

# ITEM: 6b

## Camden Local Strategic Partnership

**Meeting:** 27 March 2008

**Report Title:** Note of the Social Cohesion Forum meeting, 26 February 2008

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**Purpose:** This report updates the LSP on work of the Social Cohesion Forum.

**Recommendations:** The LSP is asked note the report.

## Current and future work

1. The latest Social Cohesion Forum was held on 26 February 2008. At the meeting the following items were discussed:
  - New Local Area Agreement social cohesion indicators;
  - Hazel Blears' response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's *Our Shared Future* report; and
  - The latest draft of Camden's ESOL Strategy

### LAA social cohesion indicators

2. SCF discussed changes to the framework for Camden's Local Area Agreement (LAA), which come into effect in April 2008. From April there will no longer be an LAA grant, breaking the link between funding for specific priorities. The forum was asked to consider which of the following two indicators it felt was the most suitable for Camden's LAA to monitor Social Cohesion:
  - NI 1 - % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
  - NI 2 - % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
3. Members of the forum chose NI 1.
4. The forum also thought that the national set of indicators didn't adequately capture the issue of social cohesion in Camden. The forum asked Claire

Tunley, Head of LAA and LSP, to convene a meeting to discuss this further and possibly identify local social cohesion measure for the LAA. The Forum agreed it was important that although Camden is a high performing borough, any measure used should set targets that are challenging to avoid complacency.

5. There was a significant amount of debate as to the merits of each indicator particularly NI 35 - "Preventing Violent Extremism,". Camden is under pressure to include this indicator in its LAA to reflect government priorities. The forum agreed with the overall aim of the indicator but felt strongly that the wording was unhelpful, potentially creating tensions and stigma. The forum agreed that NI 35 should not be included in the LAA, but the LAA narrative should contain a strong indication that preventing extremism is a priority in Camden.

### **Hazel Blears' response to the *Our Shared Future* report**

6. The Forum noted a presentation by Moira Ugoji, Head of Diversity, on Hazel Blears MP's response in January 2008 to the *Our Shared Future* report. Hazel Blears called for fresh efforts to promote cohesion and tackle community tensions. The actions that the Government will take include:
  - establishing specialist cohesion teams within Central Government,
  - local authority twinning,
  - new guidance for local authorities on developing Information Packs for new migrants and
  - consultation on cohesion guidance for funders.
7. Hazel Blears' response clarified the point that there is still a place for single equalities group funding, where there is evidenced need, but this should be carried out by exception and not as a rule.
8. SCF was also given an update on the work that Camden has done, before and since the publication of the report, to promote social cohesion in the borough.

### **Draft ESOL Strategy**

9. Brian Mitchell, Head of Adult and Community Learning, introduced the ESOL Strategic Action Plan and the consultation document on ESOL and community cohesion from the Department for Innovation, Universities and

Skills. Interested parties were asked to email comments to Brian as soon as possible to support the Council's coordinated response.

10. It was noted that Westminster Kingsway College had £1 million of surplus funds for ESOL provision as they had been unable to attract enough candidates. It was suggested that the college works more closely with the Council to ensure enhancement of services and avoid duplication of provision. The college was also tasked to work more closely with local communities to ensure that it promotes its services more effectively.

### **Further discussions**

11. Following the debate on preventing violent extremism it was decided further discussion was required on what these funds were for and what projects the money could support in the future, as well as whether funding projects under this title would lead to stigmatising communities and therefore damage cohesion. A question was raised as to whether work with potential BNP members needed to be considered under this funding framework. It was decided that this needed further discussion at a future meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 28 April.
12. After considering the reports the Forum agreed that future meetings would consider:
  - ESOL provision and how align people to the provision
  - Whether written translations into community languages are effective
  - Preventing Violent Extremism
  - Tension monitoring - how and where is tension monitored?