

REPORT FROM: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

TO: EXECUTIVE

DATE: 20TH MARCH 2025

Report Author: Sandra Farnell
Tel. No: 01282 661053
E-mail: Sandra.farnell@pendle.gov.uk

COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval of the Community Cohesion Strategy and Community Engagement Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Community Cohesion Strategy be approved
- (2) That the Community Engagement Strategy be approved

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To ensure that our approach to community engagement and cohesion remains relevant, inclusive and aligned with the borough's long-term vision for social integration, equality, and community resilience.
- (2) To enhance participation, transparency and collaboration across all sectors of the community.

BACKGROUND

1. Pendle Borough Council is committed to making the borough a welcoming, inclusive and thriving place where all residents can feel valued and participate fully in community life.

- The Community Engagement Framework (2020) provided a structured approach to engaging residents in decision-making, service improvement and community development.
- The new Community Cohesion Strategy (2025-2028) builds on this by addressing key social, economic and environmental challenges affecting Pendle and setting out a framework for stronger, more cohesive communities. It is in response to the Council's corporate commitment to Community Cohesion, as outlined in the Corporate Plan

ISSUE

2. The new Community Cohesion Strategy outlines Pendle's vision for a welcoming and inclusive borough where all residents feel valued and included. It focuses on promoting equality, addressing local challenges and fostering partnerships to build stronger, resilient communities.
3. Key challenges for community cohesion in Pendle include:
 - Demographic & Cultural Diversity: Recognising and understanding the needs of Pendle's diverse communities and ensuring inclusivity.
 - Economic & Social Barriers: Tackling unemployment, housing instability, and health inequalities that impact on cohesion.
 - Communication & Engagement Gaps: Overcoming language barriers and misinformation to improve trust and participation.
 - Environmental & Digital Exclusion: Ensuring access to green spaces, quality public realms that instill a sense of pride, sustainability initiatives and digital connectivity for all residents.
4. Key Priorities for the Council will be to:
 - Promote Social Inclusion: Ensure that all residents, regardless of background, feel welcomed and valued.
 - Build Trust and Understanding: Strengthen relationships between different community groups, reducing barriers and promoting a shared understanding.
 - Empower Communities: Provide the tools and opportunities needed for residents to actively participate in civic life.
 - Address Conflict and Tension: Work with partners to manage social challenges and promote tolerance.

5. Themes and Outcomes

The Council's commitment to these priorities is to focus on delivering key cohesions and integration outcomes around the following six themes:

- Economy
- Housing

- Wellbeing and Resilience
- Environment
- Employment and Skills
- Digital Connectivity

6. Review of the Community Engagement Framework

The Community Engagement Framework (2020) has been reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and well positioned to support the Community Cohesion Strategy. There has been significant shifts in societal engagement since the Framework was launched in 2020. It was established more as a 'How To' guide to engagement. The revised document is now a strategy, providing long term vision for engagement, key principles and ways of working.

The Community Engagement Strategy builds on existing efforts to ensure that all Pendle residents have the opportunity to contribute to local decision-making. The updated strategy aims to remove barriers to engagement, improve communication and encourage active participation from underrepresented groups.

7. Key challenges in community engagement include:

- Limited Awareness: Many residents feel uninformed about council activities and engagement opportunities.
- Barriers to Participation: Language, digital exclusion, and accessibility issues prevent some groups from engaging.
- Trust & Transparency Issues: Some residents feel that their input does not lead to meaningful change.
- Changing Communication Needs: Traditional methods of engagement (e.g. local papers, meetings) are less effective for younger and digitally connected communities.

8. Key Priorities for the Council include:

- Embedding Social Value into Community Engagement by ensuring that what we do is of real benefit to people, communities and their environment and helps lead to a lasting positive change.
- Strengthen Communication: Improve access to information using digital platforms, community radio, and multilingual resources.
- Enhance Digital Engagement: Expand the use of surveys, video conferencing, and online tools to reach a wider audience.
- Promote Resident-Led Initiatives: Support projects like Bradley Big Local to empower communities to lead change.
- Improve Transparency & Feedback: Clearly communicate how resident input influences decisions and provide updates on progress.

- Targeted Outreach & Inclusion: Work with voluntary groups, faith communities, and rural residents to ensure engagement reaches all areas.
- Encourage Early Involvement: Engage residents in shaping policies at the planning stage rather than after decisions are made.
- Increase Collaboration with Partners: Work closely with businesses, schools, and public services to coordinate engagement efforts.
- Respect Privacy & Inclusion: Ensure all engagement activities protect confidentiality and promote fairness.

9. Expected Outcomes are to include:

- More inclusive and representative engagement from all communities.
- Improved trust and participation in council-led initiatives.
- Stronger collaboration with community organisations and stakeholders.
- Better-informed residents with greater influence over local decisions.

10. Alignment with the Council's Corporate Priorities

The revised Community Engagement Strategy and new Community Cohesion Strategy will support the council's core priorities, including:

- Creating resilient communities that reflect Pendle's diversity and ensure equitable access to services.
- Enhancing community safety by strengthening relationships between different community groups.
- Driving economic growth and sustainability through inclusive job creation and investment in skills development.

11. Both documents also align with the Public Sector Equality Duty, ensuring Pendle Borough Council takes proactive steps to:

- Eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations between diverse groups.
- Ensure inclusive participation in civic life.

12. To support both strategies, we will monitor the delivery of the outcomes and report annually to the Executive on progress.

CONCLUSION

13. The Community Cohesion Strategy and Community Engagement Strategy will help Pendle Borough Council create a more inclusive, engaged, and resilient borough. These strategies will help drive initiatives that empower residents, foster meaningful connections, and ensure that local decision-making is transparent, accessible, and representative of the diverse communities within Pendle.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The Community Cohesion Strategy requires targeted actions, partnerships, and resources to foster inclusivity, reduce inequalities, and strengthen community relationships, ensuring all residents feel valued and engaged in shaping Pendle's future.

Financial: None arising from the report

Legal: None arising from the report

Risk Management: None arising from the report

Health and Safety: There are issues around lone working some of which will be mitigated through the use of digital technology

Sustainability: None arising from the report

Community Safety: The Community Engagement Strategy supports the implementation of the Community Cohesion Strategy

Equality and Diversity: Both the Community Cohesion Strategy and the Community Engagement Strategy support inclusivity

APPENDICES

Appendix One:
Community Cohesion Strategy

Appendix Two:
Community Engagement Strategy

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

