

Report of: Chief Officer for Communities

Report to: Inner North East Community Committee

Report author: Liz Jarmin, 278078

Date: 14th March 2016

For decision/To note: For discussion

Title: Strong and Resilient Communities

Purpose of report

1. The paper sets out a refreshed approach, outlining how the Council will work better across its communities, directorates and partners, to deliver a more joined up approach to community cohesion & Prevent, that seeks to harness the combined effort of staff and activities across a continuum, ranging from universal work that takes place in all communities, through to more targeted work in specific areas of the city, to support and safeguard those who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism.
2. The programme will be delivered within the context of the new Breakthrough project; 'Strong Communities Benefitting from a Strong City', and the development of a cross cutting programme of work which seeks to promote good community relations, cultural & religious tolerance and respect, and the celebration of cultural diversity, whilst acknowledging the need to undertake more targeted work with communities to dispel extremism from our city, wherever it exists.

Main issues

3. On the 19th October 2015, the Government published its National Counter Extremism Strategy, which seeks to tackle all forms of extremism: violent and non-violent; Islamist and neo-Nazi, and to improve the understanding of the causes and impacts of extremism. The strategy has four main strands, to:
 - Counter the extremist ideology
 - Build a partnership with all those opposed to extremism
 - Disrupt extremists
 - Build more cohesive communities

4. The strategy followed the introduction of the Prevent duty on 1st of July 2015, as part of the government Counter Terrorism and Security Bill 2015. This places a statutory duty for certain specified authorities, including local authorities, to have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. This means local authorities, schools, HE and FE establishments, probation, prisons, and the police must:
 - Assess risk of radicalisation in their area or institution
 - Develop an action plan to reduce this risk
 - Train staff to recognise radicalisation and extremism
 - Work in partnership with other partners
 - Establish referral mechanisms and refer people to Channel
 - Maintain records and reports to show compliance
5. Implementation of the duty will be inspected by the Home Office who will: oversee compliance; gather data from specified authorities above; and issue direct guidance if there is non-compliance with the duty.
6. In complying with the duty all specified authorities, as a starting point, should demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the risk of radicalisation in their area, institution or body. This risk will vary greatly and can change rapidly; no area, institution or body is risk free. Whilst the type and scale of activity that will address the risk will vary, all specified authorities will need to give due consideration to it.
7. Since July work has been taking place with schools, Further and Higher Education Institutions and front line workers, to build confidence and raise awareness of the duty and statutory obligations of key institutions.
8. Though training sessions for Elected Members in relation to Prevent have been organised in the past, engagement on this agenda has been low. Moving forward, we hope that Community Committees will play a much more active role in the delivery of Prevent through the Strong and resilient Communities programme, and ideas about how this work be taken forward within localities are sought.
9. To support the delivery of the programme, it has been agreed that Prevent related activity delivered through the Council, will transfer from Safer Leeds to Citizens and Communities. This will improve the link between Prevent and locality working, and help to develop closer and more joined up service development and delivery.

Strong and Resilient Communities Programme

10. Community Committees already delivery of a wide range of initiatives which contribute to community cohesion and promote good community relations. These activities play a pivotal role in our ambition to bring place, people and resources together to improve local areas and the quality of life for residents, by strengthening links with local community forums, parish and town councils, volunteer groups and residents, supporting local people to understand each other better and get on well together. This can involve a wide range of activities from helping to resolve community tensions to celebrating the diversity of the Leeds population.
11. The Strong and Resilient Communities programme will seek to build on the good work already taking place, whilst recognising that in some areas of the city there is need for more

targeted work to take place to safeguard and support those who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

12. Main outcomes/deliverables of the Strong and Resilient Communities programme is to develop a city wide approach (some existing, some new) which leads to:

- More **cohesive and better integrated communities** by instilling a sense of belonging and pride in being a citizen of Leeds. Tackling the barriers which stop people from getting involved in community life such as language skills, information about services, reducing harassment and hate, or worklessness.
- Improving **community resilience/sustainability** by tackling poverty and crime, providing excellent services, rebalancing the 'social contract' relationship between the Council and residents and promoting civic enterprise and the leadership role of trusted members of the community and community organisations.
- Promoting **universal values**, which incorporate the democratic process, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Promoting the **role of Community Committees** in addressing equality improvement priorities locally and engaging with local communities to address grievances and improve neighbourhoods and communities.
- Building the **confidence and the sure-footedness of front line staff**, including teaching staff, and elected members to engage in conversations in safe places working restoratively on issues of local, national and global significance that are impacting on communities in Leeds. Consider the impact of policies, programmes and spend decisions on cohesion.
- To **improve the vigilance of residents and staff**, and encourage them to report alert signals and behaviours that may suggest tensions / issues are arising in neighbourhoods and communities, so that appropriate interventions can be deployed early on and thereby prevent more serious incidents taking place.
- **Raising aspirations and widen access to economic opportunities** in the city that lead to people from different backgrounds sharing their life experiences and talking to each other, for example; improving the take-up of apprenticeships amongst BME and white British communities where educational attainment is low.
- Better **understanding the city's landscape in relation to vulnerability and extremism and develop targeted approaches to address the issues**. In some areas of the city, individuals are more likely to experience hate crime and ASB and minority communities appear more isolated potentially becoming more vulnerable to extremism.
- **Safeguarding those considered most vulnerable** of becoming involved in extremist activity by extending the support available in the city and by building the capacity of credible individuals and organisations to work with those identified through the Channel programme.
- To **incorporate counter terrorism based intelligence within the decision making process** to determine where regeneration activity should take place.
- **Developing a new relationship with local media agencies**, where we can showcase positive examples of how communities are working together in a common cause for the benefit of all the residents of the city.

13. A more detailed programme of activity and actions is now in development, which will form the basis for further consultation with Members, Council Services and Partners.

Corporate considerations

a. Consultation and engagement

Consultation has taken place with the Leader, Executive Member for Communities and the Community Committee Chairs Forum all of whom support the development of the approach outlined in this report. The Prevent programme has been transferred from Safer Leeds to Citizens and Communities, and now sits within the Council's corporate safeguarding programme.

The Safer Leeds Executive, are supportive of the broader approach suggested in this report and see opportunities to work more collectively across the wider continuum of activity which the refresh programme will seek to deliver.

The Council's Corporate Leadership Team have also been consulted and have agreed that combining work to improve cohesion and address potential risks associated with radicalisation in one unified programme of activity, provides greater opportunity to deal with potential issues much earlier and help stop vulnerable individuals and groups from becoming engaged in behaviour that may be damaging to themselves or others.

b. Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

This refreshed approach aims to improve cohesion and integration by bringing communities together in common cause, as well as reduce the risk of individuals and groups becoming involved in radicalization and criminality. It will seek to consider how we safeguard the city from all types of extremism by promoting the democratic process, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Once developed, an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken in line with Council guidance.

c. Council policies and city priorities

The programme will support the delivery of the Best Council Plan by helping improve the lives of local people, encouraging respect, tolerance and instilling a sense of belonging and pride in being a citizen of Leeds, thereby supporting the Vision for Leeds overarching ambition that by 2030, Leeds will be the best city in the UK:

- Leeds will be fair, open and welcoming.
- Leeds' economy will be prosperous and sustainable.
- All Leeds' communities will be successful.

Conclusion

14. The makeup of communities in Leeds is changing and in some places this change is happening rapidly. There is now a different type of threat to our communities. It seeks to undermine the values of fairness, mutual respect and equality which underpin a strong and cohesive society. We need to do more to understand and challenge this threat, by building the confidence and surefootedness of our staff and elected members and of those who live and work in the city.
15. We know from events of the past, that extremism can happen in even the most cohesive of communities. We need to ensure that we have the capacity to safeguard those who may

become vulnerable to extremism and lead them away from potential harm and criminality. We need to do as much as we can to ensure that people from different backgrounds have access to the same life opportunities and benefit from the city's prosperity. If we fail to do this, we risk tensions arising and communities becoming isolated, leading to the erosion of community cohesion and reducing levels of resilience.

16. Good work is already taking place within education and with frontline workers to raise awareness and develop confidence through the delivery of WRAP training and other more tailored support. We need to build on this momentum and reach-out to a wider a range of groups and individuals, including Elected Members and other elected representatives, and ensure that everyone plays their part in keeping the city and its residents' safe from harm.
17. The new National Counter Extremism strategy provides impetus for the Council to strengthen its approach to promoting cohesion and preventing extremism in a broader context of universal and targeted activity, delivered through the new 'Strong Communities Benefitting from a Strong City' Breakthrough project. Our approaches to the work of prevent and extremism in Leeds has always been about working with communities and the Counter Extremism Strategy is an opportunity to both broaden and deepen its impact.

Recommendations

18. The Inner North East Community Committee is asked to:
 - Discuss the contents of this report and the proposal to develop refreshed approach to the Councils Cohesion and Prevent related activity, under the banner of the 'Strong and Resilient Communities programme' (draft title) and within the context of the new Breakthrough project "Strong Communities Benefitting from a Strong City".
 - Consider how best to engage within their respective locality on this agenda, especially in light of the introduction of the statutory Prevent Duty.
 - Discuss any potential support arrangements that the Prevent team can provide to Committees/Locality Teams in the development of local programmes of activity.

Background information

- **Prevent Duty Guidance**
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445977/3799_Rev_ised_Prevent_Duty_Guidance_England_Wales_V2-Interactive.pdf
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted>