



One Borough: an equal chance for all

DEVELOPING A COHESION STRATEGY FOR SOLIHULL: CONSULTATION PAPER

VERSION 1.1

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Stage	When	Outcomes / Comments
0.0	Proposal outlined to Cohesion and Inclusion Sub- Group	1/10	Agreed to draft a short consultation paper identifying key challenges, adopting on-line questionnaire.
0.1	Shared with project group colleagues - FH, ML, DP, AH, GB plus SB and Omc	15/10 - 23/10	Comments received from SB and GB.
0.2	Shared with project group plus KG, GP and RJ.	23/10	To include comments regarding V0.1.
0.3	Consultation with SMBC Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).	17/11	To include comments on V0.2 from SB and also data from Crime Analyst re hate crime. .
1.0	Start of consultation process. Consultation paper to be located on website. Set up account on social networking site.	23/11	Start of 12 week consultation period.
2.0	Revised Draft Strategy	Feb	Take draft to SPGB, reflecting consultation feedback.
3.0	Launch of Final Strategy and Action Plan	March	

Glossary of Consultees

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DEVELOPING A COHESION STRATEGY FOR SOLIHULL

1. Consultation Paper

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 It's in everyone's interest to build stronger communities - communities that get along, are diverse and inclusive of minorities. Cohesion could happen by itself with government having little or no intervention; however, experience tells us that it is better to work proactively and in partnership. We want to make sure that any actions taken contribute to a more cohesive civic society where all communities feel they belong.
- 1.1.2 Solihull is a cohesive borough, which is something, which we should rightly celebrate. It is important to recognise, however, that there are threats to cohesion and maintaining the status quo isn't necessarily the best option. Where we can, we need to avoid tensions, conflict and the negative consequences of poor cohesion. This is the challenge and to do this well, we need a plan; for this reason the Solihull Partnership is taking steps to create Solihull's first Cohesion Strategy.
- 1.1.3 The Council and its partners have an important role in community leadership, making sure that our institutions listen to and respond sensitively to community needs. The organisations that make up Solihull Partnership also have an important role in ensuring that this Strategy underpins the work of its member organisations and its five strategic partnership boards.
- 1.1.4 Cohesion is, of course, already high on the Partnership's agenda and is given expression through the 10-year Sustainable Community Strategy, which all agencies are signed up to. It is a priority and is one of 32 Improvement Targets that comprise Solihull's Local Area Agreement.
- 1.1.5 Your views are needed to shape this strategy, which will set out where we are and what we need to do to strengthen cohesion. This paper does four main things:
- identifies factors that will influence our overall approach;
 - assesses where we are starting from;
 - says what we know already about our communities; and
 - sets out the challenges based on what we know now.
- 1.1.6 A project team has been set up to develop this strategy. The draft strategy will be displayed on the Solihull Partnership's website from November 2009 - to January 2010. On the basis on this consultation, the Council and Solihull Partnership Governing Board will take account of what is said before agreeing a final strategy. This will include a plan identifying clear actions and accountabilities that should make the borough more cohesive.
- 1.1.7 You can respond either on-line questionnaire or by contacting the project team by e-mail / letter. An on-line blog will also be set up on Facebook.

1.2 What do we mean by cohesion?

1.2.1 The Commission on Integration and Cohesion has defined cohesive communities as having

- A common vision - 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.
- A sense of belonging - 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 can expect in turn.
- Equality - tackling inequality and demonstrating fair treatment at all times.

1.2.2 It is important to recognise that the terms "community" can mean different things to different people; for example, communities differ in terms of place, faith, interest, etc.

1.3 What factors have been taken into account in preparing this Strategy?

1.3.1 This strategy is set in the context of two factors that characterise the borough of Solihull:

- The contrast in the social and economic well-being of our residents which, in a small area, ranges from amongst the most affluent to the most disadvantaged nationally; and
- The borough's recognised economic success and general affluence, which masks the deprivation in the North of the Borough. Three of the wards in the North of the Borough have areas that are in the 10% most deprived in England.

1.3.2 Solihull is one of the most polarised boroughs in the country. For example:

- On average, people in the North of the Borough die ten years before those in the South;
- Children in the North are three times more likely to be killed in a road accident than their peers in the South; and
- Around half of the population in the North have no access to a car and have no qualifications.

1.3.3 Solihull is a diverse borough and continues to change. We have to accept that the profile will change in terms of age differences, ethnicity and a whole range of economic, health and educational influences.

1.3.4 The global recession can impinge on social wellbeing and bring divisions - creating greater competition for jobs and grievances towards, for example, new economic migrants. In practice, though, we do not fully understand how the recession will affect cohesion, particularly whether this will have a disproportionate impact on minorities.

1.3.5 Although people generally get on well together it's often our attitude towards or treatment of minorities that provide the real test of cohesion. We can be judged by the extent to which minorities feel part of and listened to by institutions and the whole community. There has been an increase in migrant communities coming here to work or study, who are seeking asylum or perhaps are trafficked here. This can impact on services and, in Solihull, this has placed particular pressures in terms of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who are Looked After.

- 1.3.6 Many vulnerable people feel isolated in society because of age, disability, illness, etc, with limited association with organised activity and no interaction with institutions. Although we have strategies in place to commission support for these groups, based on demography, we do not understand how they feel about living in their communities. Recent tragic events surrounding the Fiona Pilkington case in Leicestershire (involving a mother - terrorised for ten years by gangs of children - killed herself and her disabled daughter) bring into sharp focus the problems experienced by some marginalised families.
- 1.3.7 We are aware of community tensions and the fact that some individuals want to commit criminal acts. In the face of these risks, it is important that we remain strong and are united.
- 1.3.8 Nationally, there is increased interest in violent extremism. The Government's national Prevent Strategy estimates that around 2,000 people pose a direct threat to national security and public safety because of their support for terrorism. Preventing violent extremism (PVE) is a long-term challenge, which will need to be addressed at every level - international, national and local. It is increasingly difficult for local areas to insulate themselves from the impact of world events such as the Gaza conflict. Such events can impact on short-term resilience locally as well as creating a sense of injustice or grievance amongst particular communities in the long term.
- 1.3.9 We also need to find out more about our communities. For example, we know little about sexual orientation locally. So, one of the main objectives of this strategy is to learn more about our communities.

1.4 What is our starting point?

What's happened so far

- 1.4.1 Our Sustainable Community Strategy sets out a vision for 2008-18: This is (for) "Solihull in 2018: (to be a place) where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous". The Cohesion Strategy would need to be clearly aligned to the SCS.
- 1.4.2 Promoting cohesion isn't new to Solihull. Much work has already taken place. For example:
- Regeneration – a policy framework has been created and work has started to transform the physical landscape of north Solihull, providing better housing, new schools, more employment and improved opportunities. With public and private investment of £1.8 billion to 2020, the project will bring a completion of 8,500 modern homes. Around £200m has been invested in new educational facilities including two primary schools, four secondary schools, two special educational needs schools and one college. A further eight schools are planned. This investment will have a significant impact on closing the gap on inequalities. There are also plans to build vibrant village centres that will deliver key services in the North of the Borough.
 - The Solihull Partnership agreed a Diversity Concordat in 2003 setting out some common values across partners. The three main political parties have agreed a Race Relations Declaration. This represents a public commitment to the promotion of good race relations in election campaigns.
 - All schools have cohesion plans - in line with their statutory duty to promote cohesion. The Community Cohesion Education Standards require school governors to draw up plans for encouraging the development of activities specially aimed at pupils with particular needs. A cohesion conference was held in June 2009 to consider the outcomes of this work.

- Solihull already celebrates the value and contributions of BME communities in British society by promoting the internationally recognised Black History Month every year.
- A West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership was set up in 1999 to lead regional policy on refugee, asylum and migrant issues. It was developed in response to changes in dispersal and migrant patterns, numbers and policy requirements. It oversees asylum seeker dispersal and facilitates the integration of refugees and migrants in the West Midlands by effective multi-agency working across the region.
- The Solihull Faiths' Forum was set up in 2006 to "promote greater understanding and appreciation amongst local people of the rich diversity of belief and practice within our own community and beyond". It has made a start on raising awareness of different faiths' festivals and involving all communities in celebrating events.
- There have been a number of religious and cultural events in the borough that have been designed and delivered by faith communities and Solihull SUSTAIN (Consortium of Voluntary and Community Sector organisation), in partnership with the Council. These events aim to promote community cohesion, greater wellbeing and friendship, and beneficial dialogue through building activities across Solihull, which include: 'Books for Schools' project, charity car washes and an elderly Asian ladies group. Solihull SUSTAIN has engaged with a number of individuals from the Chinese community to better understand their needs and how these could be improved within the Borough.
- There has been exploratory work to better engage people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities and to understand their needs in relation to services.
- A Learning Disability Strategy was agreed in 2006 - this recognises the impact poor levels of cohesion can have on this group, especially as more people are cared for in the community.
- A Plan for Solihull Children and Young People, written in 2007, aims to provide an equal chance for children and young people who are carers, seeking asylum, disabled or 'Looked After'. This includes, for example, improvements in support and participation, reflected through smarter commissioning.
- A partnership strategy; *The Future is Ours, a Quality of Life for Older people, 2006-13* sets out a vision for older people which includes measures to reduce social exclusion through, for example, greater involvement in social and leisure activities.
- A Preventing Violent Extremism Plan (2009/11) is in place to minimise the risk of terrorism and other criminal activity.

What else is planned?

1.4.3 Other things are planned which will help us develop and deliver a cohesion strategy. For example:

- Strengthening the knowledge and support for local information and analysis through the Solihull Observatory that will in support local partners and the third sector in using local information and research in decision making. A ward profile created that is fit for purpose and suitable for publication to the wider community, which enhances localised decision-making.
- Engagement Strategy - an approach has been agreed that will ensure more effective engagement with local people by partnership agencies by sharing best practice, streamlining processes, sharing learning outcomes and improving relationships with marginalised groups.
- Neighbourhood Strategy - a vision has been agreed and a number of projects are underway to try out different approaches to enable more effective local commissioning.

1.5 What do we know?

1.5.1 We have a partial understanding of the borough and the task of establishing up to date and reliable information is a constant challenge. However, we have a basic understanding of our communities, primarily informed by the 2001 Census.

General

1.5.2 Solihull has an interesting mix of urban and rural areas that makes it unique in the West Midlands. It is located between Birmingham (to the West) and Coventry and Warwickshire (to the East) and covers an area of almost 18,000 hectares, two-thirds of which is rural farmland. Much of the rural area is designated green belt. Solihull is also at the heart of the regional and national motorway and rail networks. The international gateway of Birmingham International Airport ensures that we have good transport links with the region and beyond. Birmingham International Railway Station is also located in the Borough, as is the National Exhibition Centre.

1.5.3 Solihull is home to an estimated 203,600 population and around 87,000 households (Office of National Statistics [ONS] 2009) who live mainly in the suburbs of Solihull, Shirley, Olton and Balsall Common (in the South of the Borough) and Smithswood, Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst, Fordbridge and Castle Bromwich (in the North of the Borough).

1.5.4 A strategic report has been produced called *Understanding Solihull*. Some headlines from this report are as follows:

- The overall population of Solihull is forecast to increase by 9,300 people from the previous 2001 census to the next in 2011. One quarter of the population is over the age of 60 and a quarter are children and young people under the age of 20. 80% of people live in the main urban areas of the Borough, 9% in the large settlements of Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath and 11% in smaller rural settlements.
- Solihull is expected to have an ageing population - between 2003-21, it is estimated that there will be 30% more people over 70 and 80% more people over the age of 85.
- Ethnicity - latest Government figures show that the proportion of residents that are from a Black and Minority Ethnic background was 9.4% in 2007. This compares to 5.4% in 2001, and 2.9% in 1991. Whilst this figure is still below the regional average 23.3%, it is the pace of change that has taken place in the last decade that is different with the demographic changes and patterns that have happened over 40-50 years in neighbouring authorities such as Birmingham and Coventry.
- Religion - in 2001, 78% of local people stated that they were Christian.

1.5.5 All schools are required to produce cohesion plans. Schools' cohesion conferences are held annually to share learning on these plans and involve children and young people in discussion.

1.5.6 The daytime student and working population brings many more people into Solihull. Approximately 27% of full-time students aged 16 - 18 at Solihull College (including Woodlands and Blossomfield campuses) and 35% at Solihull Sixth Form College are from a BME background. Evidence from Solihull College demonstrates that the outcomes for BME students are significantly better than national benchmarks.

- 1.5.7 Solihull is also one of the “most affected” Boroughs for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children along with Kent and Croydon. Solihull currently has 170 UASC, aged under 18, who Looked After; the largest group is from Afghanistan.
- 1.5.8 In September 2009 there were 5,549 out of work and claiming Job Seekers Allowance representing 4.6% of the resident working age population, an increase 82% on 12 months previously.
- 1.5.9 We have a basic understanding of how local people feel about their neighborhoods and community. The Audit Commission has carried out a survey of local people through a Place Survey. This survey asks people's views on a range of issues, including the extent to which people get on together. In addition, market research was carried out, in July 2009, in the form of a survey of residents and visitors to the borough.
- 1.5.10 As a place to belong, we understand that local communities are, generally, cohesive. The Place Survey (NI 1) established that 77.5% of local people "got on well together ". Our target is to increase this number to 81% by 2011
- 1.5.11 Evidence that people in Solihull get on well together is supported by results from NI 6, which demonstrates that just 22.9% of residents in the borough think that there is a problem with people not treating each other with respect and consideration in their local area, well below the national average of 31.2%. On this measure Solihull is ranked 70th out of 352 Local Authorities in England.
- 1.5.12 An important aspect of community cohesion is a sense of belonging. In this respect, The Place Survey (NI 2) indicates that just 58.4% of Solihull residents feel that they belong to their local neighbourhood, which although in-line with the national average, only places the borough 210th out of 352 Local Authorities in England in the lower reaches of the 3rd quintile.
- 1.5.13 Cohesiveness can also be measured by the extent to which residents participate in the community with evidence from the Place Survey suggesting that Solihull would benefit from greater community involvement. Just 11.1% of Solihull residents indicated that they have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the past 12 months (NI 3), compared with the national average of 14% and just 22.1% have given unpaid help at least once per month over the last 12 months (NI 6), which is also just below the national average (23.2%).
- 1.5.14 The Place survey also revealed that 30.4% of local people felt that they could influence decisions in their locality.

Survey of Residents and Visitors

- 1.5.15 The Council has commissioned research into cohesion to inform the development of this strategy. This research, which targeted two mutually exclusive populations - residents aged 18+ and visitors to Solihull, was focused on 3 key objectives:
- To provide quantitative and robust data on perceptions of how well people in Solihull get on with each other;
 - To identify how perceptions vary among particular resident groups and whether they vary geographically across the borough; and
 - To identify what has an influence on how well people get on with each other.
- 1.5.16 Further, related research will be conducted with young people; a range of methods will be used that include an online survey in schools and colleges in the borough.

1.5.17 As well as providing a number of useful insights, the survey also establishes benchmarks for future comparison. The key findings were:

(a) Residents

- When asked whether their local neighbourhood is a place "where people from different backgrounds get on well together", 77% of Solihull residents agreed.
- When asked whether their local neighbourhood is a place where people from different social backgrounds get on well together, 79% of Solihull residents agreed. The proportion who disagreed that people of different ethnic backgrounds got on well together in their neighbourhood was 8%.
- When asked whether Solihull as a whole is a place where people from different social backgrounds get on well together, 77% of Solihull residents agreed.
- 95% of residents said they were satisfied with their neighbourhood. 29% felt that their street had become more neighbourly in the time they had lived there.
- 20% of residents felt that they knew many people on their street; 38% said they knew only some.
- 92% felt a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood; 90% felt a sense of belonging to Solihull. Interestingly, 75% felt they belonged to the Birmingham area. Of the people who stated they 'belong' to their neighbourhood, 81% felt that people from different social backgrounds got on well together in their neighbourhood.
- Among BME residents the proportion that express belonging to Britain is 76%, compared to 94% for non-BME residents.
- Cohesion in the borough cannot be approached along simple ethnic lines. There is little evidence of cohesion perceptions varying by ethnicity, with BME residents no more likely than non-BME residents to feel people of different backgrounds get on well together; to feel their local area is neighbourly and to know most of the people in the local area.
- 16% of residents state that they are part of a local voluntary group, community association or charity.
- 10% of respondents disagreed that "workers from different countries should be welcomed once they are here"
- There is evidence of inter-generational issues.
- Only 29% said that their local area had become more neighbourly. 53% said it had stayed about the same.
- Although 68% of people in rural areas said that their local area was a place where people from different social backgrounds get on well together they are less likely to feel that their area is more neighbourly (45%).

(b) Visitors

- 96% of visitors in the survey believed that Solihull is friendly with a sense of community, although 18% disagreed that Solihull is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together.
- 35% of visitors felt Solihull was fairly welcoming for people of different sexual orientations.

Links with neighbouring areas.

- 1.5.18 Data from ONS from 2005 shows that the workplace based workforce of Solihull was 9% larger than the residence based workforce. This indicates a net in-commute of workers, the second largest in the Region after Birmingham. Detailed data about commuting flows is available from the 2001 Census. At this time, the net flow was considerably smaller, only around 500 people. However, this hides rather large flows. In fact, less than half of those living in Solihull also worked there and less than half of those working in the borough lived there too. Given that income levels were similar for both the workforce and residents, this is perhaps surprising. It perhaps reflects historic patterns where Solihull was regarded as a “dormitory town” for managerial and professional workers in Birmingham. The more recent growth of high value employment within the borough has, therefore, attracted new workers from outside the borough rather than encouraging existing residents to change job.
- 1.5.19 Certainly many Solihull residents still work in Birmingham. In 2001, around 35% of local workers commuted into Birmingham. Numbers travelling elsewhere were small; around 5.5% to Warwickshire and 3.8% to Coventry were the largest. Birmingham was also the main source for in-commuters, with 26% of Solihull’s workforce living there. Of the remainder, around 6.6% lived in Warwickshire, 4.8% in Worcestershire and 2.8% in Coventry.
- 1.5.20 Travel to study patterns - Info awaited (i.e. school and colleges). For example, at Solihull College, 56% of full time students live in Birmingham

Community Tensions

- 1.5.21 There is concern about the wider impact of hate crime. Between October 2008 and September 2009 226 hate crimes were recorded, which is a slight reduction on the previous 2 years it is recognised however that recorded crime does not, on its own, give a true picture.
- 1.5.22 Tensions are also monitored on a regular basis. This has identified a few issues
- Opportunities to share and use information more strategically.
 - The importance of managing communication and minimising the risk of malicious misrepresentation (e.g. negative media publicity following the planning application made last year for a proposed Muslim cultural centre).
 - Racial harassment - identifying patterns (e.g. night-time economy) that better inform preventative / enforcement measures. There also a need to build confidence and demonstrate that action will be taken where there is firm evidence.
 - Build stronger links with Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities seeking greater access to community facilities.

1.6 What are the Challenges and Opportunities?

1.6.1 Within the context of this strategy, there are eight major challenges. These are shown below together with key actions over the next three years that will help take this strategy forward.

1.6.2 **Sending the Right Message** - the survey showed that Solihull has a high level of cohesion, which should be celebrated. Some key actions are therefore to:

- Identify good examples of cohesion that could serve as case studies; and
- Make better use of marketing and publicity to give positive messages on Cohesion, including new arrivals.

1.6.3 **Encouraging communities to be inclusive** - there are many barriers to cohesion. Although some measures are in place to that encourage minority communities to belong to their neighbourhood and the borough as a whole, there is clearly scope for further work. Key actions will include:

- Developing a programme of Faiths' Festivals Celebration - raising awareness about different faith traditions and cultures.
- Developing a mechanism to engage with faith communities and developing the leadership skills of faith leaders, including young people and women.
- Developing ways of engaging lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT) and representative groups on a local and national level.
- Strengthening the mechanisms for engagement with the Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) Community.

1.6.4 **Making Solihull a Place that Welcomes New Arrivals** - migration is a sensitive issue and attitudes can be heavily influenced negatively by the media. We need to have a better understanding of the background and needs of new arrivals and make sure that our services are responsive. There is a need to learn more about these groups (see 1.6.8). In the short term, key actions include:

- Mapping the impact of new arrivals on our services and providing the right support for new arrivals.
- Reviewing our information and resource provided for new and recent migrants and identify scope for improvement.

1.6.5 **Addressing Community Isolation for Vulnerable People** - many vulnerability people feel outside society because of age, disability or illness. As more vulnerable people are encouraged to live in the community, this will create pressures and challenges for institutions and local people. Key actions include:

- Working through our existing forums, attempt better engagement of minorities...
- Ensure that the residential and domiciliary care needs of BME older people are being met.

1.6.6 **Understanding Inter-generational issues** - there is concern about how well some children and young people relate to adults, especially older people, in community settings. There are a host of issues that are manifested through, for example, complaints and perceptions, which would seem to indicate a level of intolerance towards young people.

1.6.7 **Tackling Hate Crime** - the impact of hate crime extends beyond the actual incidents, which often tend to be unrelated. The broader concern is how individual communities perceive the level of action / inaction by institutions in terms of their response and prevention. A number of actions are proposed:

- Further research is planned to understand the causes and patterns of reported hate crime.
- Holocaust Memorial Day will be used to raise awareness in the wider community about hate crime. Taking the core theme is *A legacy of Hope and Taking a Stand against Hatred* - a series of activities will be implemented through schools, colleges and libraries.
- Increase the confidence of LGBT communities to report homophobic hate crime, which have a low level of reporting.
- Take steps to address any distortion of message following incidents of hate crime.
- Provide regular platforms for faith leaders to promote shared values and provide opportunities / forums where faith communities, especially young people, can raise and discuss grievances.

1.6.8 **Filling the gaps in our knowledge** - although recent market research takes us a step forward, there are considered to be known gaps in our understanding of local communities. For example:

- Learning and understand the needs of our newest arrivals in the community, for example workers and their families from Eastern European, refugees and asylum seekers. Make sure that we understand needs and respond to the needs of vulnerable migrants such as UASC.
- Obtain a better understanding of our LGBT communities.
- Inter-generational issues
- Impact of recession on cohesion.

1.6.9 **Making Cohesion a Reality** - this is important to minimise the risk of social fragmentation in the event of civil unrest. Key actions will include:

- Agreeing a set of common values across the Solihull Partnership and faith communities in Solihull and Birmingham.
- Set up a high level forum to shape future policy and promote this strategy
- Take steps to ensure a united front in response to local community tension or conflict.

1.7 Next Steps

1.7.1 Your views are sought on the questions set out above.

- Your views will be taken into account by the project team set up to develop the strategy (31st March 2010). Following consultation, the challenge will then be to identify practical measures and milestones that will form part of an action plan, led by the Solihull Partnership.
- We will then contact you again to let you know how we used the information included in your response (March / April 2010)
- The SP Governing Board will then sign off a further draft before being launched in April / May 2010.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you recognise and agree with the **narrative** set out in 1.1 - 1.5. Would you agree with the assumptions made?
2. Do you consider that there are any gaps or omissions e.g. in terms of activities undertaken or in our knowledge of Solihull communities?
3. What are your views on the 8 **challenges** set out (in 1.6)? Has anything been missed? What would you consider the most important priorities?
4. Is your organisation, team or group planning any actions that would help meet these challenges?
5. What would you consider as **measures of success** in achieving community cohesion?
6. Are there ways in which you can contribute to the development of this strategy?
7. Would you be interested in joining a focus group to inform the latter stages of this work?