

MKC HOUSING FORUM

Thursday 18th January 2007

TITLE: Draft Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing and Social Care Strategy.

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1. **Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the MKC Forum the draft Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing and Social Care Strategy.

2. **Recommendation**

That the Forum comments to Cabinet on the draft Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing and Social Care Strategy.

3. **Background**

3.1 The Community Strategy for Milton Keynes set out a clear vision of a “City that Thinks Differently, Embraces Evolution and Champions Change”. It also makes it clear that Milton Keynes will be a place that celebrates diversity and cares for all its citizens, giving priority to those in greatest need.¹ The very first Action plan set out the need to make high quality, safe and healthy environments that support sustainable, varied, cohesive communities².

3.2 The Council’s own Vision is that “We will deliver the best possible future for Milton Keynes by creating sustainable communities and opportunities for all”³

¹ Community Strategy Page 32

² Community Strategy Page 43

³ Council Plan Page 5

- 3.3** In terms of evolution and diversity, the 2001 Census showed that the BME population of the Borough was 13.2%. The Milton Keynes Housing Needs Study (MK HNS) 2006 found that in just 5 years, this has significantly increased to 17% showing that the increasing diversity of our population is a key part of Milton Keynes' growth.
- 3.4** Our aim is not just for a diverse community but a cohesive community. The Commission for Racial Equality notes that a cohesive community is one that is integrated and which celebrates the strength of its diversity. Integration in turn is not about merging into a single culture that is all the same. It means ensuring that ethnicity, religious or cultural differences do not define people's life chances and that people with different backgrounds work together to build a shared future. This is because society and communities benefit from diverse cultures.
- 3.5** The Council's Housing Strategy was an important step for us in achieving this. In March 2005 the Government accepted it as "fit for purpose". One of the tasks that we set out in the Action Plan was to produce a BME Housing and Social Care Strategy. This document delivers on this promise. It also delivers on the Community Strategy's aim of giving priority to those in greatest need. All too often members of BME communities are amongst those in the greatest need. In Milton Keynes for example people from BME communities have been over-represented in the number of households who are likely to become homeless.
- 3.6** The Strategy is still in draft form and the closing date for comments is 12th January 2007. However this has been extended to the 18th January 2007 to make sure that the Forum had an opportunity to comment.

4. Preparing the Strategy

- 4.1** We researched the housing and social care needs of BME communities by:
- 4.1.1** Statistical analysis of the BME population in Milton Keynes. This included housing tenure, health statistics and take up of services in order to identify gaps in current housing and social care provision.
- 4.1.2** Consultation with the BME communities and organisations that work with these communities, to identify the areas of housing and social care that are important to BME communities and to identify any gaps in provision. The consultation took the form of structured interviews and questionnaires.

- 4.1.3 A study carried out by Opinion Research Services on the housing and support needs of BME communities in Milton Keynes.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1** The draft Strategy sets out the following priorities for action for the Housing Service:

- 5.1.1 Improve recording for ethnicity;

- 5.1.2 Provide more affordable housing of all types and tenures;

- 5.1.3 Make sure documents of immediate relevance to local BME population are available and accessible in appropriate communication methods.

- 5.1.4 Monitor the impact of information and advice provided to BME homeless applicants;

- 5.1.5 Consider ways in which overcrowding issues can be assessed and addressed;

- 5.1.6 Working on prevention homelessness;

- 5.1.7 Ensure that the forthcoming Private Sector Stock Condition Survey records housing conditions of BME groups;

- 5.1.8 Investigate the effects on in-migration from the Eastern European countries on the housing market in Milton Keynes.

- 5.2** The draft Strategy also sets out the following priorities for action for the Social Care service:

- 5.2.1 Improve ethnicity recording;

- 5.2.2 Improve the current information about services for BME communities;

- 5.2.3 Improve communication between BME communities and services.

Background Papers: Milton Keynes Community Strategy.