

TACKLING SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN MILTON KEYNES

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Members of the social inclusion project, which has recently been initiated within the Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 The consultation exercises which were carried out in preparation for unitary status in Milton Keynes identified integrated service provision both within the Council and between local agencies as a key requirement for the new unitary authority. The structures of the new Council were therefore devised to facilitate integration and effective corporate working.
- 2.2 This has been a key theme in the way the new authority has set about its work and some progress has been made in developing inter-disciplinary and inter-service working both within and between directorates.
- 2.3 Similarly, the new unitary Council has set out to develop close working relationships with a wide range of external partners and has sought to improve the co-ordination of service provision wherever possible.
- 2.4 In consequence, there is considerable evidence of new initiatives which bring together a number of different service providers from both within and outside the Council. These include:
 - the West Bletchley pilot scheme
 - the two Close to Home projects
 - the single point of access scheme
 - the Government-led single work-focused gateway
 - the regeneration partnerships
 - the Community Legal Service
 - the Youth Offending Team
 - the Crime and Community Safety Partnership

2.5 The Council has also embarked upon two major projects to tackle key aspects of social exclusion in the Borough – the anti-poverty programme and the equalities programme.

2.6 At the same time, the Government has instituted a major programme to address social exclusion and has sought to create a national framework within which local public and voluntary sector agencies can work together to reduce the incidence of social exclusion in many parts of the country.

3. Current research work into social exclusion

3.1 The question of social exclusion is a complex one. A great deal of work is being undertaken nationally to try to understand its causes and to identify the most effective means of intervention to reduce deprivation and disadvantage. It is essential that any social inclusion project for Milton Keynes should draw on the findings of research work in progress elsewhere.

3.2 The Warwick Business School Local Government Centre has set up a social inclusion research programme involving 21 local authorities. The programme focuses on three key issues in tackling social exclusion:

- corporate and strategic issues for local authorities
- community leadership and involvement
- monitoring social exclusion and evaluating the impact of policy

3.3 The Council has been invited to join this group. Membership would provide direct access to current research and thinking on the subject and obviate the need to commission separate work. It is therefore intended that the Council should join the programme at a cost of £5,000 per annum, to be funded from within the £10,000 allocated for this project in the 2000/2001 budget.

4. The social inclusion project

4.1 Whilst there is evidence that many services within the Council are engaged in collaborative working to tackle the causes of disadvantage and deprivation and to meet the needs of local communities, these efforts are not currently set within an overall strategic context for the Council, which is linked to the Council's objectives and priorities.

4.2 Equally, current arrangements for assembling, interpreting and disseminating demographic information are insufficiently geared to support the process of service development. Some work is needed to upgrade the management of demographic information within the Council (and possibly with external

partners) in order to support corporate and partnership efforts to tackle social exclusion.

- 4.3 First steps have therefore been taken to set up a corporate social inclusion project, initially within the Council. The initial purposes of the project are to:
- define social exclusion and understand its different causes
 - map its incidence in Milton Keynes as a whole and at more local level
 - scope the work which is already in progress in the Borough
 - work with local communities and local professionals to identify the most effective responses available to local agencies and partnerships
 - put in place a strategy and co-ordinated action plan to ensure that the Council's resources are being used to best effect to eradicate the causes of social exclusion and mitigate its effects wherever possible.
- 4.4 As already mentioned, the anti-poverty and equalities programmes are already addressing aspects of social exclusion in the Borough. The product of these programmes will be incorporated into the social inclusion project.
- 4.5 The project will be led by a working group of officers from across the four Directorates and the Chief Executive's Office (see **Annex**), which has been constituted to lead the project and to ensure that all Council services are contributing to it together.
- 4.6 Once the new democratic structures are in operation, the Executive may wish to delegate responsibility for this work to an Executive Member and, at the same time, to agree with the Scrutiny side that one Policy Development Forum should have responsibility for social inclusion.
- 4.7 A number of local partner agencies have expressed interest in this project. Once the working group has established its approach in consultation with Members, it is proposed that external partners should be invited to play a part in the project, to ensure that the work is being taken forward on as wide a front as possible.
- 4.8 It is proposed to provide staffing support to the project by redeploying some existing Council staff time from appropriate services into support for the project and associated equalities and anti-poverty work. If the project is developed on a multi-agency basis, it may be possible to increase the resources available.
- 4.9 This project, if carried through to a successful conclusion, will:

- provide more comprehensive local information on social exclusion
- identify the issues of greatest concern within the Borough
- establish a coordinated social inclusion strategy and action plan, within which Council services and external partners will be able to identify their roles
- create a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the progress and effectiveness of social inclusion initiatives in Milton Keynes.

ANNEX TO ITEM

Initial membership of the Social Inclusion Working Group

Chief Executive's Office

Tina Butterwick	Policy Officer
Howard Miller	Chief Executive
Geoff Snelson	Corporate Policy Manager

Resources

Judith Pears	Head of Information Technology
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Environment

Geoff Beck	Head of Regulatory Services
John Best	Strategic Director Environment
Jan Howard	Senior Planning Officer, Demography
Tony Kirk	Passenger Transport Manager

Neighbourhood Services

Paul Gibson	Policy and Development Officer
David Jones	Strategic Director Neighbourhood Services
Jane Reed	Strategy and Performance Manager

Learning and Development

Farzana Aldridge	Early Years and Child Care Manager
Andy Couldrick	Children's Services Manager
Vanessa Gwynn	Head of Community and Economic Development