

COMMITTEE: Citizenship and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE: 14 November 2007
REPORT OF: Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Community Welcome

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide background information to inform a discussion by the Committee on the impact on community cohesion of new residents and how they might be supported to integrate with existing communities by being welcomed in a way that helps to clarify collective rights and responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and recommend issues to be considered in further work to develop the way in which new residents are welcomed to Manchester and its neighbourhoods.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Committee has asked for a report on how new residents are welcomed to the City and how they are helped to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens.
- 1.2 Manchester is a very diverse city. Our history is one of migration and, in many ways, diversity makes Manchester dynamic, which makes us successful. Currently Manchester is becoming even more diverse. As the core of one of the UK's major conurbations, new people come to live here all the time. These include economic migrants, particularly at the moment from eastern Europe. Asylum seekers and refugees are also attracted to Manchester, either because they have family or community connections here or because they are placed here by government. With over 57,000 full time students attending the City's universities, there is an annual influx of new young people to live in the City.

- 1.3 How new arrivals are integrated into society and how people from different backgrounds get on together – “community cohesion” – has become an issue of national debate and discussion. This is partly the result of reports into disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001 which brought into focus questions of why, in some areas, different groups were not mixing and were leading parallel lives. More recently, terrorist attacks in London in July 2005 raised questions about the alienation of some particular communities.
- 1.4 To put this into context locally, our most recent residents survey showed that 77% of Manchester residents believe that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is the same as the national average and higher than the average for Greater Manchester.
- 1.5 Nationally levels of cohesion tend to correlate negatively with deprivation, that is the more deprived an area the less likely it is the people will believe that their local area is the place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. Manchester bucks this trend. Compared to national figures the level of cohesion in Manchester is greater than one would expect, given our level of deprivation. The evidence also suggests that this is more than an issue of race. In Manchester areas with high proportions of ethnic minority population tend to have higher portions of residents saying that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. It is not difference that causes tensions, it’s newness.
- 1.6 We know from feedback from Councillors and from residents that tensions can be caused between new arrivals and the existing local community.

2. EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY WELCOME IN MANCHESTER

- 2.1 Set out below are three examples of work to welcome new residents into Manchester in different contexts. First welcoming migrants into an area without a history of migration – the New Moss Brook Agreement. Second responding to refugees from a particular ethnic group – Somalis into Hulme and Moss Side. Third welcoming students in Fallowfield, Rusholme, Withington and Levenshulme.

New Moss Brook Agreement

- 2.2 Harpurhey has a limited recent history of wealthy ethnic residents has recently seen an increasing number of immigrants moving into the area. The New Moss Brook Residents’ Association noticed that there was a growing gap between people who lived in the area and those who were newcomers from other countries who came to work or join their families. This was giving rise to misunderstandings and misconceptions. The residents wanted to do something about the barriers that were starting to go up and looked for ways in which residents could get together.
- 2.3 This work became one of the pilots for Mancunian Agreements. Mancunian Agreements are part of the delivery of the Community Strategy. The idea of Mancunian Agreements is that everyone should have the opportunity of saying what they can contribute to making Manchester or their neighbourhood

better. The idea builds on what Manchester residents have said makes a good Mancunian – people who are proud of their City, are friendly and welcoming, passionate and creative and have a good sense of humour. By enabling local residents to come together to develop their own agreements about their local area or local issues, we can focus on the values that people share as Mancunians.

- 2.4 Mancunian Agreements can be used for all kinds of purposes but in this case, the idea has been used to build bridges between new and existing residents. The New Moss Brook Residents' Association led this work. A questionnaire was used as part of a consultation including questions about neighbourliness and respect. The Residents' Association focused on welcoming people moving into the area and distributed "Welcome Cards" inviting new residents to contact the Association and discuss any problems or concerns. The Association's representatives visited homes in the area and reported positive responses from new and existing residents.
- 2.5 The Association is encouraging those people that have not yet opened their doors to do so. The Agreement itself takes the form of an information pack setting out agreed aspirations for the future of the local area, how residents treat each other and how they can do their bit to make life in the neighbourhood better. The pack also sets out what the Council does and what local people can do to improve the local environment. Copies of the Agreement will be available at the meeting. The pack includes the A-Z guide of Council services, information about neighbourhood policing and Police Community Support Officers, youth activities, recycling and refuse collection.

Somali Communities in Hulme and Moss Side

- 2.6 In 2003/04 it became clear that the number of Somalis living in the Hulme, Moss Side and Rusholme areas had increased significantly. This became known, not through national statistics but through ad hoc feedback from public services, particularly a local primary school in Moss Side. Although there are longstanding Somali communities in Manchester the growth in those communities was relatively sudden, driven by refugees fleeing civil war in Somalia. There were tensions between different Somali groups and between Somalis and the existing, mainly afro Caribbean community.
- 2.7 Once the scale of the issue was known a community conference for Somali residents and public services was held at the Powerhouse in Moss Side. This opened up dialogue between new residents and public services with the aim of ensuring that the new residents could access employment opportunities and public services. The key message to all public services was that the response to the new Somali residents had to be seen by existing residents as fair and had to, wherever possible, promote integration between the new and existing communities.
- 2.8 A range of initiatives arose from the conference such as work by the Adult Education Service to bring Somali Women's organisations into English Language classes and assisting women to work; Manchester Housing arranged for the inclusion of Somali residents in the local Tenants and Residents Association and other housing providers provided support

schemes; a primary school developed a new induction programme for Somali parents and pupils and the police engaged Somali residents in their Independent Advisory Groups and the Local Action Partnership for Crime and Disorder.

- 2.9 A forum of all public services was established to work on the integration of Somali communities in the area and a follow-up conference with the Somali community was held one year later. A Somali community forum was also established supported by Manchester Council for Community Relations.

Student Welcome Packs

- 2.10 The majority of full time students attending the City's Universities will at some point rent privately, generally in their second and third years of study. The Fallowfield area is the focus for student living with the main concentrations clustered around the boundaries between Fallowfield, Rusholme and Withington wards and, to a lesser extent, Levenshulme ward. Students make up approximately 35% of the population of Fallowfield, Rusholme and Withington and 20% in Levenshulme.
- 2.11 The student accommodation is often linked to environmental problems mainly relating to refuse and littering. Properties are generally empty between June and September and they are often redecorated and furniture etc replaced during this time. This can lead to an accumulation of household waste and furniture in alleyways. Student housing is also a significant factor in certain types of crime. Burglary rates increase in areas dominated by student accommodation in October and during holiday periods.
- 2.12 Over the years the Council and other agencies have worked hard to communicate to landlords and student tenants their responsibilities in relation to refuse and recycling of target hardening. However, students receive large amounts of information when they arrive in the City for all sorts of purposes. Therefore, in 2005 the Council developed a Student Welcome Pack bringing together a range of information about housing rights and responsibilities, security, energy efficiency, refuse and recycling and fire safety.
- 2.13 These packs were developed in conjunction with a range of services and distributed to 1,500 student properties. The feedback from these packs was positive and they were further developed in 2006 when approximately 3,500 packs were distributed to properties through landlords and agents with a further 1,500 being delivered in hot spot areas by a variety of council services. The packs contained information on:–
- **Tenant's Responsibilities** – How they should comply with the tenancy agreement including payment of rent and utility bills.
 - **Anti-social Behaviour** – What their responsibilities are to the community and how to get help if they are the victim of anti-social behaviour.

- **Home Security** – How to minimise the risk of burglary including police contact numbers.
- **Fire Safety** – How to minimise the risk of fire.
- **Environmental** – How to be environmentally friendly.
- **Energy Efficiency** – Tips on how to save energy and money.

Citizenship Ceremonies

- 2.14 Under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, all applicants, aged 18 years or over, who are accepted for naturalisation as British Citizens are required to take part in a citizenship ceremony.
- 2.15 The aim is to enable applicants to understand the rights and responsibilities that come with British citizenship and to ensure that they are properly welcomed into the British community. Citizenship ceremonies are held at Manchester Register Office. The ceremony is conducted by the Superintendent Registrar who formally welcomes the new citizens on behalf of Manchester City Council. The applicants swear allegiance to the Queen and make a pledge of loyalty and receive a nationality certificate and an information pack.

3. **CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 Examples given in this report of existing work on community welcome in Manchester show different approaches to different types of new residents and the issues that arise. Given the dynamic and diverse nature of Manchester, the need for community welcome will continue, if not grow and it may, therefore, be helpful to develop some broad principles to guide different types of community welcome in the future. For example:-
- Ward Councillors should be involved in community welcome initiatives at the local level. The local leadership role of Ward Councillors can help bridge different communities and facilitate residents to work together to come to their own conclusions about what they can do to help new residents integrate.
 - Community welcome should be about more than what new residents should and should not do, it should also be about what all members of the community have in common, what they share and what their shared rights and responsibilities are.
 - Community welcome should be underpinned by consideration of shared values. New and existing residents may come from different communities with different cultures and different values. This cultural diversity is a strength. At the same time, Community welcome should emphasise the common values which we all share as Mancunians and which brings us together.

- Community welcome will often be a process more than the production of a welcome leaflet or information pack. Activities and events which encourage local residents, new and existing, to engage with each other are key. Cultural events and festivals can be very powerful in enabling new and existing residents to connect.
- Communicating community welcome needs to be imaginative, not just based on leaflets. For example, DVDs, internet sites advertised on the Web etc.

3.2 In taking this work forward Manchester does not need to re-invent. The recent national Commission on Integration and Cohesion considered welcome packs for new migrants and identified existing good practice. For example: East Lancashire councils have worked in a sub-regional partnership to produce a convenient pocket sized welcome book to help new migrant works to integrate into East Lancashire. The booklet contains useful information about life in East Lancashire, including information about housing, employment and expected behaviours. Cornwall's strategic partnership has also produced a comprehensive Welcome Pack for new arrivals in five main languages. The pack contains information about all aspects of local life, services and customs.

3.3 The Commission recommended that the government develop a sample welcome pack, based on current good practice. In its initial response to the Commission the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has said that the government will work with the Improvement and Development Agency to produce a consistent template to form local area information packs outlining for new arrivals their rights, their responsibilities and the local customs. This will be done no later than January next year.

3.4 The views of the Committee on community welcome can be fed into how Manchester responds to the national template.