from the start, not a bolt on. Our view therefore is that LSPs should have an explicit role in building integration and cohesion into their vision and strategies, and should have the structure to be able to put local issues on the agenda.

*Our Shared Future July 2007*

Public policy is not cohesive and can be contradictory. It leads to services accounting for their own priorities, sometimes at the expense of others.

*Decision maker June 2007*

We need a step change in what we're doing, the pace of change in communities has not been matched by the pace of change in services.

*Decision maker June 2007*

#### 4.6 *Participation*

The Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement in each local area should include a strategic approach to community capacity-building

*Our Shared Future July 2007*

Contributors to this work would like to see more and better opportunities for the engagement of local communities. This involves helping communities to build their own networks and interact effectively with key workers that relate to their geographic area and interest (bonding) and providing opportunities for communities

to connect with people with different backgrounds and experiences (bridging).

There is a strong feeling that this should include interventions to specifically integrate incomers into civic life. A number of community, voluntary and faith organisations work in this area producing welcome packs, acting as mentors, supplying English language training etc. The Commission feels that this work needs to be given systematic support and that there is the opportunity to extend it by offering an 'official' welcome into the Borough. A civic ceremony of some sort both sends the right message to incomers and our indigenous population, and allows accurate information to be gathered and need assessed. We also need to understand better the extent to which a lack of opportunity to learn English affects effective integration into borough life (6.5).

Almost every [cohesion] project is run by churches and the community sector...I think the challenge is to the public sector, what are they contributing?

*Focus Group April 2007*

Consultation on the refreshed Community Plan will provide an opportunity to develop public debate around key issues for the borough. The Commission would like to see existing engagement structures, and the new emerging neighbourhood opportunities, playing a proper and formal role in this work (6.5).

We urge .... local authority areas to push further .. to ensure that ESOL is delivered in an accessible way and that it meets the practical needs of the learner and that ESOL provision is boosted in all local authority areas

*Our Shared Future July 2007*

The Commission welcomes the existing activities that engage Wigan's communities in cross-cultural activities. It would like to see these developed into a co-ordinated programme, extensively promoted across the Borough. This would also complement a national Shared Futures Programme which is proposed by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in their report (6.5).

Community cohesion is a product of effective community engagement. For the successful cohesion of diverse groups within a community, the community and varied groups must first engage each other in order to form networks and relationships.

*Interview June 2007*

## 5.0 Challenges

The Commission has identified three key challenges to the development of a cohesive Wigan. The Commission would like to see further development work on these issues and feels that the WBP Board should play a particular role in learning more about how they can be addressed;

- the '**traditional**' nature of Wigan society. Many participants described a Wigan community that is insular and anachronistic. They are acutely aware of the challenges and yet opportunities this provides – a strong sense of community but a history that doesn't adapt well to change. Wigan's rates of Domestic Violence and Teenage Pregnancy continue to resist national trends which show marked improvement.

A lack of aspiration continues to be cited as a most significant issue needing resolution in most, if not all, our strategic plans. The need for organisational change, addressing cultural barriers within our services and institutions as well as our communities, presents a particular challenge to leadership at all levels of WBP. The Commission feels that further, practically based, work is needed to achieve systemic change.

A strong local narrative and sense of local identity helps build cohesion. But equally, people with more complex and multiple sources of identity are more positive about other groups, more integrated and less prejudiced. *Our Shared Future July 2007*

Local people are not **overtly** racist but often hold old fashioned views. They're not keeping up with changes in our culture. There is a need to be up front with the message that says increased diversity brings strength to the borough's communities. *Decision maker June 2007*

The biggest issue in Wigan is low aspirations and we're making this a self-fulfilling prophesy, we seem to be selling Wigan that way. *Decision maker June 2007*

We need to be clear what we mean by aspirational – Status? Wealth? Caring about the community? *Decision maker June 2007*

We develop aspiration through exciting ideas, creativity, being entrepreneurial, motivating, doing/thinking outside the box, risk taking, living with discomfort, being outward looking. *Decision maker June 2007*

- the extent of **racism** in Wigan. The Commission is concerned that we appear to have significantly different experiences in relation to the prevalence of racism in the borough and different views on the damage being caused. This difference appears to be between the experiences of frontline officers and decision taking senior managers. The Commission was unable to reconcile this picture but is sufficiently concerned to ask that further work be carried out to determine the extent of racism in the borough.

The word out there is it's not safe to be a black person in Wigan, we're afraid of looking into this. *Focus Group April 2007*

We need the opportunity to 'learn' tolerance, non-cohesive behaviour is due to ignorance, individual and strategic, not having an ability to understand the issues.

*Decision maker June 2007*

- how best to address our collective **lack of experience** of diversity. Many of the decision makers interviewed by the Commission suggested that staff, and volunteers, are uncertain how to identify and respond to different needs. As Wigan responds to rapid change, particularly but not exclusively relating to ethnicity, we need to adapt quickly to assessing how best to support and include changing communities. Some respondents felt that we could learn from the experiences of our near neighbours, that other North-west communities have more experience and knowledge about diversity. The Commission feels that it would be useful to ascertain the extent to which the staff, and volunteers, working within WBP feel they have a knowledge gap in this area and how they would like to have this filled.

We need mainstream services that are very sensitive to users... how staff understand the client groups they're working with.

*Focus Group May 2007*

Wigan has been taken by surprise by diversity, we weren't ready for it.

*Interview July 2007*

## **6.0 Objectives and Actions**

The Commission recommends that, within the Community Plan framework, an Integration and Cohesion Policy is developed, with clear and measurable objectives. The table at Appendix 1 summarises the Commission's thoughts on objective areas and early actions – it is offered as a 'starter for ten'. As in the development of any policy area, consultation and involvement in developing the strategy will be essential. The Commission is keen to see the WBP Board taking a lead role in this.

It also feels that the refreshed approach to the Diversity Champions network, within the Council, provides an real opportunity to develop the strategy quickly and effectively. The Commission understands that this refreshed approach allows for LSP wide participation and it suggests that the WBP Board may wish to commission this group to produce the Integration and Cohesion Policy for the LSP.

	Objective Area	Priority Issues	Early Actions
6.1	A clear message, communicated effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a mythbusting campaign, identifying mis-information and where it is circulating</li> <li>- a clear and honest statement about the allocation of public resource</li> <li>- a public debate on shared values</li> <li>- equipping community leaders with information and the skills to communicate</li> </ul>	Adopt a common definition of cohesion, and an associated set of objectives to achieve it, across WBP
6.2	Understanding our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sharing information in a systematic way across key community organisations</li> <li>- mapping diversity in the borough, understanding who is living where</li> </ul>	Develop a protocol for identifying and sharing 'soft' information about new arrivals
6.3	Measuring our performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identifying measures of cohesion within the Local Area Agreement</li> <li>- establishing regular monitoring of these indicators</li> <li>- adopting an external 'challenge' mechanism to assess our response</li> </ul>	Explore with the Community Empowerment Networks the opportunity to provide a challenge mechanism.
6.4	Active leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the WBP Board to explore further the three key challenges identified by the Commission's work</li> <li>- co-ordinate and assess existing cohesion work against the new strategic objectives</li> <li>- ensure that the refreshed Community Plan and new Local Area Agreement identify resources, targets and line of accountability for cohesion work</li> </ul>	Assess the extent to which corporate grant aid regimes in the borough foster cohesion
6.5	Actively support communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understand the breadth of support provided by the community, voluntary and faith sectors and provide a systematic response</li> <li>- develop a civic welcome</li> <li>- celebrate diversity through a positive local campaign</li> <li>- a co-ordinated programme of cross-cultural activity</li> </ul>	Develop a programme of consultation for the refreshed Community Plan that makes the most of existing participation structures and encourages the development of new opportunities