

Lead Member Foreword



We are pleased to be presenting the report of the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee.

We live in one of the most rapidly diversifying boroughs in London. As the increase in the number of people from different ethnic backgrounds offers considerable opportunities, at the same time, the pace of change creates a number of real challenges for building a stronger community. The challenge for the Council and its partners is to ensure that this diversity is a source of strength for the Borough.

Throughout this report, we consider the wide range of work undertaken by the Council and partners to promote a cohesive Barking and Dagenham. The Committee was also pleased to hear directly, the views and concerns of the community and voluntary groups.

We make a number of recommendations, which we believe will build on the positive work underway. A lot of positive work is already being done by a vast majority of community and voluntary organisations throughout the borough, and we as the Council must recognise their work and support these organisations.

Finally I would like to thank all the people who have contributed to this review. This includes all the Members of the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee, all the Officers who presented evidence. Finally those community and voluntary organisations who took the time out to meet with the Select Committee to give evidence or participate in the consultation meetings.

Cllr Darren Rodwell

Lead Member of the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 28 July 2010, the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee (SSCSC) commissioned a review into community cohesion in the borough. The Select Committee wanted to know, in the current financial climate, how the Council and its partners can support community and voluntary groups in building cohesion amongst communities in the borough. The Select Committee also wanted to explore what opportunities are currently available for community and voluntary groups to build community cohesion.

The review was prompted by a number of considerations:

- Relevant indicators drawn from the Place Survey 2008/09 showed that only 49% of people in Barking and Dagenham believed that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area. Furthermore, only 44% of people in Barking and Dagenham felt that they belonged to their neighbourhoods.
- The review was strategically linked to the Council's Community priority to provide "a stronger and more cohesive borough so that it is a place where all people get along, and of which all residents feel proud". The review was also intended to identify and promote opportunities for the Third Sector to enhance community cohesion in the borough.
- Members also identified that community cohesion was a key concern and was raised frequently by residents during their 2010 election campaign.

The terms of reference for the Select Committee can be viewed in Appendix 1.

The Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee consisted of the following nine Councillors in the 2010-11 municipal year:

- Councillor Darren Rodwell (Lead Member)
- Councillor Laila Butt (Deputy Lead Member)
- Councillor Saima Ashraf
- Councillor Jim Clee
- Councillor Eileen Keller
- Councillor Graham Letchford
- Councillor Margaret Mullane
- Councillor Tony Perry
- Councillor Maureen Worby

The Scrutiny Officer was Paramjit Nijher. The Lead Service Officer for the review was Heather Wills, the Head of Community Cohesion and Equalities, who supported the Select Committee throughout the review and helped oversee the delivery of the project in collaboration with the Lead Member and the Scrutiny Officer.

Anne Bristow, the Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services, nominated as the SSCSC Scrutiny Champion, also supported the Select Committee throughout the review and provided her expertise and guidance to the Select Committee.

Over the course of the review, the Select Committee met on eight occasions, including formal and informal meetings, and heard evidence from a wide range of services and organisations associated with building community cohesion and the voluntary and community sector. The Select Committee also undertook a visit to Gascoigne Primary School, which has been rated outstanding for community cohesion.

The Select Committee enabled community and voluntary groups and their representatives to give their views directly, through a number of consultation meetings held in July, August and September 2010. The Select Committee heard view of approximately 25 community and voluntary groups and their representatives based throughout the borough. A number of issues and concerns were raised by the groups which are addressed throughout this report

This report will be presented to the Select Committee for agreement in January 2011. The report will then be presented to Cabinet on 15 March 2011 for comments and then for consideration by the Assembly on 30 March 2011.

If the report is agreed by the Assembly, an action plan outlining how the recommendations will be implemented will be produced and the recommendations will be monitored by the Select Committee until each one is completed.

When finalised and agreed, the findings of this report will be publicised in the following ways:

- A download copy will be made available from the Council's website at **www.lbbd.gov.uk/scrutiny**
- A brief summary of the report will be published in 'The News' and sent to other local newspapers.
- A comprehensive summary of the report's findings will be sent to interested parties and relevant organisations.
- A download copy will be made available from the 'Centre for Public Scrutiny' website.

2. Background

2.1 What is community cohesion?

Although the term community cohesion has many dimensions, a widely accepted definition of a 'cohesive community', was introduced by the Government in 2008; "Community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and exiting residents to adjust to one another¹."

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008, 'The Government's response to the commission on Integration and Cohesion'.

The Government's vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

- *People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities*
- *People knowing their rights and responsibilities*
- *People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.*

and three key ways of living together:

- *A shared future vision and sense of belonging*
- *A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity*
- *Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.*

While not disagreeing with the Government's definition, Barking and Dagenham Council developed its own, simpler, definition and vision when developing a new Community Cohesion strategy in 2007:

Together we choose to build and support:

- *A strong community who will get fair access to services*
- *A place where people respect one another and enjoy safe and peaceful lives*
- *Opportunities to meet together and look forward to the future*

2.2 National Context and Guidance relating to community cohesion

Creating community cohesion is a complex challenge and has been a key theme in national and local government agendas since civic disturbances in 2001. Whilst there is a natural focus on how people from different cultural backgrounds can live peacefully side-by-side, the challenge exists equally in building intergenerational cohesion.

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced the 'wellbeing power' – the power for Councils to promote the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their area. Many types of council have seen this as endorsement of their mainstream role in building community cohesion locally. No other statutory service has this power.

Local Authorities have legal duties with respect to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination and harassment – at present this relates to race, gender and disability, but when the new Equality Act comes fully into force (expected by March 2011), this will be extended to age, sexual orientation, faith and belief and pregnant women and new mothers.

While much work in relation to community cohesion is underpinned by effective work in relation to promoting equalities and tackling discrimination, a wider approach is required to build 'community spirit', to ensure that services are perceived to be fair, and to build good relationships between communities and individuals.

The Coalition Government's idea of 'Big Society' suggests that citizens and communities will gain the power and information they need to come together,

solve the problems they face. The creation of the Big Society forms one of the main tenets of the government's vision for the future of society. The Voluntary and Community sector is expected to be the driving force behind this radical shift in power. It is hoped that the Big Society will help bring communities together and create a new era of local action.

Local authorities are key to promoting cohesion. They can do this by taking an active role in listening to their local communities – in terms of how they're changing, whether people are getting on well together, whether they're satisfied with their local area as a place to live, whether they're satisfied with the service they receive from the Council and whether they feel there is equality of service.

This has been measured through the national Place Survey conducted every two years.

2.3 Local Picture

The most recent figures show a borough population of approximately 175,600, living in just over 69,000 households². The borough is one of the fastest-growing in the country.

However, the Greater London Authority has predicted that by 2020, Barking and Dagenham will have a population of 205,000, reflecting the increase in the number of houses that are being built in the borough, particularly the Thames Gateway regeneration such as Barking Riverside, which brings a demand for services as well as great opportunities.

At the moment 26% of the population are under 16, 62% are aged 17 to 64 and 12% are 65 and older. The borough has a higher proportion of both older and younger people than the London average.

An important recent change has been the rapid rise in the proportion of residents who are black or from an ethnic minority. In 1991, only 6.8% of the borough's population were black or from an ethnic minority. This had risen to nearly 15% in 2001, and is now estimated to be approximately 33.7%³. Historically, there has been a stable white, working-class population in many parts of the borough, although in areas of Barking there has been a high number of people from different ethnic backgrounds, also well-established since the 1960s. Increasing the number of people from different ethnic backgrounds offers considerable opportunities, but the pace of change creates a number of real challenges for building a strong community.

² Office of National Statistics mid-year estimates, 2009

³ Estimate by LBBB Information and GIS Team 2010

A more detailed breakdown is provided below⁴:

Ethnic Group	Borough Count	Borough %
White British/Irish	102,637	56.4
White Other	19,695	10.8
Asian Indian	7,440	4.1
Asian Pakistani	9,754	5.4
Asian Bangladeshi	5,506	3.0
Asian Other	3,435	1.9
Black Caribbean	3,407	1.9
Black African	28,060	15.4
Black Other	514	0.3
Chinese	710	0.4
Other	970	0.5

Ipsos MORI⁵, provide an insight into what drives individuals' perceptions of their local area and what they are looking for from those that serve them. Their data includes the overall results and overall trends in relation to the perceptions-based National Indicators (NIs) from the National Place Survey conducted until now every two years.

The key indicator used to measure performance in relation to community cohesion is National Indicator 1: the percentage of people surveyed who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in the borough. The following table shows the results in the 2008/09 Place Survey:

England (City of London)	Highest	91.6%
England (LBBB)	Lowest	49.1%
England Average		75.3%
London (LB Richmond/Thames)*	Highest	87.6%
London (LBBB)	Lowest	49.1%
London Average		76.3%
BARKING & DAGENHAM		49.1%

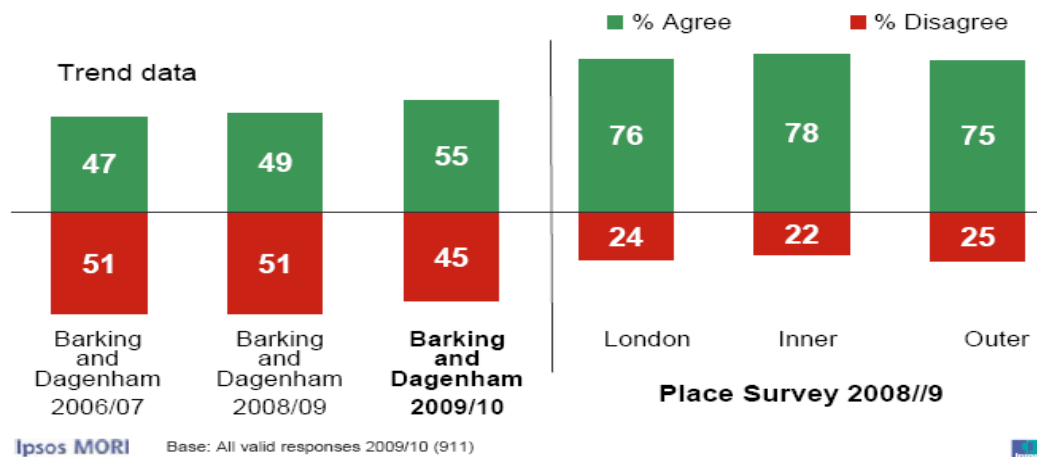
It can be seen that, in 2008/09, Barking and Dagenham was the worst performing local authority in the country against this indicator, with a score of 49.1%. Although the borough's performance was an improvement on its 2006/07 score,

⁴ This is assembled from three main data sources: GP Register 2010, Electoral Register 2010 and Annual School Census 2010 as part of the Borough's Community Mapping Project. The figures are a provisional estimate.

⁵ Ipsos MORI Local, *People, Perception and Place*, 2009

it still remained below London average. The Council conducted its own survey in 2009/10, using the same methodology: while performance had improved to 55%, this remains considerably below the national and London averages, as shown below:

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?



The performances of other London boroughs most comparable to Barking and Dagenham in this indicator are Lewisham with 78% and Hackney with 77%.

The Place Survey also measures cohesiveness in the local area by asking residents about the degree to which they feel they belong to their neighbourhood (NI 2). Survey results for this measure in 2009/10 found that less than half (46%) of residents in Barking and Dagenham state that they feel a strong sense of belonging to their local area. This means that when compared with 2008/09 averages, residents' in Barking and Dagenham are slightly less likely to feel a sense of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood than those living in London as whole (where the average is 52%).

Another facet of community cohesion is viewed by asking residents the extent to which people treat one another with respect and consideration in the local area. Interim Place Survey results show that more than a half (56%) of residents in Barking and Dagenham feel that people do not treat one another with respect and consideration is a problem in their local area, while 44% say that this is not a very big problem or not a problem at all.

During its review, the Select Committee learned of the Coalition Government's decision to terminate the National Place Survey. However, officers are currently liaising with other local authorities to see if they will continue to commission a less detailed version of the survey which will also ask the NI1 question, at a cost of approximately £10,000: if so, this will be conducted in January 2011. However, there is as yet no guarantee that other authorities will conduct the survey, so comparisons with elsewhere will not be possible. Members were of the opinion that the Borough's own Place Survey should be sustained as it provides a valuable indication of how the local residents feel about community cohesion.

Recommendation 1:

The Select Committee supports the borough undertaking its own survey to provide insight into the views of residents towards community cohesion. The Select Committee therefore recommends that the Council should continue to survey residents in relation to this indicator, using statistically comparable methods.

2.4 Community cohesion in Barking and Dagenham and relevant strategies in place

In 2004, Barking and Dagenham adopted its first community cohesion strategy, 'One Community'. This expired in March 2007, and a new strategy was built on the foundations of partnership working and shared values that One Community established, utilising insight gained from an extensive programme of community engagement with residents, key voluntary and community sector organisations and local businesses.

The results of the consultation revealed a number of community concerns and priorities, which were translated into actions in the strategy's action plan, published in July 2007. These were then continued into the Community Plan. The Community Plan outlines the Borough's aims for the future and the actions to be taken to deliver these aims, through working in partnership with a number of agencies, over the next three years. The plan is reviewed annually by the Barking and Dagenham Partnership to assess the progress on implementing the actions. New actions are incorporated or modified in light of progress, changing circumstances and in order to ensure continuous improvement.

The objective most relevant to community cohesion in the current Community Plan is

Fair and respectful: a stronger and more cohesive borough so that it is a place where all people get along and of which all people feel proud.

The Council routinely considers the potential impacts of new policies in terms of community cohesion. Services are required to identify actions which will mitigate any negative impacts of new policies.

2.5 How does LBBD compare with best practice

The Select Committee explored the work undertaken by other boroughs in building community cohesion; this also included the work of four local authorities awarded beacon status for their work around community cohesion:

Lancashire, one of the most diverse counties, was recognised for its work on fostering good community cohesion through strong and effective partnership work. The Lancashire Community Cohesion Partnership, sub-regional and made up of the 15 Lancashire local authorities, developed a joint approach to community cohesion by working closely with a range of partners, both within and outside the Council. Representatives of the partnership also link to other strategic

partnerships including the Hate Crime Incident Working Group, Police Division Tension Monitoring Groups and the Community Safety Board.

London Borough of Hounslow was awarded for its outstanding work around preventing violent and extremism, particularly on the risk of violent Muslim extremism. The Council carried out innovative research into Far Right and religious fundamentalism and involved a series of stakeholder interviews and consultation with 200 young people. The Council developed programmes ranging from work with British Muslim scholars to sharing best practice with counterparts in Australia.

London Borough of Southwark delivered its cohesion work through capacity building and citizenship activities. Four area-based teams were developed to work with local communities; geographical areas set their own action plans in relation to monitoring community tensions, understanding new communities or working in schools. Furthermore, following July 7 bombings, the Council worked with the Police to support south Asian and Somali communities to take stance against extremism.

London Borough of Waltham Forest was awarded for its work around challenging extremism. A number of people arrested in the borough as part of the counter-terrorism operation called 'Operation Overt', which caused tensions between communities and also generated media attention. However, through strong leadership and partnership work on tension monitoring and maintaining cohesion, beacon status was jointly awarded to the local authority and Waltham Forest Metropolitan Police Service.

Although Barking and Dagenham does not face the same challenges in relation to violent extremism as other boroughs, the borough is working closely with community groups and the police to reduce risks in this area. Barking and Dagenham's Community Safety Partnership comprises of partners across the borough such as the Police, Fire Service, Probation, NHS, Community and Voluntary Services and so on. The role of the partnership is to work closely across organisations to develop and implement solutions to meet community priorities.

The Committee also noted interesting examples of activities undertaken by other borough to promote community cohesion.

- The London Borough of Lewisham holds local assemblies in each ward which are chaired by local councillors. In 2008, the Council held a Food and Drink Festival open to all communities
- The project 'Eco-Street' involved the Lewisham Council asking residents to nominate a street to win an environmental make-over. The successful street received free energy assessments, information and advice on recycling, environmental goodies and local cleanups. The project highlighted the importance of effective engagement with residents by ensuring that the motivations for the project are well understood and are aligned with the vision and sense of local pride held by the residents.
- London Borough of Hackney delivered a strong programme of activities to encourage local people to get involved in the Olympics. The borough also

held 'Give or Take Days', held after Christmas with residents giving away unwanted toys, books, tools and kitchenware;

- The Kindness Club is a community rewards scheme run by a local newspaper in South London. The scheme offers rewards in exchange for good deeds and people who prove themselves worthy by doing good deed become members of the club. Members of the club also benefit from deals and discount offers from local businesses;
- The United Streets of Birmingham Community Awards was created in order to recognise the contribution of local people in reducing crime in Birmingham. Furthermore, in Shard End, Birmingham, people are celebrated as 'heroes' if they befriend other on the same housing development as them;
- Also on Birmingham's housing estates, under a community repairs scheme, people on the estate do minor repairs before they become major ones costing more money;
- In Suffolk, a community-led social enterprise has developed with the aim of tackling the economic and social needs of communities and promoting self-help. It delivers a range of projects, schemes, advice to community groups running village halls, and promotion of local products and businesses. The Good Neighbour Scheme involves raising a team of volunteers locally to help other people in their community with small services ranging from giving lifts to checking smoke alarms. There are currently 21 schemes up and running around the county and others under development. The Scheme has benefited communities by helping to knit the community together and building new friendships between villagers.
- Manchester has a very strong 'Manchester in Bloom' competition. A group of young and old residents who transformed a run-down piece of land - Hulme won the trophy for Best Large Neighbourhood category and also the Best of the Best with a secure planting scheme. Around 75 stainless-steel planters now brighten up the Liberty Gate estate. Flora and fauna make the area look good and act as a deterrent to burglars.

3 Findings

In compiling the findings, the evidence gathered by the Select Committee has been grouped into key themes, and recommendations are presented with the relevant themes to provide context.

3.1 What are the opportunities for community and voluntary groups to build cohesion?

3.1.1 The Voluntary and Community Sector

The voluntary sector or community sector (also non-profit sector) is made up of organisations that are for non-profit and non-governmental. This sector is also called the third sector.

There are over 500 Third Sector organisations in Barking and Dagenham, comprising voluntary, community and faith organisations, social enterprises and

not-for-profit organisations. The Committee noted that in 2007/08, over 120,000 people benefited from Third Sector services and activities, equating to 74% of the local population.

The Third Sector has a key role to play in supporting local communities within Barking and Dagenham, as well as creating employment, volunteering and work placement opportunities. Members were pleased to note the optimism of organisations in the Borough, as 48% had seen their turnover grow in the previous 12 months and over 50% felt that it would continue to grow in the future.

The Select Committee took the view that currently the voluntary and community sector in Barking and Dagenham sits in three tiers. Members established that tier one represented the well established voluntary and charitable organisations that are recognised and are regularly funded. Tier two includes the local community and voluntary groups that provide support to the community i.e. managing the community halls etc. Tier three represents the small groups such as the local knitting club, scout groups or the Tenants and Residents Associations which the Select Committee believe are under-represented in the borough. Currently there is no information to determine whether there is an average distribution of small, medium and large community groups across the borough.

Members felt that the Council needs to encourage people to come together to build community activity, and to ensure there is support for small groups to get established. The Council should also ensure that the benefits of working together are demonstrated to community and voluntary groups.

The Committee took the view that the challenge for the Council is to ensure the development of the strategic capacity and skills of a range of much smaller organisations such as local knitting clubs, scout groups and the Tenants and Residents Associations, building on their expertise in meeting the needs of very closely defined communities, and enabling them to support increased cohesion by working with and bringing together a wider range of groups within the community.

In the context of funding the voluntary and community groups across the borough to build community cohesion, the Select Committee took the view that there is currently a lack of join-up in work in this area. At present, work to build capacity in the voluntary and community sector is funded by the General Fund. However, some funding to support Tenants and Residents Associations also has the potential to build community cohesion: however, this is funded by the Housing Revenue Account and is managed separately.

Recommendation 2

The Select Committee recommends that funding to build community cohesion from both General Fund and Housing Revenue Account should be managed in a joined-up way to deliver maximum benefits to the community.

The Council provides significant funding to build capacity in the voluntary and community sector locally. The corporate grants fund in 2010/11, which is used to build capacity and community cohesion, stands at £845,000. Within this, £133,000 is spent on activities to support the infrastructure of the third sector (such as the CVS, the volunteer bureau and the community accountancy project). Subject to confirmation of available funding, the Council has agreed to increase the proportion of spending on infrastructure support in 2011/12 and ongoing.

In terms of comparisons with neighbouring boroughs, these are difficult as each authority records its spending on the sector in a different way, and not all have been willing or able to share their information. Redbridge provide £704,900 corporate grants funding, but until 2010 they did not have a Volunteer Bureau. For 2010-11 they are projecting spending £114,500 on a CVS and volunteer support. Waltham Forest spend £172,500 on the equivalent of their CVS and volunteer support. Newham does not fund an equivalent of a CVS, but does spend around £340,000 on promoting and supporting volunteering.

3.1.2 Barking and Dagenham Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)

Barking and Dagenham CVS is the main umbrella organisation for the Third Sector in the borough: the Council has currently commissioned the CVS to provide infrastructure support to community and voluntary organisations in the borough. The organisation provides support through five key functions:

1. Service and Support – The CVS pro-actively identifies needs in the local community and facilitates improvement in service provision to meet those needs. The CVS also promotes the effectiveness of the local Third Sector organisations by providing them with a range of services, including access to meeting rooms, administration support and training.

2. Liaison - The CVS promotes and facilitates effective communication, networking and partnership working amongst local voluntary and community groups. The organisation works with strategic funders and local third sector organisations to increase the level of resources coming into the sector in Barking and Dagenham. These funders include London Councils, the Big Lottery Fund and others.

3. Representation – The CVS enables the diverse views of the local voluntary and community sector to be represented to external bodies, developing and facilitating structures to promote effective working relationships and two way communication.

CVS has led on the development and implementation of a strategy to develop a strong third sector, and has established a number of working groups, such as the cross-sectoral Compact Working Group, and the ChangeUP Steering Group.

4. Development Work – The CVS assists local voluntary and community organisations to function more effectively and deliver quality services to their

users, members and constituents. The CVS Development Team uses diagnostic Organisational Healthchecks developed to identify specific needs of local community and voluntary groups and provide development support to meet those specific needs.

5. Strategic partnership – The CVS enhances the voluntary and community sector's role as an integral part of local planning and policy-making.

Following issues raised through the Select Committee's consultation, Members pointed out that several groups expressed disappointment with the lack of communication between CVS and community groups. The groups suggested that CVS should actively communicate with community and voluntary groups. The groups also stated that information on the CVS website needed to be updated and regularly communicated.

The Select Committee noted the following targets in relation to service and support currently being met by the CVS under its commission with the Council:

- 4 editions of CVS newsletter to be produced and sent to voluntary and community organisations in the borough. Newsletter to contain information which is relevant, useful and timely to groups, including information on funding opportunities, training and infrastructure support, and feedback from the Local Strategic Partnership.
- A regular eBulletin to be sent to local voluntary and community organisations with targeted information, for example on specific funding opportunities or policy initiatives.
- The CVS website to be maintained with up to date and relevant information and to be linked with other relevant websites.
- The CVS database of voluntary and community organisations in the borough to be comprehensively reviewed and updated to more accurately reflect not only the groups which exist but also the services they provide and their level of activity (including opening times).
- The CVS Directory of voluntary and community organisations in the borough to be updated and expanded based on the revised database, and to be made available through the CVS website and accessible online by March 2011.

During the consultation, several groups also expressed concerns regarding the lack of support received from the CVS. The groups further stated that CVS need to support small and local community and voluntary groups in the borough which are struggling to raise funds. The Select Committee met with the Chief Executive of CVS to address these concerns and looked into the role of the CVS and what support it currently provides to the community and voluntary groups in the borough.

The Committee noted that over the course of the year, the CVS Development Team delivered a range of training courses including 15 free training courses to a total of 148 attendees from local community and voluntary groups and facilitated a total of 44 participants through six Action Learning Sets, promoting peer learning and support. Furthermore, tailored one to one support was also provided to 102 local community and voluntary groups through 349 sessions. These covered a wide range of organisational and community development issues,

including governance, fundraising, project management and policy development. Specific fundraising support, including practical support on delivering bids, was provided to 22 local community and voluntary groups over 42 sessions. Financial management and support is also provided through Accounting for Community Enterprise (ACE).

The Social Enterprise Project provides information and practical support to new and upcoming social enterprises as well as to existing ones. In the last year, the CVS had successfully supported the establishment of four new social enterprises and delivered further ongoing support to 51 existing social enterprises.

Members noted that the CVS organises and facilitates a number of meetings with local community and voluntary groups such as:

- at least four meetings of the Voluntary Sector Forum a year to provide opportunities to discuss policy issues, network and share ideas and experiences
- at least six meetings with the larger and well-established voluntary sector organisations took place to discuss strategic issues of relevance to them.
- A Voluntary Sector Open Day was held in Vicarage Field Shopping Centre with stalls from 72 different community and voluntary sector organisations to showcase their work and publicise their services to Barking & Dagenham residents.

In October 2010, Members of the Select Committee visited the newly refurbished Ripple Resource Centre located in Barking. Members were impressed with the new layout and design of the centre and were also pleased to note that it provides excellent and high quality office accommodation, training rooms, meeting facilities, performance space, conference facilities and a community café.

Members were also pleased to note that an incubation space for new upcoming and established groups was now available at the centre, which provides the opportunity for groups to use the office space to start up at the maximum cost of £500 per year. This includes the provision of desks, chairs, computers and telephones.

CVS has recently appointed a Community Development & Resource Centre Manager who will be responsible for overseeing the management of this new centre, ensuring that it effectively meets the development needs of local groups and residents. The role will also manage the CVS Development Team, created in April 2008, to plan and deliver effective development support to local groups. The team currently comprises five staff funded from various sources, the majority until April 2012.

Recommendation 3:

The Select Committee recommends that an update on the achievement of the targets for service and support by the CVS be provided by the CVS to the Select Committee in six months time.

The CVS has successfully gained Connecting Communities funding until March 2011 to provide additional capacity-building support for local Tenants and Residents Associations and Community Associations. This officer is currently meeting with local groups to discuss their needs and identify appropriate support to enable them to maximise their effectiveness as organisations.

3.1.3 Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum

In 2008, the Government issued the document 'Faith by Faith and Side by Side' after extensive consultation with faith communities. This report highlighted the significant proportion of the population (around 77%) who declared themselves as having a faith in the 2001 census, and noted that for many people, their faith is central to their identity and what they do on a daily basis. Figures in the Barking and Dagenham census were comparable, and it is considered that recent population changes are likely to have made the figures even higher locally. However, the Select Committee acknowledged that these figures are now out of date and that more recent figures were needed for an accurate analysis.

The Select Committee took the view that faith groups play an active role in society in bringing different faith communities together and contribute towards building community cohesion. The Committee therefore wished to look into the role of the Faith Forum and ascertain how the Council could support the organisation in achieving cohesion.

Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum is the main route to inter-faith dialogue and activity in the borough. The aim of the Faith Forum is to demonstrate that faith builds community. Its objectives are:

- To provide opportunities for each faith community and the wider community to gain a fuller understanding of the faith communities (education);
- To enable the voice of faith communities to be heard by statutory organisations in the borough both jointly and individually (consultation); and
- To lever into the borough resources for faith-based community action, both jointly and individually (resourcing).

The Council has commissioned the Faith Forum to:

1. Maintain and implement an ongoing business plan
2. Employ of a member of staff to service the forum/network
3. Hold 6 full meetings of the forum per annum:
4. Provide the opportunity for 12 borough consultations per year in a manner appropriate to the consultation.
5. Work to demonstrate how faith organisations contribute to bringing people from different backgrounds together.
6. Represent the faith sector at partnership meetings and events – and in particular Local Strategic Partnership boards
7. Maintain links with the CVS and Third Sector strategy to promote voluntary and community activity through faith communities eg the contribution made through volunteering in faith communities
8. Build relationships with relevant stakeholders and partnership bodies to develop their attendance at full meetings of the forum where appropriate e.g. PCT, Police etc

9. Facilitate a minimum of 3 appropriate training opportunities per annum for the local faith sector
10. Maintain a data base of relevant groups
11. Provide information on how the Forum is working towards promoting community cohesion e.g. community events, promotion of services etc.

The table below shows the different faith groups in the borough as at December 2007. Barking and Dagenham is different from many other London Boroughs in that the Christian faith is still the predominant and growing faith group:

Faith	Percentage
Bahai	0.6%
Christian	72.8%
Hindu	1.2%
Islam	4%
Jewish	0.6%
Sikh	3.5%

However, it is anticipated that the proportion of people from the Muslim faith will have grown since this assessment was completed.

Traditionally, faith groups have provided education, social welfare and community life for the borough population. In Barking and Dagenham, faith groups are the largest providers of youth activities, training and skills provision, community work and services for the vulnerable members of the society. All faith groups in the borough carry out community work as this part of their teaching.

There are currently at least 230 faith groups based throughout the borough. Although all groups are invited to become members, only 50-60 (approximately 25%) faith groups are actually registered members of the Faith Forum. This indicated that majority of the faith organisations in the borough are not registered. Encouraging faith organisations to register was identified as a key challenge by the Faith Forum. The Committee learned that some faith groups prefer to operate separately and do not wish to be part of the Faith Forum, in such circumstances the Faith Forum endeavour to interact with the groups by attending their meetings and participating in their activities.

3.1.3.1 Promoting the Faith Forum

The Select Committee noted that faith organisations approaching the Council for support or advice are already referred to the Faith Forum. The Committee however considered that one way to encourage faith groups to register was through promoting the benefits of being with the Faith Forum.

The Select Committee considered that the Council's discretion to award relief of up to 100% to organisations which are not established for profit should be further promoted to the faith groups. Only registered religious and charitable organisations are entitled to a mandatory rate relief of 80% for properties which are occupied for that charitable purpose. The Council's has discretionary powers

to award further rate relief of up to 20% (this is commonly referred to as 'top up' relief).

The Committee feels that there is also an important leadership role for elected councillors to play. Councillors must be willing to champion community cohesion at the ward level and, where necessary, take an upfront approach to the issue. The Select Committee took the view that Councillors in their role as representatives of the community should actively engage with the faith groups in their wards, as well as throughout the borough, more often and encourage them to register with the faith forum.

Recommendation 4:

The Select Committee recommends that the Faith Forum are invited to provide a briefing to all ward Councillors to enable them to encourage faith groups in their ward to register with the Faith Forum.

Recommendation 5:

The Select Committee recommends that the Faith Forum advertise the activities and events of different faith groups taking place in each ward in 'The News' on a regular basis.

Over the years, faith communities have changed dramatically in the borough: the number of faith groups in the borough has increased by 10% in 2009. Although the Church of England has always been well represented in the borough, the number of people participating in Pentecostal churches has increased and these churches now have the highest number of centres of worship. The Select Committee took the view that there was a lack of interaction between the new faith organisations and the wider community, impeding community cohesion. Furthermore, Members also expressed concerns that a number faith organisations are only communicating within their own community, which can create segregation and result in a negative impact on community cohesion.

The Faith Forum identified that the majority of all faith buildings are open to people of all cultures and backgrounds. Both worship services and community and youth activities are open to the whole community. For example, attendance at the Mosque is mainly by people of the Islamic faith although all communities are welcome and have been publicly invited. The Gudwara in Barking provides food, shelter and companionship to the whole community. A number of church buildings in the borough hold a playgroup or Mother and Toddler group for all cultural backgrounds. In addition many of the borough's churches run youth groups and these are open to any young people in the community.

Within the borough there are approximately 500 faith-led community programmes running, and 2,000 faith-led children and youth activities running every week. An example would be The Salvation Army in Barking who run Karate Classes, Kids Club, Bubbles Parents and Toddlers, Baby Song, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows, Alove Youth Club, Youth Cell, Soul in the City Youth Events, Police

Panel, Sunday School, Crèche: that is, a total of 14 different Youth and Children's activities in one Centre.

There are also many other good examples of local faith groups which proactively contribute to their local community, for example:

- St Thomas Becontree's 'Life After Debt' project
- A wide range of positive activities for young people provided by the mosque in Victoria Road, Barking, including an allotment project
- Youth mentoring and other activities provided by the Harmony Christian Centre in Kemp Road

The Peace Week event held in September 2010 included the contribution of various faith groups, the Council and local schools. Peace Week also included the Peace Walk, starting from St Cedd's Church, through Barking Park then onto the Barking Mosque and Gurdwara and ending at St Margaret's Church.

3.1.3.2 Wider access to information

The Select Committee took the view that a database with information on all the activities provided by faith organisations should be available and shared publicly on the internet. It was noted that the Faith Forum records data on all the faith organisations and the work they do throughout the borough. However, the information is currently not shared, and permission from the organisations' contacts would be required to share the information. The Select Committee noted that libraries also provide a database of community groups on the Council's website and the Committee therefore suggested that details of faith organisations and their activities could be incorporated into this database, subject to the agreement of those people named as contacts.

Recommendation 6:

The Select Committee recommends that the Faith Forum work with libraries in the borough to seek permission of the faith groups to incorporate the details of their organisations and activities into the main database.

3.1.3.3 Premises for religious worship

Barking and Dagenham is now home to a very rich and diverse range of faith communities and the demand for religious meeting places in the borough is increasing. It was noted the Faith Forum receives approximately two enquiries on this subject per week; however, the number of premises available is limited. The Council's policy on religious buildings confirms the Council's support to religious organisations in relation to premises is limited to advice and guidance, and financial support to the Faith Forum.

However, the Select Committee noted the increasing requirement for religious premises by new community groups, and the limited ability for these to be accommodated, has the potential to increase community tensions.

The Committee noted that the Council has recently reviewed its planning policy via a Planning Advice Note (PAN) on Religious Meeting Places. The revision to the Guidance introduces more clarity on what are considered to be the preferred

locations for religious meeting places, the main change being that the policy will now allow religious facility usage in areas which will have little impact (noise, disturbance and parking) in certain circumstances, such as within employment areas and the edges of industrial areas which are on a bus route. The following four locations have been identified where applications for religious meeting places will be dealt with favourably;

- Thames Road within the River Road Employment Area
- South Dagenham West. Site Specific Allocation SSA SM2
- South Dagenham East. Site Specific Allocation SSA SM4
- Ripple Road within the Rippleside Employment Area

The Committee is however aware that, in some cases, premises may be being used as places of religious worship inappropriately. It is therefore important to ensure that any religious meetings are held in a place that are suitable for that use and will not impact adversely upon neighbouring use and areas, particularly residential areas.

Recommendation 7:

The Select Committee recommends that the Regeneration and Economic Department provide a briefing to all Members regarding the Council's policy for places of religious premises, including guidance on what to do if Members suspect premises are being used as places of worship outside of planning regulations, or are creating environmental nuisance to neighbours.

3.1.3.4 Parking for religious premises

One of the main concerns raised by the Faith Forum was the lack of parking facilities around a number of religious premises throughout the borough. Due to parking restrictions, the majority of the people are finding it difficult to park around their religious premises and as a result are reluctant to visit their place of worship. Conversely, competition for scarce parking spaces is a source of community tensions around some places of worship. It was suggested by the Faith Forum that the consideration to removing parking restrictions during worship hours should be given to enable people to park near their place of worship.

The Select Committee considered that that removing parking restrictions might not be feasible as it is likely that residents living around the religious premises will raise concerns, and this would not be conducive to community cohesion. Members were of the opinion that people living in the vicinity of their religious premises should be encouraged to walk; however, Members were also mindful that elderly or disabled people may need to drive to their places of worship. The Select Committee considered that a drop-off zone might be a more appropriate option to facilitate people's access to such premises.

Recommendation 8:

The Select Committee recommends that the Council undertake a review of the religious premises in the borough to establish where parking space is sufficient and consider whether a drop-off zone could be created to facilitate people visiting their places of worship.

Another parking issue raised by the Faith Forum was the problems faced by Ministers of Religion when visiting houses in need. When visiting a bereaved family or administering last rites it can seem inappropriate for the first interaction to be a request for the visitors parking permit. It was suggested that consideration could be given to providing borough wide parking permits to Ministers of Religion registered with the Faith Forum. The Select Committee took the view that all faith ministers in the borough should have access to parking facilities and be issued with home visitor permits. There are currently 50-60 Faith Ministers in the borough and issuing a visitor parking permit would cost the Council approximately £3,000- £3,600, based on the cost of one permit being £60 each.

Recommendation 9:

The Select Committee recommends that the Council adopt a policy of issuing parking permits to Faith Ministers registered with the Faith Forum in the borough.

3.2 How can the Council and its partners help to build cohesion?

In order to understand what community cohesion mean for their area, which goes beyond a formal and remote definition, it is important that the work of local authorities reflects the importance of openness and transparency and a willingness and capability to challenge myths and misinformation.

Building capacity in the voluntary, community and faith sectors is a key challenge for local authorities and their statutory partners. However, local authorities play a vital role in supporting and facilitating Voluntary and Community Sector (also known as Third Sector) involvement through funding arrangements, partnership working and capacity building.

Barking and Dagenham Council has worked closely with partners to understand how best to communicate with the minority of people in the borough who are disaffected and liable to believe myths (eg 'Africans are being paid to come to the borough'). The Council has been recognised as an example of good practice by the Department of Communities and Local Government in relation to this work.

The Council understands that using the printed and official communications to put forward the facts does not work; in fact it spreads the myths and makes people think that there is some truth to it. The Council instead focuses on

building contacts with people in the community who don't normally go to meetings or engage with the Council. This involves sharing the true facts on a one to one basis with people who may believe in a myth, with the aim that they will believe what they hear from a trusted source, and then share that news with their contacts. The community contacts also provide early warning of concerns and rumours in the community, in order to get a response back out in a timely way. This has proved to be a very successful model which is now being copied in many other local authorities.

The Government's Cohesion Delivery Framework⁶ makes a number of suggestions and actions that the local authorities could take in order to build community cohesions. Barking and Dagenham have already adopted many of the suggestions by offering, for example:

- **Information packs for new migrants** – the Council provides a Welcome Pack to the new residents moving into the borough to help them access services appropriately and quickly become part of local society;
- **Encouraging volunteering** – this is done through a number of routes, including funding for the Volunteer Bureau and the 'Giving Back' awards during Peace Week
- **Promoting citizenship ceremonies** – these are routinely held at the Civic Centre
- **Promoting English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes** –the Council and the local college provide and commission a range of ESOL classes to the community, and the Council is doing further work with learning providers and community representatives to ensure that its resources for ESOL provision are targeted where they will have most impact;
- **Use translation guidance** – Translation and interpreting are used where they can be more effective in enabling residents to access services
- **Sports development strategies** – Such as the football development strategy which includes plans for a football competition, bring people from different communities together.
- **Time Bank** – this approach enables people to give their time to something of community benefit on the basis that they will get a 'credit' for a similar amount of benefit at a later date- e.g. I do your shopping for you on the basis that you will teach my children knitting.

3.2.1 Building cohesion through community events and festivals

Community events and festivals can play a vital role in building community cohesion and contribute to economic prosperity. By promoting positive interaction between different cultures, the Council aims to build up residents' pride in Barking and Dagenham, minimise social tensions or conflicts and support residents living in the borough.

A number of events are run by the Council which have the potential to promote interaction between communities. There is scope to question the extent to which they achieve this.

⁶ Communities and Local Government, March 2010, Cohesion Delivery Framework 2010

The Dagenham Town Show is the biggest entertainment show in the borough held in Central Park in Dagenham, for almost over 50 years. This year's Dagenham Town Show was held on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 July and included at the main stage featuring headline acts like Stacey Solomon and Damage, supported by a number of tribute bands. A performance arena featured comedy cars, high drives, car stunts, workshops and performances by local groups. There was also a traditional crafts area, carnival parade, trade stall and funfair. A number of exhibition marquees promoted Council services and the work of community organisations, such as things for young people to do; being safe, feeling safe; smartening up the borough, health and well being and community spirit. In addition, Musictek co-ordinated a showcase for local bands, dancers and singers on the community stage and Arc theatre presented their community play, 'The marvel of Muddy End', in a performance tent.

However, a number of groups in the consultation expressed disappointment regarding this year's Dagenham Town Show, stating that there was little presence of community and voluntary groups. A number of groups from the consultation also felt that the cost of hiring a tent or a stall to display information was too high, discouraging groups from participating at the Town Show.

The Select Committee met with the Head of Arts and Leisure to address the issues raised at the consultation. The Committee was pleased to note that in 2009 the Council had introduced free basic accommodation to all local community groups and charities to promote their services. The incentive includes a basic exhibition pitch (2m x 3m) in a marquee, provision of exhibition panels, display boards etc to facilitate the groups; charges are only made for any additional requirements. Furthermore, all prices are displayed in the form filled out by the groups wishing to participate at the Dagenham Town Show.

The Committee took the view that despite the excellent opportunity provided by the Council, a vast majority of the community and voluntary groups remain unaware of this support. The Committee felt that this incentive needed to be further promoted to the community and voluntary groups.

Recommendation 10:

The Committee recommends that the provision of free accommodation at the Town Show for community and voluntary groups, including faith groups, be further promoted in the Third Sector via the equalities fora and CVS.

The Select Committee made the following suggestions for improvement at future Town Shows:

- Re-branding the Town Show – Members suggested that the Show's name should be changed to 'Barking and Dagenham Town Show' to help brand the event as one for the whole of the Borough and not just for Dagenham residents, as it is currently perceived. Also instead of having the Town Show in one particular place, it should be relocated to a more central location to attract a borough-wide audience. However, Members were made aware that

the relocation of such a large event to another park could also attract a large number of complaints from nearby residents, as the current location does not have many houses bordering onto the park.

- Increase participation by local community groups – the exhibition marquees promoted Council services more than the work of the community groups. Members felt that more community groups should exhibit their work. The Committee noted that currently it would cost the Council approximately £20,000 in marquee hire cost to provide up to 100 local community groups and charities with free space (2 metre frontage including table and chair hire cost) to showcase their services.
- Re-invigorate the carnival parade- Members stated that parades including floats should be reinstated at the Town Show. It was noted that parades were currently organised and managed by a Parade Committee, and the Council provides administration and marketing support to the Committee. However, recently, it has proved difficult to get groups involved in the parade. The Select Committee stated that the Council should identify ways of achieving a float for each ward in the borough, furthermore, local businesses should be encouraged to sponsor the floats.
- Use of local music bands_– increase the profile of local bands by moving them from the side stage to the main stage.
- More activities during the day - the activities and entertainment at this year's Town Show mainly took place in the evenings, while there wasn't enough to do during the day. Members suggested that activities and side shows should be organised for families attending during the day.
- Representing different and diverse groups - Diverse community and voluntary groups should be encouraged to be present at the Town Show to raise awareness of their work to the community, i.e. the knitting group, history and heritage, scouts groups, Tenants Resident Association Groups, different religious groups etc.
- Stage shows and acts - Members were of the opinion that the stage shows and acts are very popular at the Town Show; however, concerns were raised regarding problems associated with people drinking alcohol and behaving anti-social such as leaving empty bottles around. It was suggested that in the evenings, the arena around the stage should be made an alcohol free zone by fencing part of the area off which would be prohibited from drinking alcohol. This would require additional security at an estimated cost of £4,000.
- Invite schools to participate – the Select Committee was concerned regarding the lack of participation of schools at the Town Show. Members felt that schools should also actively take part in the town show and the carnival and exhibit their contribution towards promoting community cohesion in the borough. Furthermore, the Select Committee felt there are a number of young talented music bands in various schools that should be given the opportunity to perform at the town show. This would also save the Council money in hiring external bands.

Recommendation 11:

The Select Committee recommends that the Council should encourage local businesses to support a reinvigorated carnival with the aim of achieving at least one float per ward.

Recommendation 12:

The Select Committee recommends that the Council invite schools to exhibit their extra-curricular activities and increase their presence at the Town Show and the carnival.

Officers have conducted a review of the Town Show, and are now proceeding to plan for the 2011 event. These plans respond to the concerns and ideas of the Select Committee, such as a proposal is being developed to provide support to increase participation by local community groups.

3.2.2 Promoting pride in the borough's heritage

Feedback from the consultation revealed that a number of groups felt there should be greater contact between different generations and communities, and that they could all learn from each other. It was suggested that one way to build community cohesion is to promote the borough's heritage and history so people could feel proud and respect the areas they live in.

The Select Committee looked into the contribution of the Council's Heritage Services to building cohesion. Members were pleased to note that much positive work was already being undertaken by Heritage Services in promoting the borough's history and heritage to the community. The Committee noted the following:

Valence House Museum - Following extensive renovation and refurbishment, Valence House Museum was reopened in June 2010. The Museum is the centre piece for pride in the borough and highlights the achievements of the past through a number of displays of the borough's history, in a friendly and modern way to suit people of all ages, origins and learning abilities. Entry to the Museum is free and is open to all and includes access to a visitor centre with café, education rooms and a state of the art local studies library.

The displays in the Museum's galleries outline the story of the borough and reflect the people that make up Barking and Dagenham.

Teaching also takes place in the museum galleries and in the education facility in the new visitor centre. This includes teaching on the Key Stage 1 subject on famous people, both local and national.

A total of 18 classes were booked into the museum from 15 October to 18 November 2010 (about 500 children and 180 adults). Furthermore in November 2010, Rush Green Primary school brought three year 2 classes to study famous people.

The museum also exhibits the lifestyle of residents who lived in the Becontree housing estate in the 1930s, through a recreated living room and kitchen. Schools use these settings to teach local children studying 'How we used to Live' and 'Houses and Homes'. Furthermore presentations are tailored for individual schools that wish to learn about the history of their area. A number of sessions have also been provided on Pride in the Borough, Remembrance, transport, Victorian Barking, the Fishing Fleet, Victorian Dagenham, Who do you think you are and Victorian Christmas. A total of 504 children were taught in the Museum and in formal outreach sessions between June–July 2010.

Eastbury Manor House uses both costumed interpreters and members of Heritage staff to interpret the history of the house and to explain the Tudor period to both school children and adults. Eastbury Manor House's ability to promote pride is in its existence and has been promoted as the 'Jewel in the Crown'.

Heritage Services have also created over 20 loan boxes covering a range of Key Stage subjects. The Tudor box is often used by teachers as prequel to a visit to Eastbury Manor House. An average loan box is used for a year group and reaches up to 112 children over a two week loan period.

Intergenerational work is normally done with Key Stage 2 children in primary and junior schools and involves older people explaining the changes in an area they have seen throughout their lifetime. Leys Primary School has worked with a worker from Samuel William's Dock in Dagenham, part of a Heritage Service project that taught 112 children about the history of the borough and how it had changed over the years.

The Heritage Service is working hard to capture historical experiences for tomorrow's children and have created opportunities to bring older and younger people together. Rush Green Junior School experienced soldiers and veterans recounting their stories of evacuation, military services and the Home Front. The veterans have also helped schools with Remembrance themed workshops and have been part of the Soldiers and Civilians Lottery Project that reached some 439 children in the borough.

Members commended the work undertaken by Heritage Services and were particularly impressed with Valence House Museum as it caters for both adults and children. Members suggested subjects for a number of additional displays which could be mounted in the future: Dagenham Beaches, and exhibitions on different communities in the borough. Members suggested that the Museum should consider selling a wider range of books based on the borough's history and heritage as these would be popular.

The Select Committee took the view that sites of historic importance to borough's heritage should be further promoted by erecting commemorative plaques of

eminent figure from the borough. The Select Committee considered that Heritage plaques are a unique way to promote greater awareness of borough's heritage and a way of connecting people and places by commemorating the link between notable figures of the past and the buildings in which they lived and worked.

Recommendation: 13

The Select Committee recommends that the Council uses commemorative plaques to celebrate famous figures that were born or lived in the borough in the past as well as those currently reside in the borough.

Recommendation 14:

The Select Committee recommends that consideration be given to promoting a local history week to increase awareness of the borough's history and heritage across all ages.

3.3 The role of schools in building cohesion

Schools have a central role to play in breaking down barriers between young people and helping to create cohesive communities. By enabling every child and young person to achieve their potential, schools make a significant contribution to long term community cohesion.

According to the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) community cohesion is defined as 'working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to develop in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community'⁷.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a duty on all maintained schools to promote community cohesion. However, Ofsted will no longer be inspecting schools on this issue.

The role and the work of schools in promoting community cohesion has been categorised under the following headings:

Teaching and learning: teaching pupils to understand others, promoting discussion and debate about common values and diversity. For example through the new 'identity and diversity: living together in the UK' strand within citizenship education.

Equity and excellence: removing barriers to access and participation, offering equal opportunities to all their pupils to succeed at the highest level possible. This category of action focuses on securing high standards of

⁷ Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion, DCSF, 2007

attainment for all pupils from all ethnic backgrounds and of different socio-economic status; dealing with incidents of prejudice, bullying and harassment, and developing admission arrangements that promote community cohesion and social equity.

Engagement and ethos: providing opportunities for children, young people and their families to interact with others from different backgrounds. This category of action picks up on the extended school agenda and the engagement with parents and with the wider community.

There are currently 57 schools in Barking and Dagenham. The majority of schools already consider promoting cohesion as a fundamental part of their role and work in ways which promote community cohesion. The Council is working closely with schools to promote community cohesion by providing guidance and support to them and their governors. There is already excellent practice in some local schools in promoting community cohesion. This has been recognised by Ofsted since inspection results reveal that 51% of primary and 86% of secondary schools were rated either good or outstanding in this regard. The results of inspections since 2008 are shown below:

	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Primary	19%	32%	46%	3%
Secondary	43%	43%	14%	

Although Barking and Dagenham's primary inspections have seen an improvement from satisfactory to good or outstanding, the Select Committee expressed concerns that only 19% of primary schools achieved outstanding (which represents seven primary schools). The Select Committee was of the opinion that given the level of good work undertaken by many of the primary schools in building community cohesion, they should aim to achieve better than 'satisfactory'.

Recommendation 15:

The Select Committee recommends that the schools not yet rated 'good' or 'outstanding' be encouraged to develop plans to achieve a higher rating in building cohesion.

As well as the generic citizenship curriculum, which all schools in the borough deliver, there is a number of additional activities which provide good opportunities for young people to engage with their community. These include:

- Volunteering in secondary schools such as Jo Richardson School
- All primary schools in the borough have playground buddies to prevent bullying and promote citizenship and community.
- All schools in the borough have active school councils. School councils are democratically elected groups of students who represent their peers and enable pupils to become partners in their own education, making a positive contribution to the school environment and ethos.

- The majority of the schools invite speakers from the local community to speak at their assemblies. Furthermore, schools organise Citizenship days where local and national community and voluntary groups visit and present through discussion and interactive workshops on the work they do and how people can support them.

The Select Committee was pleased to note the approach undertaken by schools in engaging young people and community groups. The Select Committee however felt that a number of local community and voluntary groups (such as Tenants and Residents Associations) lack the involvement of young people, and suggested that schools should particularly invite locally based community and voluntary groups to give them the opportunity to promote their work and encourage youth participation.

The Committee noted the work undertaken by a number of schools in building community cohesion. Some examples are shown below:

Beam Primary	'contributing ideas to a local playground project'
Cambell Infant's	'they have been active in the local community persuading local shopkeepers to put up their posters about keeping the environment tidy and clean'.
Ripple Primary	international week with each classroom designated as a different country, a focus on learning about the language and culture of that country. Parents cook food which reflects the cuisine of their mother county.
Roding Primary	'pupils visit many different places of worship and gain a clear understanding of the diverse cultures that shape their community'
Thamesview Infants	'developing understanding and respect for differences in race and faith is part and parcel of the school's mission. Parents and pupils from all ethnic backgrounds dancing to music from Indian cinema is an example of the positive impact the school is having in promoting racial tolerance'.
Village Infants	'good contribution to community cohesion through dance celebrations, charity work and a multicultural week'.
Barking Abbey Comprehensive	'excellent opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures through their subject lessons as well as whole-school 'Cultural Days' and different cultural events. The school's specialisms of Sport and Humanities are having a positive impact on raising attainment by improving students' engagement, self-confidence and ability to work collaboratively in a harmonious international community'.
	'working with a local community centre, the school contributed

Eastbrook Comprehensive	to a community cohesion breakfast to encourage greater engagement with local senior citizens’.
Eastbury Comprehensive	‘under the banner ‘Being Different, Belonging Together’ the school has developed a number of projects to promote tolerance and understanding. The school supports the learning needs of local families by offering English courses, and facilitates local organisations by hosting events for a variety of groups. The school plays an active role in working with safe neighbourhood groups, local agencies and voluntary organisations to promote local community cohesion’.

3.3.1 Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS)

The Integrated Youth Support Service in Barking and Dagenham works with partners to deliver positive activities and preventative targeted services to young people aged 11-19. The service delivers generic youth club sessions at the Vibe, the Sue Bramley Centre and the Gascoigne Youth and Community Centre.

The Youth Support Service helps to support and develop third sector and voluntary youth provision by providing professional advice, support and training to existing groups and by developing new local voluntary youth clubs known as Street Base Locals. There are currently 10 voluntary led youth clubs throughout the borough, enabled and facilitated by local residents. The youth clubs are run from both the schools and community centres.

Gascoigne Youth and Community Centre is a prime example of how communities come together. Amongst the facilities on offer at the centre are a contemporary recording studio and editing suite, a games and socialising area, IT suite complete with the latest technology and a kitchen/café area. The centre opens during the summer for young people to take part in summer programme activities. It also runs a pre-school from Monday to Friday and runs a youth club twice a week. It also hosts a 'Chit Chat' club on Tuesday mornings for adults who want to network and socialise. On Sunday mornings a church group is based at the centre.

Streetbase is a youth initiative that provides a multitude of positive activities for young people to develop new skills and increase participation in positive activities. Streetbase Connect and Splash presents the Council with an opportunity to engage, encourage and incentivise local young people to participate in community, voluntary and environmental activities. It enables young people to take positive actions like choosing healthier meals in their school lunch, taking part in sporting activities or volunteering for charities, the card holders earn rewards points that they can trade in for exciting incentives. It is currently planned to complete the roll out of Streetbase Connect by mid December 2010 and the roll out of Splash by June 2011.

Solutions have been identified and procured that will allow non school / leisure and library uses to be recorded against young people's individual card accounts. The scheme will piloted through the extended schools coordinators in borough's secondary schools throughout Nov and Dec 2010. Once fully tested this will be made available to community and youth groups, Barking College along with charities and services such as young offenders service.

The encouragement, recognition and reward of young people for their participation in community activities and events such as the Olympics, form a central part of the project and one that will expand considerably once the project moves beyond the roll out stage.

3.3.2 Best Practice within the borough

The Select Committee met with representatives from two schools that have been rated outstanding for their work around community cohesion: Sydney Russell School and Gascoigne Primary School. The Committee commended the work undertaken by both schools in promoting community cohesion with young people and the wider community.

3.3.2.1 Sydney Russell School

Sydney Russell School is a much larger than average secondary school. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is above average with 47 different languages spoken at the school. The school has a number of refugees and asylum seekers. The main minority ethnic groups are Black or Black British African, Any Other (than British or Irish) White, and Black or Black British Caribbean.

The school has specialist media arts status and shares the facilities of a leisure centre with the local community. Sydney Russell works in a consortium with three other schools providing sixth form courses.

The work of the school in promoting community cohesion was graded exceptionally and consistently high by the Ofsted inspection in 2008. The school comprises students from a wide range of cultures, who get on extremely well together, valuing their diverse backgrounds. This harmonious situation has been achieved through rigorous and consistent application of carefully-designed policies that build trust and respect.

Members noted a number of recent community projects undertaken by the school in promoting cohesion:

- *Age Swap* – students worked with the tea dance group at the Kingsley Hall community centre by teaching seniors to spray paint. Together they created a mural on one of the walls at Kingsley Hall. In return, the seniors taught the young people how to tea dance. The feedback from both was extremely positive and provided a learning experience for both parties.
- *Respect Show*- the show was a culmination of three months of students' extra curriculum workshops in dance, singing and fashion involving over 60 students. The work of the students focused on encouraging children to build respect for oneself and others by working in a team.

- *Beauty in an urban age photography* – an ongoing community digital photography project involving people's perspective of what is perceived to be 'beautiful' in an urban area with a particular focus on Barking and Dagenham, under the guidance of a professional photographer.
- *Silver surfers' week* – Members of staff and students volunteered to help at various events held in the borough's libraries in workshops aimed at helping over 50's learn how to use the internet and computers.
- *Black History Month* – is a remembrance of important people and events in the history of the African diasporas and is celebrated every year with all students from different backgrounds.

3.3.2.2 Gascoigne Primary School

Gascoigne Primary School is a very large school consisting of over 1,000 pupils. The number of pupils from an ethnic minority background has risen significantly in recent years from 20% in 1999/2000 to 90% at present. The school draws children from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the main groups being from Albania, Somalia, West Africa and Easter European Heritage. The number of children with English as an additional language has risen from 18% in 1999 to 76% in 2005; it now stands at 90%. Currently there are 57 different languages spoken by children in the school and 26% of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The school provides thorough support to newly arrived pupils and those with English as Additional Language.

The School defines community cohesion as working towards a society in which:

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging among all communities;
- The diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and valued;
- Similar life opportunities are available to all;
- Strong and positive relationships exist and continue to develop in schools and the wider community

The school runs a number of project and activities to encourage children's involvement in the local community. Some examples include:

- The school embraces students' input in a positive and proactive way. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 discuss important issues and make recommendations for change at the School Council meetings.
- Children are encouraged to organise and plan events themselves and have raised funds for various organisations and charities such as Children in Need, Comic Relief, the Haitian Earthquake appeal and the UNICEF Pakistan Flood Children's Appeal.
- The school encourages children's involvement in the local community and have organised a school choir to entertain the residents of a local care home at Christmas, for the St George's Day celebration in Barking Town Centre and at the Community Singing Festival, hosted at the school.
- The school took part in the annual Fourth Plinth awards scheme and won the borough prize two years running.
- The Gascoigne Summer Exhibition is a new initiative that involves the whole school and parents working together.

- The Diversity Week involved children celebrating similarities and differences in cultures.
- The school values the many languages spoken by its pupils and encourages the development of bilingualism. It advises parents to maintain the use of their language in the home. It uses Language of the Month in all classes to introduce children to a wide range of languages.

The school has maintained good links with the local religious communities, with members of all faith communities visiting the school. The school believes that this has been achieved through the good work of the teachers and administrative staff which in turn reflects the ethnic diversity of the local community. The school has close links with the local Mosques, churches and temples.

Encouraging the involvement of parents in schools and education of their children has been a key priority for Gascoigne Primary School. The school has a strong parental links through working with parents groups who run after school provision. In particular, two parent groups; Albanian and Portuguese groups run the extended schools activities with which the school is closely associated. Due to the large number of parents from minority ethnic backgrounds, workshops for parents are run by teachers and outside providers on speech and language, reading and writing and maths for families.

A key development in building good relationships with the local community was achieved through the Shpresa project. The school worked in partnership with Shpresa, an active user-led organisation that promotes the participation and contribution of the Albanian-speaking community, to encourage the involvement of Albanian parents in the school, on discipline and on the children's cultural confidence and attainment. The school provided Shpresa with free use of its premises and facilities to set up an after school class, one day a week until 7pm, which included an hour of literacy in Albanian and a very popular hour of games and lively and complex traditional dancing.

It also set up regular consultations with parents and ran support sessions to meet identified needs and provided individual support for parents if required. In particular it ran the Step-by-Step parental support programme that introduced parents into the English education system, helping them to support their children and get involved in the life of the school. It also advised the school on issues of culture and language and deployed three Albanian volunteers, training to work with children in schools. The director of Shpresa has regular meetings with the headteacher of the school and the Ethnic Minority Achievement co-ordinator and also serves on the School's Board of Governors. The project resulted in very positive effect on the children's self-esteem of experiencing their culture valued in school and enhanced parental involvement. The school is hoping to use the Shpresa project to engage with the Portuguese community.

The Select Committee commended the work undertaken by the school in actively engaging with the Albanian community. The Select Committee also commended the school's provision of free use of its premises to the local groups; Members felt that this was very encouraging and a positive step taken by the school in building cohesion amongst diverse communities in the borough.

3.4 Other relevant issues arising from the consultation

3.4.1 The use of community facilities to promote cohesion

Currently the Council's network of community halls is as follows:

Abbey	Heath Park	Ted Ball
Fanshawe	Marks Gate	Thames View
Gascoigne	Ripple	Village
Hatfield	Teresa Green	Wantz

The 12 community centres are run in partnership between the Council and Community Associations, with the exception of Ripple Hall, which is managed and held on a long lease by the CVS. The Gascoigne Community Centre is currently under the control of the Council until a new Community Association is established. Community Associations are responsible for the centres' operations from Sunday through Friday, and can request to make bookings on 12 Saturdays of the year.

There are however other community facilities available for hire by the community and voluntary groups such as:

- The Barking Learning Centre
- Eastbury Manor House
- Valence House Museum Visitor Centre
- Kingsley Hall Dagenham
- Halls associated with places of worship
- A range of school halls

Feedback from the Select Committee's consultation indicated that a number of groups felt that the availability of community centres was not well publicised throughout the borough. The groups suggested that it would be useful to have a regular update on what community centres are available and where in the borough.

Groups also raised concerns regarding charges for the hire of community halls. The majority of groups felt that the charges were too high, particularly at the weekends, and that a number of small groups find it difficult to afford for these charges.

Following the Coalition Government's announcement on the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010, the Council is facing tough financial challenges in achieving difficult budget reductions. The Committee noted the Council's proposal to transfer community halls as assets to Community Associations, which is expected to commence in April 2011. The Council has invited Community Associations across the borough to take over the running of their local centres on long leases at a peppercorn rent. This will enable the groups to bid for funding against the leases, bringing new funding into the borough which is currently inaccessible to the Council.

The proposals intend to build community capacity and to give local community and voluntary groups the opportunity to contribute towards community priorities. A provision will be incorporated into lease agreements to ensure halls remain accessible by all groups in the community.

However, unless the community centres are transferred to local groups by the end of March next year, the Council cannot continue to run them. Depending on the geographical location and presence of other facilities in the area, the halls may be closed from April 2011 and this would result in some reductions in local community spaces.

Members took the view that there are a range of facilities available for community and voluntary groups; however, other than the Council and CVS website, these facilities need to be widely publicised using different channels of communication.

Recommendation 16:

The Select Committee recommends that the provision of community facilities, including the availability of community halls and church halls, should be further publicised to the community in the News, on a ward-by-ward basis, and using Community TV.

Recommendation 17:

The Select Committee recommends that a report, outlining the extent to which the community centres transferred continue to enable the whole community to access their space, be brought to the Committee in six months time.

3.4.2 The use of School Halls through Extended Schools and wider community access to schools

The Select Committee regarded schools as the hubs of communities, particularly for families and the local community groups that could benefit from using school resources. Members felt that schools play an important role in promoting cohesion and should work with local voluntary and community groups to build stronger relationships with the community by increasing the range of activities and services available. The schools would also benefit from shared expertise by working with different groups who are already established in their area.

Extended services in and through schools (also known as Extended Schools) is a programme initiated by the previous government, which required schools to offer a range of extended activities to the community by 2010 (Barking and Dagenham has already met this target). These include a varied menu of activities including:

- study support;
- childcare in primary schools;
- parenting support;

- swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services and opening and
- **opening up facilities to the wider community**

A definition of the wider community access within the Extended Schools agenda was set out by the previous government:

“Where a school has facilities suitable for use by the wider community (e.g. playing fields, sports facilities, IT facilities, halls), it should look to open these up to meet community needs in response to an assessment of local demand”

In Barking and Dagenham, schools do not necessarily provide services directly, but commission providers and link/signpost to existing provision through clusters of schools, children’s centres and other settings.

Furthermore, a range of guidance documents is provided by the Council to support schools in developing a wider community access provision:

- Extended schools staff guidance – setting out key considerations for Headteachers to appropriately and fairly staff their extended schools provision.
- Legal guidance for Governing bodies offers advice to Governors who wish to let school premises to a third party providers i.e. community groups. It includes a model ‘Transfer of Control Agreement’ which will serve to protect the school in the instance of something going wrong. A Transfer of Control is the way in which the Governors can permit a third party to use part of school premises by transferring control of that area to the third party for a given period of time.
- Charging and remission policy for schools and model charging policy, using the best practice guidance developed by the London Borough of Islington. The document provides guidance on developing a charging policy that is both fair to community groups and private providers, and at the same time, is sustainable for the school. All schools are required to develop this policy by the end of 2010.
- Ongoing support and professional development is provided by the Head of Youth Support Service by regularly liaising with schools to address various issues.

The Committee noted the current provision, in relation to wider community access, taking place in individual schools throughout the borough. Full details of provision in individual schools (including infant, primary, special and secondary schools) can be viewed in appendix 2. The Committee was pleased to note that every school in the borough provided wider community access in one form or another, whether through the provision of groups and classes specifically linked to the school, such as activities for parents, or through the 18 Children’s Centres based throughout the borough.

In 2008, the Department for Children, Schools & Families (DCSF) announced a three year Extended Schools capital allocation to develop extended schools across an area to support delivery of the core offer. So far, the capital programme has seen £1.1m invested in a range of projects, benefiting the

schools and the wider community, in 16 primary schools throughout the borough. The projects have included

- access to sports hall with independent community access i.e. at William Ford J school;
- 'zoning off' to allow community access i.e. at Ripple Primary School and Thames View Junior School;
- adaptation of ICT suite i.e. in Parsloes and Thomas Arnold School

In developing services it is important for schools to plan collaboratively with other local schools as well as other agencies and voluntary organisations in order to provide a wide a range of facilities for an area. The majority of the schools in Barking and Dagenham share extended services by sharing facilities for wider community access such as Grafton Infant and Junior, Marks Gate Infants and Junior, Thames View Infants and Junior and William Ford and Village Infants.

3.4.3 Which schools hire their halls and for how much?

Currently 18 primaries, 8 secondaries and one special school let their halls out for community access. Although all schools are required to follow the borough's guidance for developing a charging policy or revising their existing policy, charges for letting out halls vary from school to school according to the beneficiary. Example charges for letting school halls are provided in appendix 3.

The Committee expressed disappointment regarding the number of schools not letting their halls for use, based in areas where community facilities are needed the most. In particular, 15 schools within the five wards situated in the heart of the borough (including Parsloes, Alibon and Valence) do not offer their facilities to the community. Member felt that at least one school in each ward should provide community access to their facilities.

The Committee suggested that the Council should demonstrate to schools the benefits of engaging with the community and by allowing this provision schools will be able to build good relationship with their local community. The Committee however noted that schools do not have to open up the facilities if they are not suitable or if opening them up would duplicate existing community facilities. Furthermore, the Council's powers are limited in enforcing schools to let their halls for hire; the School Governors have the authority to require schools to open their halls for community use. It was discussed that Councillors who are representatives on the school governing bodies across the borough have a role to play in encouraging schools to promote community cohesion.

Recommendation 18:

The Select Committee recommends that the Council encourage school governing bodies to consider opening facilities to the community in at least one school in each ward.

Recommendation 19:

The Select Committee recommends that Councillors, in their role as school governors, encourage schools to allow their facilities to be used by the community.

The Select Committee identified a number of key challenges for schools around wider community access, mainly around safeguarding and liability. It was established that a number of schools are not designed to facilitate wider community access through the appropriate 'zoning off' of parts of the school to safeguard children. This has however been addressed through the Extended School Capital Programme, which has seen development of areas within a number of primary schools that are now accessible for independent community access, such as Ripple Primary and William Ford Junior. The schools are now able to 'zone off' areas and only open parts of the school accessible by the community. A number of schools also raised issues around not having the appropriate furniture to cater for community groups to use, however Extended Schools revenue funding has been provided to support this.

As well as safeguarding, insurance has also been a key concern amongst many school and governing bodies. Furthermore, the school governors who participated in the consultation with the Select Committee also identified insurance as a barrier to schools letting halls out for wider community access. However, it was noted that the schools are actively supported by the Council to put in place robust and legally binding partnership agreements that cover them in instance if any damages, such as through the Transfer of Control Agreement. 14 schools currently host external childcare providers until 6pm each weekday and have put these arrangements in place.

3.4.4 Improving community perceptions

During the Select Committee's consultation, a number of groups felt that despite the level of good work undertaken by local community and voluntary groups, it often goes unnoticed. Promoting and publicising the work and the contribution of the local community and voluntary groups would help improve the perception issue within the borough.

The Select Committee took the view that the local media plays an important role in eliminating myths and stereotyping and could help promote an appreciation of diversity in the borough. Therefore, publicising the positive work of community and voluntary groups in the borough would improve communications and subsequently challenge misconceptions and tackle negative views of some local residents towards changing communities. The Select Committee also suggested that community events and activities should also be widely publicised by the local media to raise further awareness in the community.

However, it is equally important that the community and voluntary groups proactively engage with the local media to promote community cohesion by developing guidance for the release of information which might impact on perceptions of cohesion.

Recommendations 20:

The Select Committee recommends that the CVS pro-actively approach the local media to further promote the work undertaken by the local community and voluntary groups, including the publication of the activities and event organised by the groups.

3.4.5 Volunteering

Volunteering plays a vital role in sustaining the Third Sector and supporting communities in the borough. Currently, 26% of organisations survive on volunteering support alone in the borough. The prevalence of organisations managing with an all volunteer workforce or mainly volunteers is partly explained by the number of new groups in the borough in their formative stages. However, a number of well and established groups also manage to sustain their work with few or no paid staff. A total number of 2,561 volunteers were identified in 2008/09.

The Council currently commissions the Volunteer Bureau to provide a range of support in relation to volunteering. Their targets include the following:

- Promote the role of volunteering in the borough:
 - Place 200 volunteers in organisations per annum
 - Recruit, train and support these volunteers
 - 75 volunteers to take up accredited training
- Continue promoting the CRB process and implementation within the voluntary sector in the borough:
 - Ensure 2 yearly renewals for all registered organisations
 - Process 500 voluntary and community sector applications per annum

This commission is currently being re-tendered: the new commission will commence in July 2011.

Recommendation 21:

The Select Committee recommends that in nine months time, by when the new volunteering function will be up and running , a report on the impact of volunteering in the borough and plans for its promotion be presented to the Committee by the organisation delivering this commission.

4. Conclusion

This has been the second in-depth review conducted by the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee. The review has aimed to identify some key areas that impact upon community cohesion, and to put forward recommendations to support those working in the complex yet vital area.

Members recognise that many of the report's recommendations require partnership working between the Local Authority and other relevant organisations and intend to hold ongoing dialogue with those on whom the recommendations have an impact.

The Select Committee recognise the importance of continued consultation with the voluntary and community sector in relation to building community cohesion. Following the drafting of this report, the Select Committee has consulted further with the community and voluntary organisations, and intends to incorporate any recommendations arising in consideration for further action plans, where not possible to accommodate at this present time.