

REPORT OF: **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MANAGER**

TO: **EXECUTIVE**

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**THE GOOD NEIGHBOURS PROJECT – ADVANCING THE
WORK ON COHESION IN PENDLE**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update on progress of Community Cohesion work in Pendle and to seek match funding support for its continuation through a Big Lottery bid by Building Bridges for 'The Good Neighbours Project' .

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) The Executive is asked to consider the project outlined in this report and approve a match funding commitment of £30,000 spread over 4 years subject to the Big Lottery bid being successful.
- (2) In support of the above, agree an initial supplementary revenue estimate of £7,500 in the current financial year funded from the External Funding Receipts Reserve.
- (3) Note that contributions in later years will be built in to subsequent revenue budgets funded by contributions from the above reserve.

REASON

To continue to build on community cohesion in the Borough.

Background

1. Pendle Council has, over the years, recognised the importance of encouraging good relations and integration of communities across the Borough. Projects have been supported which have challenged racism and aimed to build tolerance and understanding. The need for these approaches has become a national imperative: firstly through the new Prevent Duties to offset and undermine violent extremism and latterly the publication and pending implementation of the recommendations of the Casey Review into divided communities (opportunity and integration).

2. Pendle had already responded positively to these issues by working in partnership with Building Bridges to set up the Connecting Communities Project in May 2016. This established two community led forums: the Community Cohesion Action Network and the Pendle Forum of Faiths. The Council identified £10,000 for the first year of a two year project with a further £10000 coming from Bowland Trust to take the project through to April 2018. The aims of the CCAN are to bring together groups:
 - to engage on Community Cohesion matters; to network and share knowledge / good practice on local initiatives promoting integration.
 - to build the capacity of local groups/organisations by informing them on local and national policy on Cohesion, Integration, Interfaith and Prevent agendas.
 - to develop a structured 'partnership' approach towards tackling challenges in line with resources available.
3. The Faith Forum aims to bring together faith leaders to develop friendships and understanding on common social issues and interfaith matters.
4. The strength of this arrangement lies in that it is led by the voluntary and community sector enhancing the aims and objectives of the Council at a time of diminishing resources.

Progress to date

Community Cohesion Action Network :

- 35 organisations are members from across Community, Council, Police, Health, Young People and Education (Primary, Secondary and College), Arts, Housing, Young people's service and faith-based groups.
- Four meetings have taken place - May, August and November 2016, February 2017. The turn out and quality of discussion has been excellent.
- Format of meetings entails development of local knowledge via keynote speaker on a specific, networking, discussion on priority issues with gentle persuasion for groups to respond with activity and networking.
- Based on action points from CCAN - 2 community events were developed: community conversations 3rd August and 24th August.
- These were followed up with a major cohesion event - Banquet for over 500 people at the Brierfield Mill on 1st October which received massive media coverage across newspaper, radio and television. CANN member organisations were central to this event.
- Additional joint project with pupils from Park High and Marsden Heights school is being developed following presentations at the CCAN.
- Smaller partnership groups are starting to form between member organisations.

The Pendle Forum of Faiths - Progress to date:

- 19 people from 12 Churches and 6 Mosques across the borough form the current membership of this forum. The PFF runs very differently to CCAN and the focus at this stage is to bring people together for discussion, dialogue and relation-building.
- Three meetings have taken place - June and October 2016, February 2017.
- Development of the format of meetings is three aspects, interfaith dialogue, promoting community solidarity, responding as one voice to community issues.
- 4 additional engagement events have taken place involving PFF members and people from respective Church and Mosque congregations:
 - Opening of fast at Ghausia Mosque, Nelson.
 - Attendance at Church service at Baptist Church, Nelson.
 - Attendance and address at Mawlid event Ghausia Mosque, Nelson.
 - Attendance at Christmas Carol service at St Luke's, Brierfield.

GOOD NEIGHBOURS PROJECT Sub-title: COHESION IN ACTION

To build on and expand the scope of their current work programme in schools and project outlined above Building Bridges have submitted a substantial bid to the Big Lottery and have successfully progressed to stage 2 of the application process.

The project which will run from July 2017 to June 2021 (4 years) and has a total value of £530,000. This is made up of £400,000 from Big Lottery with £100,000 agreed match funding from Bowland Trust. Building Bridges requests a further £30,000 from Pendle Borough Council match funding towards the project to the sum of £7,500 per year.

The project aims:

- to involve individuals and groups in creating cohesive communities that promote shared living and harmony and challenge racism, extremism and intolerance.
- to create relationships between people and established groups in Pendle, enabling them to have a pivotal role in improving their local community.
- to develop good role models to act as leaders and champions for integration, community cohesion and social action by giving them experience of the benefits of working together to create a cohesive and integrated society.

There are five distinct strands of project activity proposed, all of which are independent but also have clear linkages between each other so that approaches and activity can add value to initiatives taking place.

The approach will place people at the forefront of community engagement and participation – local people, taking local action. Activities will engage individuals, families, BME and faith communities within varying cultural and socio-economic backgrounds:

1 - Community Conversations:

We will host Community Conversations, the spectrum of which will touch upon positive matters and commonalities but also address 'topical and difficult' questions which impact on levels of intolerance, hatred and social division.

A community conversation will take place in each of the 4 urban towns across the borough on a 3-monthly basis. Venues such as town halls, Churches, Mosques and community centres will host. These conversations will be supported by additional discussions taking place at a neighbourhood level and run by local people with acquired skills from the 'Cultural Navigators' programme. Neighbourhood based conversations will take place up to 5 times a year in people's homes and ward-based spaces. We project 300 people directly being involved in the conversation forums and up to 900 people involved indirectly.

2 - Connecting Communities:

Our project will create opportunities for service users to attend events in a social setting. Beneficiaries within the context of a 'family unit' will be paired together on the basis of difference in race, faith or cultural background and partake in a mixture of shared activities followed by entertainment and food. All social events will have common themes such as festive celebrations, Lancashire day, the Big Lunch and help people to break-down barriers and realise commonalities which exist between them. Built into the design of events will be a task to get involved in the organisation and delivery of a community project based on a local need identified by families in attendance.

Events will take place in community halls on 3 occasions each year, all of which will have a community projects following on. We aim to have between 80 to 100 people taking part in each event and up to 20 people involved in follow-on project work which would impact on 100 people.

3 - Good Neighbours Day (GND):

The 'GND' is an initiative which will bring the agenda of community cohesion to a personal space, stressing the importance that community starts from the home and neighbourhood.

The 'GND' will take place on a fix date in the summer-term and run a series of borough-wide coordinated events at the same time. Beneficiaries from across age, class, faith, race will engage in a process to personalise a local project / event based on common ground. These events could be a street party or a cleaning the local area or campaign, the possibilities are many. Up to 8 neighbourhood events would take place in open areas such as streets or local community halls, directly involving over a 100 people and indirectly involving nearly a 1000 people.

4 - Schools Linking:

Based on the model of engagement from a 'Primary School Twinning Scheme' in Pendle which has been working with year 3 pupils, a programme of engagement will be developed which will target schools and pupils at Key stages 1,2,3 and 4. A bespoke programme will be devised which will bring together pupils from both within their respective Schools but also into community setting, a minimum of 3 workshops involving full classes of pupils. The partaking in learning activities, dialogue and relationship building will be under the theme of 'developing tomorrow's good citizens today'.

5 - Community Cohesion Action Network (CCAN)

This forum will be sustained for a further 4 years under the Good Neighbours Project and present grassroots communities being engaged via the Good Neighbours Project a connection into a larger partnership-based network.

Recommendation

The project will significantly extend the quality, scope and outcomes of cohesion work in the Borough and help to make it more sustainable. It will help to complement the Council's overall development strategy for the Borough by enhancing cohesion, integration and opportunity. The matched funding will attract significant resources into the Borough for work that needs to continue. It is recommended that the matched funding of £7500 per annum is agreed for the next 4 years.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The project fits well within the Council's strategic objective 'helping to create and sustain resilient communities'. It will help to build the relationships and dialogue necessary to deliver a rounded approach to Prevent and other difficult community cohesion issues.

Financial: The Council has no funding earmarked specifically to support this project. However, the project does offer an opportunity to lever in significant funding for the benefit of local communities if the bid to the Big Lottery is successful. At this stage the Council is being asked to commit a total contribution of £30,000 spread over a four year period.

Funding for this could be made available from the External Funding Receipts Reserve which contains an element of residual funding from previous grant based regimes. If the Executive agrees to support the Project and wishes to commit funding of £30,000 at this stage, it is asked to approve an initial supplementary revenue estimate in 2017/18 of £7,500 funded from the above reserve. This and contributions in subsequent years will be conditional on the Bid outcome and contributions for later years will, if the bid succeeds, be factored in to budgets for the relevant year in due course.

Legal: None

Risk Management: it will help to mitigate against the risks of problems arising from community tensions.

Health and Safety: there are no immediate health and safety impacts of this report

Sustainability: The recommendations in this report will create a sustainable medium term future for the Community Cohesion Action Network and the Faith Forum. By working with community and faith sectors it will build capacity and resilience at grassroots level to allow the work to continue.

Community Safety: The project could have an impact on reducing conflict and related crime and anti-social behaviour.

Equality and Diversity: The project will reach out to hard to reach groups and encourage action to combat inequality, prejudice and misunderstanding