

SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL – 27 MAY 2008

BY: HEAD OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: Draft Community Cohesion Policy

PURPOSE: For comment

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Council does not have a Community Cohesion Policy. On the 15th April the Cabinet agreed to put a draft Community Cohesion Policy out for public consultation. The Cabinet will consider a final draft of the policy at its meeting to be held on 15th July 2008.

2.0 CURRENT POSITION

2.1. The draft Community Cohesion Policy is attached to this report as appendix 1. This has been sent to the Council's partners on the Rural Action Zone and to all Parish Councils in the district for their comments. In addition, officers are undertaking some detailed consultation with groups who are specifically mentioned in the policy; migrant workers, young people and older people.

2.2. The Council is developing a Community Cohesion Policy in response to its poor score in national surveys that monitor community cohesion.

2.3. In February 2008 the Government published "The Government's Response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion". In this document the government acknowledged that local authorities' were best placed to facilitate improved local community cohesion and to do so required resources. The government will be adding £34M to Councils' Area Based Grant.

2.4. While it is not yet confirmed how much of this funding South Holland will be able to draw down, the government has based the grant levels on an area's score on the BVPI General Survey results - those with the lowest scores of "the percentage of residents who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together". South Holland's score in 06/07 was 38.4%, (up from 25.3% in 03/04) while the national average score was 79%. Only 10 out of 387 areas in England scored under 60%. Additional funding kicks in when an area's score falls under 70% and is graded up to those where the score was under 55% - so South Holland is in the highest percentage bracket for this funding. As part of the budget setting process, Council approved setting up a Community Cohesion Reserve to hold the grant funding.

2.5. The government has stated that

"2.4 Local authorities will be able to use the money to respond to their own particular challenges - for example some will focus on the impacts of new migration, others may conclude that the priority is to promote interaction between people from

different backgrounds, and others to create a sense of shared belonging and pride in an area."

Thus the Council's new Community Cohesion Policy will help prioritise the issues within South Holland that this funding will need to address.

- 2.6. The Government will be measuring the impact of the additional funding through PSA 21 - "to build cohesive, empowered and active communities" and they will quantify change against 4 national indicators (3 of which are in the 198 new national indicators):
- The percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
 - The percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
 - The percentage of people who have meaningful interactions with people from different backgrounds
 - The percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.

3.0 **LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no legal, financial or risk management implications as this report is for information only.

4.0 **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 4.1 **Members are asked to pass comment on the draft Community Cohesion Policy.**

Background papers:- Our Shared Futures The Commission on Integration and Cohesion June 2007.

Appendices: Draft Community Cohesion Policy

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Please contact Sue Bolter, the Head of Economic and Community Development if you want more information about this report or the background papers. You can contact her:

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POLICY TITLE

DRAFT Community Cohesion Policy 2008

REVISION DATE

2010

REPLACES POLICY

New in 2008

POLICY NUMBER**POLICY AIM**

The aim of this policy is to define what community cohesion means to South Holland District Council, outline the community cohesion issues existing within the district and determine how the Council will address these issues through the provision of its services and its relationships with its partners.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy addresses the issue of community cohesion in South Holland. The Council wishes to see cohesive communities within South Holland and has adopted the Local Government Association's definition of a cohesive community to guide its policy. The communities in South Holland have seen sustained population growth caused by the inward migration of older people from other parts of the UK. More recently it has experienced rapid population growth from migrants from Poland, Portugal, Lithuania, Latvia and a number of other countries.

This has given rise to community tensions that are not in all cases fully quantified but are anecdotally led such as fear of increased crime, lack of access to jobs, housing and school places. It is the concern of the Council and its partners that these local issues are addressed appropriately and are not allowed to build up in to resentment or, at its worst, public disorder. The Council wishes to see people of different backgrounds expressing mutual respect and living contentedly in South Holland.

This policy outlines the Council's approach to community cohesion and outlines the work that the council will undertake to improve and promote community cohesion in the future.

POLICY STATEMENT**National Policy Context**

In 2002 the Local Government Association and its partners agreed a definition of a cohesive community. The Council has adopted this definition to guide its own understanding of community cohesion issues within South Holland. This definition is:

A cohesive community is one where:

- *There is a common vision and sense of belonging*
- *The diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued*
- *Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities*
- *Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.*

In October 2006 the government published a white paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" which, amongst a wide range of other issues to do with local government, it set out its strategy for community cohesion. This focused on issues to do with communities that were from ethnic minority groups, radicalised Muslims and new migrants. It addressed issues to do with tackling religious extremism, public disturbances and disorder, far right myths and the underlying drivers of tensions between different groups. This document set out eight "guiding principles" that would define central government's work:-

- Strong leadership and engagement
- Developing shared values
- Preventing the problems of tomorrow
- Good information
- Visible work to tackle inequalities
- Involving young people
- Interfaith work
- Partners such as third sector organisations.

In February 2008 the Dept. Of Communities and Local Government published research findings that showed a number of predictors of community cohesion. These were:

- Both individual and community-level factors influence cohesion
- Ethnic diversity drives cohesion
- Disadvantage erodes community cohesion
- Crime and fear of crime strongly undermine cohesion
- Empowerment is an important factor
- Volunteering is a positive predictor of cohesion
- Vulnerable groups have more negative perceptions of cohesion
- The predictors of cohesion vary across ethnic groups.

Community Cohesion issues in South Holland

The make up of South Holland is that of a predominantly white Christian population with less than 1% of local people belonging to a visible ethnic minority group. Thus the issues that concern the government of religious extremism linked to radicalized young Muslims do not apply in South Holland.

Community cohesion within South Holland has been challenged by recent population change. Census data has shown that the district has been growing at a rate greater than the national average. Prior to 2004 this was predominantly due to the inward migration of older people from other parts of the UK, mainly the southern counties. This distorted the age profile of the population in South Holland, which was older than the Lincolnshire or national average.

The distortion in the district's age profile has given rise to known tensions between older and younger people. The General Survey of 2006/07 showed that the aspect respondents' listed more often than any other as most in need of improving in their local area were "activities for teenagers" (41.1%). Anti social behaviour was increasingly seen as a problem with "parents not being made

to take responsibility for the behaviour of their children” noted by 62.8% of respondents and “teenagers hanging around the streets” by 57.4%.

Less than half of respondents agreed with various community cohesion statements asked within the General Survey. The most striking response rate was to the question ‘this local area is a place where people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds get on well together, only 38.4% of South Holland people agreed with this; the national rate was 79%. (Other measures reflect the strength of the national opinion for example the Citizenship Survey April – September 2007 showed a national rate of 82% to this question.) Only 39.9% of local people thought “this local area is a place where residents respect ethnic differences between people”. Also only 46.3% of local people thought SHDC “caters well for people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds”. Agreement with each of these three community cohesion statements has increased since the General Survey of 2003/04 (undertaken prior to the large influx of European migrant workers) but the figures for 2006/07 are still very low indicating potential community tensions that have existed for some time and also prior to the latest wave of new population.

South Holland is characterised by an aging population, many of whom are moving into the district from the south of England. These new comers into South Holland have brought new attitudes with them from their experiences in their previous communities. For example, South Holland has a really low crime rate, but many people’s perception of crime is disproportionately high. Many of the newer groups of residents have comfortable disposable incomes, having moved to more affordable accommodation in the district from high cost housing areas in the south of the country. However, they have also brought the southern experience of crime with them. Many of the new older residents are retired with the time and interest to get involved in local community groups. Thus they have gained considerable local influence that allows their attitudes to affect public opinion more widely.

Younger people aged under 18 make up 17.9% of the population. They do well at school but need to leave the district if they wish to continue to study in Higher or Further Education. This group then tends to find work elsewhere in the country and do not return to South Holland, further distorting the age profile of the district in favour of older people.

Overall South Holland is a mid-ranking district in the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007. This accounts for its sparse rural population and the consequent lack of services such as public transport, access to higher and further education and medical care. However, these lack of services are balanced against high employment rates – with low wages in some areas off-set by independent incomes in others.

Another challenge for community cohesion in South Holland is related to migrant workers. The area has always had a large seasonal workforce due to its reliance on agricultural and food production industries. However after the European Accession in 2004 the area saw a large influx of migrant workers from the ex-eastern block states, the exact numbers are not known (there is no comprehensive data set) but are estimated to be in excess of 5,000. For example between May 2004 and September 2007, 4920 people from the A8 states registered under the Worker Registration Scheme as working in South Holland. Although there are limitations with this data, this is a good proxy for the number of migrant workers working in South Holland. The most commonly requested languages used with the Council are Russian, Polish and Portuguese. Nationally South Holland and its neighbour Boston have received the largest number of EU nationals as migrant workers in the UK outside London. The sudden growth in non-UK nationals in the district has presented a range of issues for local communities.

This new communities have been excellent for local businesses, providing a flexible workforce that enables them to respond to the demands of agricultural production and food supply swiftly and appropriately. This ready supply of labour has undoubtedly ensured that many of the large food processing businesses have remained in South Holland and not considered re-locating. However

its is not uncommon to hear that local people feel that they do not get adequate access to local jobs and that the ready supply of migrant labour depresses local wage rates.

Considerable pressure has come to bear on the local housing market with many larger family homes becoming Houses in Multiple Occupation. Smaller, cheaper houses are also proving popular for both multi-occupation and individually rented/ purchased homes for migrant families. There is anecdotal evidence that people that ran Bed and Breakfasts for the tourism trade now no longer worry about attracting tourists as they can fill all their rooms with workers. There is the use of temporary caravan based accommodation across the district and it is common to see minibuses full of workers being driven from site to site.

However, South Holland has lived with this phenomenon for a number of years now. Migrant workers are more established in the district and research in 2004 "(The Dynamics of Migrant Labour) showed that nearly 40% were interested in settling permanently in the UK. Migrant workers are no longer migrant and are buying properties locally. As has been the case in other areas and with other groups of new migrants to the UK, there are early indications that certain nationalities are choosing to live near to each other – for social and community reasons. For example, it is estimated that there are an additional 450 school age children in the district due to migrant worker families, and while Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has been challenged with teaching English as a second language for these children, their presence has prevented a number of primary schools from being considered for closure as their rolls are no longer falling. It is a challenge for both Councils to help ensure that the communities integrate and not fragment.

The influx of migrant workers has also given rise to a political response. Prior to the 2007 District Council elections South Holland District Council had the only sitting British National Party member in the East Midlands region - a councilor who changed to the BNP from his original elected party. In the 2007 elections the BNP fielded three candidates in Holbeach Town gaining over 600 votes each – setting these amongst the numerically largest number of votes for BNP candidates in the region. While none of the candidates were selected as Councilors, they did gain a significant proportion of the vote. Other BNP candidates across the East Midlands won seats with fewer votes for example in Charnwood (324), Brinsley Broxtowe (439) or North West Leicestershire (449). In other parts of the region the BNP won seven seats in uncontested wards. The BNP are still very active and regularly leaflet homes in South Holland which must undermine good community cohesion.

The issue of gypsy and traveler sites is also one that has caused local controversy. The Council has a legal obligation to identify sites suitable for permanent and transitory encampments. The planning process the Council has embarked upon from the autumn of 2007 to identify these sites, has resulted in a great deal of local interest and a number of negative racial stereotyping comments being received by the Council. The Council's Hate Crime reporting procedures are in need of improvement so that the level of local response is adequately monitored and trends analysed.

IMPLEMENTATION

Considering the definition of a cohesive community and looking at the issues that positively impact on community cohesion, this section suggests ways that the Council can deliver its community cohesion principles:

1) *There is a common vision and sense of belonging*

1.1 Members of the Council have an important and clear community leadership role. One of the Council's priorities is Democratic Community leadership. There is a role for Members to embrace the changes within South Holland's communities and work to integrate the newer members of the population without alienating its longer standing residents.

- 1.2 Traditionally young people have little influence within the community, being the least likely to join influential local community bodies such as Parish Councils. The Council will work to counteract the negative views held by many residents concerning young people by supporting initiatives such as the Youth Council and by continuing to provide a range of outside school sports and cultural activities that encourages their positive participation and engagement.
- 1.3 The Council will continue to ensure that newer members of its population are included in local democratic processes from community consultation to playing an active role in local citizenship issues. It recognises that many members of its local population do not have English as their first language and so it will take steps to ensure this “hard to reach” group is catered for and its concerns appropriately addressed.

2) The diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued

- 2.1 The district has experienced rapid population change. Although the Council has undertaken extremely useful local research to understand the general nature of some of the changes that have taken place, it still needs to undertake more detailed specific research into the on-going changes and the demands that this is making on its local infrastructure and its community issues. It is a changing situation that gives rise to varying circumstances requiring a range of positive responses. The Council will share good practice and knowledge and where appropriate work collaboratively with its partners.
- 2.2 The Council will work to influence its partners, helping them to understand the issues that South Holland faces and the role that they can play in partnership with the Council to address and answer the issues within our local communities. It will do this primarily through the local strategic partnership; Rural Action Zone (RAZ). The Council is also an active partner of the local Community Safety Partnership and will work through this and other groups to ensure that community cohesion issues are fully addressed.
- 2.3 The Council will continue to promote “myth busting” through its publications and other work so that it addresses some of the incorrect issues that provide fuel for underlying community tension.
- 2.4 The Council will continue to seek to make the district one in which there is a high quality of life for all residents. It will continue in its role of maintaining open spaces and a clean and tidy street scene within the district. It will also prioritise the removal of racist graffiti and seek to prosecute those that choose to act in this manner. It will also encourage and support community events that celebrate local heritage, culture and traditions. SHDC needs to remove barriers to and promote opportunities for interaction e.g. language, timing of events, transport, location, cost etc

3) Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities

- 3.1 The Council’s Equality Policy (2007) clearly states that services will be provided fairly and equitably across the district for all residents whatever their background. The Council is working towards gaining level three of the Local Government Equality Standard, and is using this process to ensure it meets its legal duties. This includes the duty to positively promote good relations between people of different races and backgrounds. Council staff’s equality training will include the need to not collude with discriminatory attitudes expressed by customers and to encourage more inclusive and objective attitudes.

- 3.2 The Council will improve its hate crime reporting system and share this information with its partners. This will assist the police to monitor any tensions that may be arising and assist in forewarning of significant issues that might result in disorder.
- 3.3 The Council will also seek to influence funding agencies to provide additional resources into the district to enhance its own effort. The response to the changes that South Holland has experienced needs to be made over a considerable length of time and new attitudes and methods of support thoroughly embedded.
- 3.4 The Council will support “myth-busting” activities and actively encourage people to participate in their local community. Effective communication is important if we are to empower people and give them the knowledge and confidence to be active citizens. This can be achieved through the local media, leaflets, websites and similar. The Council will seek to improve service information and access.
- 3.5 One of the Council’s priorities is Democratic Leadership and it will work to improve community and democratic participation.

4) Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

- 4.1 The Council has provided translated induction packs for local employers and will continue to maintain a migrant workers website to provide accessible and translated information for migrant workers. The Council’s policy is translation on demand, not per se.
- 4.2 The Council works with its County Council colleagues in Children Services and sits on the Lincolnshire Children’s Strategic Partnership and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Board. Through these groups it will seek to influence its partnership and so improve the experience for the children of new arrivals in the district within their school environments.
- 4.3 The Council will encourage relationships between schools and the indigenous and new arrival communities to develop interaction, mutual respect and understanding. Young people are ideal to help influence the wider community on community cohesion issues.
- 4.4 Within neighbourhoods the Council will continue to seek ways in which it can assist with the integration of newly arrived people. It will work to prevent fragmentation and will address any negative or hostile feelings within its communities. It will do this through addressing and confronting hate crime issues, as well as by ensuring that newer residents have proper and equal access to its services.
- 4.5 The Council will continue to help and support the development of local community initiatives
- 4.6 The Council currently positively addresses neighbourhood disputes not only through its role as a social landlord, but also in the private sector through an Anti-social behaviour worker and an environmental protection service. The Council will seek to enhance this area of work wherever it can within the resources available to it.
- 4.7 As a landlord the Council has over 1,000 sheltered housing units accommodating elderly residents. It has deployed “mosquitoes” to deter young people from congregating at inappropriate locations and will continue to do so. It will also continue to work in partnership with the local Community Police Support Officers in order to tackle Neighbourhood issues quickly and so take residents concerns seriously.

MONITORING

The policy will be monitored in the following ways:

MONITORING ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
This policy overall will be monitored by the Corporate Equality Working Group	HoECD
<i>Partnership Working, influence</i>	ACX
Continuing research into local population change and other community cohesion issues	ACX
Resource identification	All HoS
Anti-Social Behaviour work & Environmental Protection	HoCNS
Social integration issues: culture	HoECD

Performance Indicators to use?

POLICY CONSULTATION

This policy will be sent for consultation to

1. The Council's partners on the RAZ.
2. All Parish Councils.
3. Focus groups will be held with migrant workers, older people and young people (through the South Holland Youth Council).

POLICY APPROVAL

Draft Policy approved by SMT date: 25th February 2008

Draft Policy approved by Cabinet date:

RELATED POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper October 2006

Predictors of community cohesion: multi-level modeling of the 2005 Citizenship Survey

Department for Communities and Local Government February 2008.

Government's Response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion Dept of Communities and Local Government February 2008

Links to SHDC's:-

Corporate Equality Policy 2007

Housing Strategy (2006 – 2011)

Cultural Strategy 2007 – 2012

Economic Development Strategy 2006 - 2009

