

## Report to COUNCIL

# Council commitment to community cohesion

### **Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor Barbara Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Co-operatives and Neighbourhoods

**Officer Contact:** Helen Lockwood, Executive Director Co-operatives and Neighbourhoods

**Report Author:** Bruce Penhale, Head of Stronger Communities Service  
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### **Reason for Decision**

The report seeks approval of a policy statement on community cohesion which sets out a set of principles the Council will follow.

Alongside this, the Council has been asked to sign up to three initiatives relating to building good community relations: the Greater Manchester Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest; the Bruxelles Declaration of Pledge to Peace; and the We Stand Together initiative. The report provides information regarding these initiatives.

### **Executive Summary**

The report considers four inter-related initiatives:

- A group of members has developed a draft policy statement on community cohesion which is framed in relation to the Council's ambition as a Co-operative Council, and organised around the Council's values. Effectively it provides greater detail about what these values mean in the context of community cohesion.

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- The Bruxelles Declaration: Pledge to Peace is a European Parliament initiative which aims to create a network of people with a “shared vision of the value of peace, who have the potential to create, promote and communicate tangible projects and initiatives” that can promote peace within their communities. The Council has been asked to become a signatory to this. If it does so, Oldham will be the first local authority in the UK to make this commitment.
  - The pledge of hope and guidance on peaceful protest was developed by a group of Greater Manchester faith leaders in discussion with the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner. It seeks to balance the right of individuals to peaceful protest against those of others who may be affected by a protest, by encouraging that protests be undertaken in responsible ways which do not cause division or incite hatred.
  - We Stand Together is a national campaign which seeks to celebrate difference, challenge hatred and intolerance, and to build a stronger United Kingdom. It includes a focus on tackling hate crime. It has arisen from concern about the impact of recent incidents of terrorism and extremism. The intention is that a public awareness campaign will stimulate a wide range of community activity which brings people together and encourages mutual understanding and respect.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Council support Option 3, and:

- (i) approve the policy statement about community cohesion,
- (ii) become a signatory to the Bruxelles Pledge to Peace,
- (iii) endorse the Greater Manchester Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest,  
and
- (iv) endorse and promote the We Stand Together campaign.

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## **Council Commitment to Community Cohesion**

### **1 Background**

- 1.1 Oldham Council has a longstanding commitment to community cohesion, and works with partner organisations and communities in support of this. The Council's approach to community cohesion reflects both its values and legal duties.
- 1.2 Community cohesion is about how individuals and communities relate to each other. In a cohesive Borough, people and communities:
- have a shared sense of pride and belonging;
  - are confident in their own identities, and respect those of others;
  - have equal and fair access to opportunities which enable them to achieve their potential;
  - are outward looking and not isolated from one another;
  - play their part in supporting themselves and each other; and
  - are able to live safely, and stand together against those who seek to harm others.
- 1.3 As part of developing its commitment to a co-operative borough, the Council has re-visited what this means for its approach to community cohesion.

### **2 Current Position**

#### **The Council's approach to community cohesion**

- 2.1 A sub-group of members have worked together to develop a Council policy statement on community cohesion, with the intention that this should be adopted by Council. There is a strong history of collaboration across the Council on this issue, and the statement was developed in this spirit.
- 2.3 The statement is framed in relation to the Council's ambition as a Co-operative Council, and organised around the Council's values. Effectively it provides greater detail about what these values mean in the context of community cohesion. The statement is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.4 The statement sets out principles which will inform decisions taken by the members and officers of the Council. The principles may, for example, inform decisions over priorities or help determine the circumstances in which the Council needs to take action. Examples of the Council's activity which it applies to are:
- decisions about priorities for resource allocation;
  - the ways in which the Council communicates with, or involves, residents and businesses;
  - tackling anti-social behaviour;
  - terms and conditions of Council staff;
  - supporting the inclusion of disabled people;

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- activity to encourage positive interaction between people from different backgrounds (such as through the primary school linking programme);
  - work to support the integration of new migrants to Oldham; and
  - preventing and resolving conflict within communities.

### **The Bruxelles Declaration: Pledge to Peace**

- 2.5 The Bruxelles Declaration of Pledge to Peace was established on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 at the European Parliament in Brussels. The purpose of the Pledge to Peace is to create a network of people with a “shared vision of the value of peace, who have the potential to create, promote and communicate tangible projects and initiatives” that can promote peace within their communities.
- 2.6 The Pledge to Peace is a voluntary commitment, and entails no obligation. Every signatory, however, declares their willingness to create programs and initiatives promoting the culture of peace, also in collaboration with other signatories, and to notify the Secretariat (Percosi Association) accordingly. This not-for-profit organisation then promotes events and official initiatives in support of the signatories’ work allowing them to expand their scope of action and the visibility of their programs. More information about the Bruxelles Declaration can be found at: <http://www.pledgetopeace.eu/the-pledge.html>
- 2.7 The ethos of the Bruxelles Declaration complements Oldham’s commitment to its co-operative values, in particular fairness, respect and working together; and is also in line with our Ethical Framework which ensures we are operating with our co-operative principles in mind. Oldham Council would be the first Council in the UK to become a signatory to this.
- 2.8 The signing of the Pledge would help to reinforce and promote work already undertaken, and being planned, to promote peace throughout the borough and beyond, including:
- In response to the crisis in Gaza, Oldham Council commissioned an Oldham Peace Flag. This was raised over the Civic Centre on 7 August 2014.
  - In the same week members of an Oldham delegation delivered an 8,303 name petition to Downing Street, calling for an end to all hostilities and the recall of Parliament so the crisis can be discussed and humanitarian aid can be agreed.
  - Oldham Council hosted a peace conference on Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup> 2014 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall to identify practical ways in which residents can help those suffering through conflict, and to prevent international conflict from damaging community relations in Britain. *‘Making a difference: A conference to discuss local responses to international conflict’* was attended by around 120 residents.
  - A group from Oldham visited the Warrington Peace Centre on 5<sup>th</sup> February, with a view to looking at whether there are some opportunities to work together. There is potentially a link between work to promote peace, and activity to build good community relations and prevent extremism.
  - Plans are in development for an event to celebrate International Peace Day in September. Individuals and groups which were involved in the Peace Conference will be invited to contribute to this.
  - to follow up on the Peace Conference by bringing together a network of individuals who can work with the Council and each other in promoting peace.

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## **Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest for the Communities of Greater Manchester**

- 2.8 The pledge of hope and guidance on peaceful protest was developed by a group of Greater Manchester faith leaders in discussion with the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner. It has been supported by AGMA Leaders, and Councils have been asked to sign up to this. The wording of the pledge is at Appendix 2. It seeks to balance the right of individuals to peaceful protest against those of others who may be affected by a protest, by encouraging that protests be undertaken in responsible ways which do not cause division or incite hatred.
- 2.9 The North West Infidels recently held a demonstration in Oldham Town Centre which had the potential to cause damage to community relations in the borough. The management of the demonstration by the police and Council reflected the ethos set out in the Pledge of Hope and Guidance. With the support of a range of local partners, including community and faith groups, the demonstration passed off without significant disruption and disorder. Business continued as usual in the Town Centre, and it had only a minimal community impact.

### **We Stand Together**

- 2.9 On Thursday 5th March the national “We Stand Together” campaign was launched at Manchester Town Hall by, among others, the Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Lloyd, Chief Constable Sir Peter Fahy and Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council Cllr Bernard Priest. The campaign has arisen in response to recent concerns about issues of terrorism and extremism.
- 2.10 The campaign seeks to celebrate difference, challenge hatred and intolerance, and to build a stronger United Kingdom. It includes a focus on tackling hate crime. The intention is that the public awareness campaign will lead to a wide range of community activity which brings people together and encourages mutual understanding and respect. It is intended that this will be publicised on Twitter at #WeStandTogether. In Greater Manchester there was a week of action on 9th – 15th March, and an event is being planned in Oldham Town Centre for Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March.
- 2.11 It is intended that the campaign will stimulate a range of community led activities, with a wide range of organisations and individuals promoting the We Stand Together message and developing activity in support of it. The Council has been asked to support the We Stand Together campaign.

### **3 Options/Alternatives**

- 3.1 **Option 1** – That Council does not either approve the policy statement or endorse any of the three external initiatives.

This would lose the opportunity to provide clarity about the Council’s commitment to community cohesion, and to support a set of initiatives which are compatible with this.

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- 3.2 **Option 2** – That Council adopt only the policy statement about community cohesion, and does not commit support to the three external initiatives.

While the Council would be adopting the policy statement setting out a set of principles for how it intends to operate in relation to community cohesion, it would then be choosing not to offer support for three initiatives which are compatible with these principles. While there is an expectation that the Council would take action in support of these initiatives, this does not necessitate a substantial commitment of resources which could be a barrier to offering support.

- 3.3 **Option 3** – That Council:
- (i) approve the policy statement about community cohesion,
  - (ii) become a signatory to the Bruxelles Pledge to Peace,
  - (iii) endorse the Greater Manchester Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest, and
  - (iv) endorse and promote the We Stand Together campaign.

These initiatives are complementary, and would together represent a positive commitment to work with others on building peace and good community relations. There is an obligation in signing the Peace Pledge to report programs and initiatives to the Secretariat, and this would include activity undertaken in response to the policy statement, and in support of the Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest and the We Stand Together campaign. The same report on progress could also be provided to Council.

## 4 **Preferred Option**

- 4.1 Option 3 – That Council:
- (i) approve the policy statement about community cohesion,
  - (ii) become a signatory to the Bruxelles Pledge to Peace,
  - (iii) endorse the Greater Manchester Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest, and
  - (iv) endorse and promote the We Stand Together campaign.

The policy statement, and the three initiatives complement Oldham's commitment to its co-operative values, in particular fairness, respect and working together; and are also in line with our Ethical Framework which ensures we are operating with our co-operative principles in mind. Approval of the policy, and endorsing the three initiatives have no impact on the Council's budget, but any activity undertake in support of them would be subject to the appropriate financial approval processes.

## 5 **Consultation**

- 5.1 The Community Cohesion Policy statement was developed by a group of members, led by Cllr Barbara Brownridge as the Cabinet member for Co-operatives and Neighbourhoods. Members attending training sessions on community cohesion and preventing extremism on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> March were consulted upon the draft.
- 5.2 The Bruxelles Declaration Pledge to Peace has been discussed with the group Peace Talks Oldham, who have requested that the Council become a signatory to the declaration.

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5.3 The Greater Manchester Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest was developed by faith groups in discussion with the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner. It has been discussed by Greater Manchester Leaders and Chief Executives.

5.4 Cllr Moores represented Oldham Council at the Greater Manchester launch event of We Stand Together. The initiative has been discussed with Greater Manchester Police and Oldham Inter-Faith Forum.

## **6 Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no implications arising from the report.

## **7 Legal Services Comments**

7.1 There are no implications arising from the report. (Paul Entwistle)

## **8. Cooperative Agenda**

8.1 The policy statement, the Bruxelles Declaration, the Greater Manchester Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest and the We Stand Together campaign complement Oldham's commitment to its co-operative values, in particular fairness, respect and working together; and are also in line with our Ethical Framework which ensures we are operating with our co-operative principles in mind.

## **9 Human Resources Comments**

9.1 There are no implications arising from the report.

## **10 Risk Assessments**

10.1 There are no implications arising from the report.

## **11 IT Implications**

11.1 There are no implications arising from the report.

## **12 Property Implications**

12.1 There are no implications arising from the report.

## **13 Procurement Implications**

13.1 There are no implications arising from the report.

## **14 Environmental and Health and Safety Implications**

14.1 There are no implications arising from the report.

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15 **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**

15.1 The policy statement and the three initiatives are specifically concerned with making a positive contribution on community cohesion. They are particularly concerned with promoting good community relations, but the Policy Statement also addresses wider issues including equality. (Bruce Penhale)

16 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

16.1 An initial assessment has indicated that there is no adverse equalities impact as a result of the proposals.

17 **Key Decision**

17.1 No

18 **Forward Plan Reference**

18.1 Not applicable

19 **Background Papers**

19.1 The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act :

File held by the Stronger Communities Service on Level 9 of the Civic Centre  
Officer Name : Bruce Penhale  
Contact No : 0161 770 4196

20 **Appendices**

20.1 The report has the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Draft policy statement. Community cohesion in a co-operative borough
- Appendix 2 - Pledge to Peace: The Bruxelles Declaration
- Appendix 3 - Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest for the Communities of Greater Manchester



DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT

COMMUNITY COHESION IN A CO-OPERATIVE BOROUGH

Oldham is committed to developing a co-operative future; in which residents, the Council and partner organisations work together to improve the borough and create a confident and ambitious place.

This includes:

- everybody doing their bit and everybody benefitting;
- devolving power and responsibility to enable residents to take greater control over the services and amenities that matter most to them;
- supporting people to do more to help themselves and each other;
- helping to build greater resilience and self-reliance among individuals and communities.

In support of this ambition, the Council has three corporate objectives:

- **A productive place** to invest where business and enterprise thrive
- **Confident communities** where everybody does their bit; and
- **A co-operative Council** creating responsive and high quality services.

The Oldham Partnership is also committed to a cooperative borough, and to ensuring that partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors work together for the benefit of Oldham.

Community cohesion is about how individuals and communities relate to each other.

In a cohesive Borough, people and communities:

- have a shared sense of pride and belonging;
- are confident in their own identities, and respect those of others;
- have equal and fair access to opportunities which enable them to achieve their potential;
- are outward looking and not isolated from one another;
- play their part in supporting themselves and each other; and
- are able to live safely, and stand together against those who seek to harm others.

The Council's approach to community cohesion reflects both its legal duties and its values. Two key pieces of legislation in relation to community cohesion are the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010. The Council's values provide a set of principles which inform the decisions it makes, including those relating to community cohesion.

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## OUR VALUES

The Council has adopted a set of co-operative values, which it is also encouraging staff, residents and partners to observe:

### **Fairness**

*"We will champion fairness and equality of opportunity, and ensure working together brings mutual benefits and the greatest possible added value. We will enable everyone to be involved."*

The Council views all citizens as equal.

It will champion citizens' right to a peaceful life, and freedom from mental and physical harm.

It will seek to enable all citizens to enjoy life and achieve their potential.

Treating people fairly does not mean that everyone should be treated the same, or that resources should be allocated equally.

The Council will not favour any religion over any other, or favour holding a religious faith over not having a faith.

### **Openness**

*"We will be open and honest in our actions and communications. We will take decisions in a transparent way and at the most local level possible."*

The Council will be open in its decision-making, unless there is a legal requirement to do otherwise.

### **Responsibility**

*"We take responsibility for, and answer to our actions. We will encourage people to take responsibility for themselves and their actions. Mutual benefits go hand-in-hand with mutual obligations."*

The Council will obey, and will expect residents to obey, the law.

The Council expects residents to meet their obligations to others, and to the community as a whole.

Members and officers of the Council are entitled to hold their own views but, when representing the Council, must behave in ways which are consistent with the Council's values.

The Council will operate in line with its ethical framework.

### **Working together**

*"We will work together and support each other in achieving common goals, making sure the environment is in place for self-help."*

The Council believes that concern for others is the cornerstone of a cohesive society. It will seek to balance the rights of individuals with those of others and the wider community.

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The Council will promote a sense of community based upon co-operation and mutual support.

The Council will work with communities to design and deliver services, and will consult individuals and communities about decisions that affect them.

The Council values its workforce highly. It will protect employees' welfare and provide suitable support in developing their potential. It will aim to provide an example to other employers in the Borough.

The Council will work in partnership with other public, private and voluntary organisations for the benefit of the Borough. It will provide leadership including on matters of community cohesion.

### **Accountability**

*"We recognise and act upon the impact of our actions on others, and hold ourselves accountable to our stakeholders."*

The Council believes in being accountable to Oldham's citizens and businesses for the decisions it takes, and how it uses public money.

Where individuals or organisations break the law, the Council will use its enforcement powers to hold them accountable if it is in the public interest to do so.

### **Respect**

*"We recognise and welcome different views and treat each other with dignity and respect."*

The Council will encourage appropriate understanding, mutual respect and interaction between different individuals, groups, faiths, traditions, communities, cultures and lifestyles.

It will respect freedom of belief, expression and lifestyle, providing that these are not used to justify restrictions on the rights of others.

### **Democracy**

*"We believe and act within the principles of democracy, and promote these across the borough."*

The Council will actively promote participation in the democratic process and protect each citizen's right to vote fairly, freely and secretly.

It will listen to and take account of the views of residents.

It will seek to manage conflict peacefully and positively, preferring dialogue to enforcement.

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## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Pledge to Peace: The Bruxelles Declaration**

#### **Article 1**

##### **Joint commitment to create Projects aimed at promoting peace and well-being among people**

- 1.1 The PARTIES agree that the Pledge to Peace, which will implement the actions described below, has the aim of promoting the values of Peace and Well Being in their broadest and universal meaning, based on the principles of the centrality and dignity of every individual, and on the principles of solidarity, equality and freedom.
- 1.2 In respecting the criteria inspiring the afore described initiative, the PARTIES, each within their own institutional field of competence and in complete freedom, are committed to initiate the actions needed to identify and seek the practices, methods, contexts and tools they intend to use to contribute in creating and shaping the Project.
- 1.3 To this aim it is agreed that from now on each PARTY, while developing and planning its activities and governance, will include those elements capable of supporting the need for peace and prosperity while at the same time supporting initiatives as appropriate to all segments of society that can offer a valid support to the dissemination and promotion of peace, employing resources and tools such as education, technology, science and policies as may be deemed necessary.

#### **Article 2**

##### **Role of those adhering to the Declaration of Intent**

- 2.1 The PARTIES declare they adhere to the Pledge to Peace Project as defined in the Declaration of Intent and are at the same time committed to provide every form of support and collaboration conducive to the positive outcome and success of the Project.
- 2.2 For this purpose, the PARTIES are committed towards providing proposals, documents, materials, and results of studies and surveys that may be useful in achieving the Pledge to Peace objectives.

#### **Article 3**

##### **Communication and promotion of the Declaration of Intent**

- 3.1 The PARTIES agree upon the importance of providing adequate publicity to the content of this Declaration of Intent and promoting the participation of any other Institution, Administration, public and private Agency and Organization that may be interested.
- 3.2 The PARTIES expressly convene that the dissemination of any initiative connected to this Declaration of Intent through institutional communication channels is of a purely informative nature.

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## APPENDIX 3

### **Pledge of Hope and Guidance on Peaceful Protest for the Communities of Greater Manchester**

**We stand up for hope in our communities, not the fear and hatred extremists would use to divide us.**

We vow to import peace, never to export conflict.

We are proud of our city and region.

We celebrate our common heritage of peaceful radical protest to achieve social progress and justice.

We uphold the right to peaceful protest as essential in a healthy democracy.

However, we will stand up to those who try to use protest to divide or threaten our people and whip up intolerance, violence and hatred.

We gain strength from the diversity of our people. We welcome people from around the world, from different cultures, religions, backgrounds and outlook.

#### **We pledge:**

- To promote positive relationships between all communities and reject and condemn any form of discrimination, violence or harassment to any member of our communities
- In exercising the right to demonstrate and protest, we will not do anything to generate hostility or division between our communities. We will avoid doing anything in our protest to cause racial or religious hatred or prejudice on grounds of race, nationality, sex, sexuality or religion.
- In managing protests, we will facilitate peaceful protest as the exercising of a basic democratic right
- In expressing deeply held opinions, including the use of social media, we will do so responsibly and respect the right of others to do the same
- To ensure everyone involved in the managing of protest and those who organise and participate in our protest to abide by this pledge.

We expect the community of Greater Manchester to hold us to account in continuing to promote strong communities that work against hatred and fear.

On behalf of all of the people of Greater Manchester, we call on all those in the news media to report issues on protests and demonstrations, race, nationality, gender, sexuality and religion positively, responsibly and with sensitivity.