

MAYOR AND CABINET		
Report Title	Mayoral response to the recommendations of the Safer Stronger Select Committee review - Promoting a Sense of Belonging.	
Key Decision	No	Item No.
Ward	All	
Contributors	Executive Directors for Community Services and Customer Services.	
Class	Part 1	Date: 10 April 2013

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the response to the recommendations from the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee review - Promoting a Sense of Belonging.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Mayor:

- 2.1 Approve the response from the Executive Director for Community Services to the recommendations from the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee.
- 2.2 Agree that this report should be forwarded to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Previous research into cohesion had been undertaken by the community cohesion in Lewisham steering group, which was set up by the Lewisham Strategic Partnership (LSP) in 2009. This group was commissioned to carry out research, assess levels of integration and determine which factors had a positive effect on cohesion. The group considered the national and regional context of their work as well as hosting workshops and discussions to develop a local understanding of cohesion and belonging.
- 3.2 The Promoting a Sense of Belonging review links very closely to the following strategic priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy:
- Ambitious and achieving – where people are inspired and supported to fulfil their potential.
 - Safer – where people feel safe and live free from crime, antisocial behaviour and abuse.
 - Empowered and responsible – where people are actively involved in their local area and contribute to supportive communities.

- Clean, green and liveable – where people live in high quality housing and can care for and enjoy their environment.
- Dynamic and prosperous – where people are part of vibrant communities and town centres, well connected

3.3 Additionally it relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Community Leadership and Empowerment
- Inspiring efficiency, effectiveness and equity

4. Background

4.1 At the 11th April 2012 meeting of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee, members agreed to carry out a short review into social cohesion in Lewisham. The aim of the review was to gather evidence about Lewisham's approach to promoting cohesion and belonging. The Committee were particularly interested in finding out:

- How the services, activities and campaigns carried out under the headings identified by the community cohesion in Lewisham steering group had promoted social cohesion.
- Whether these had been as effective as they could have been.
- If there had been ways that these could be improved or new approaches that could have been taken.
- What other councils had successfully done to promote cohesion.

4.2 Evidence-taking sessions were held in July and September 2012.

4.3 Members looked at the range of services currently being delivered by the Council and its partners and decided to focus on local democracy and decision-making; events and celebrations; citizenship and intergenerational collaboration. The Committee concluded its review and agreed its recommendations in November 2012.

5. Response to the Safer Stronger Select Committee (SSSC)

5.1 The Select Committee made the following recommendations.

5.2 Recommendation 1

The local assemblies programme should continue in its efforts to engage with a wide cross section of citizens. Using existing channels and links with partner organisations in health, housing and the community and voluntary sector, coordinating groups should work to develop good practice, share ideas and build on their successes.

Response

The local assemblies continues to engage with a wide variety of people, both at formal meetings and outside of meetings. During 2011-12 more than 7600 people participated in assemblies outside of meetings; through taking part in surveys, focus groups, events and

other activities. Issues and ideas are gathered through this process and fed into the main assembly action plan. The assemblies also work very closely with statutory and non-statutory agencies to engage people, using their networks and contacts in the community. For example Whitefoot and Downham assemblies work closely with Phoenix Housing, and in Evelyn a youth partnership forum has been set up to work with the assembly. The programme is working to strengthen coordinating groups and support them to get further involved. The 2012 annual report has been shared with assemblies and coordinating groups to help cross-fertilise ideas and best practice; and ad hoc events for coordinating group members are held, for example a recent social media sharing event. The release of the latest census data will provide a good opportunity for coordinating groups to re-evaluate their assemblies and the profile of their wards.

5.3 Recommendation 2

Following the commissioning of the local assemblies survey in Autumn/Winter 2012, assembly steering groups and assembly chairs should be encouraged to use the information gathered to build on what they do well. Specifically, assemblies should use the feedback explore ideas for developing a sense of belonging in their communities.

Response

The annual survey was undertaken between October and December 2012, and had 256 responses. It was undertaken borough-wide, with responses from each ward and from regular attendees and people who had never participated. It has provided some valuable feedback on people's thoughts about the assemblies, providing a deeper understanding than can be collected on meeting evaluation forms. In particular it shows what parts of assemblies are important to local people. It also provides feedback on why people don't get involved. The results were presented to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee; and are available for coordinating groups to view via the assembly coordinators. Assemblies will be encouraged to use the results, along with their ongoing feedback from meetings, to help further develop and improve the assembly offer in their ward.

5.4 Recommendation 3

Local assembly chairs and coordinating groups should work with organisations representing minority groups in the borough to encourage more local people to get involved in their local assembly and local assembly steering group.

Response

Local assemblies are very aware that attendance at assembly meetings only represents a small part of the ward's population; and in some areas is not necessarily reflective of the wider population. As such, extensive work is undertaken between meetings to engage more

people in the assembly process (and recruit new members to the coordinating group); and this includes minority groups. This work is coordinated by the assembly officers, in conjunction with assembly chairs and coordinating groups who help to identify areas to target and provide links into groups. Examples include meeting with the Tabernacle Church in Ladywell; and working with young people's groups in Brockley.

5.5 Recommendation 4

The Council and its partners, including health, housing and community safety should continue to work together to share expertise about events, consultation and community involvement. Publishing and web resources should be shared to maximise the audience for community events.

Response

Lewisham already has an events toolkit on the website. This very useful resource has been put together in partnership with events staff from across London. Officers will review how this is promoted with our partners to ensure the widest possible audience is benefitting.

The events database on the website has recently been upgraded and promotion of events across the borough, run by the Council and by community groups and individuals, has been enhanced. Anyone has the opportunity to promote an event using the Council's website.

5.6 Recommendation 5

The 'welcome pack' being developed by Lewisham Homes for new residents should include relevant information about Local Assemblies and other opportunities for residents to become involved in their communities. Furthermore, all local housing partners should be encouraged to include this information in their communications with residents.

Response

Officers will liaise with Lewisham Homes and ask them to include more information in their welcome packs, including information on Local Assemblies. Additionally officers in Customer Services do have regular meetings with other housing providers and will use these opportunities to encourage them to provide a range of information for their residents.

5.7 Recommendation 6

Building on the success of the Big Lunch, groups wishing to hold similar community events should be encouraged to make use of public buildings, community spaces, schools and other indoor space (particularly when the weather prevents the event from being held outdoors).

Response

Officers will review what information is available for community groups and ensure that as much of this information as possible, including the existing web presence and toolkit are promoted. Additionally links will be made with our venue booking service. Officers will continue to look for opportunities within our services and networks to help groups develop skills and knowledge and share best practice with regard to planning and running events.

5.8 Recommendation 7

The Mayor should be invited to refresh his letter of welcome to new citizens on behalf of the Council.

Response

Officers will progress this recommendation following its approval at the 10 April 2013 Mayor and Cabinet meeting.

5.9 Recommendation 8

All Councillors should be encouraged to attend a citizenship ceremony. Dates of meetings should be made available to Councillors so they can meet with new citizens. Councillors and other local people who have made a difference in the community should be invited to welcome new citizens by presiding as dignitaries.

Response

All Councillors are made aware of the dates of the ceremonies, and some Councillors have previously officiated at ceremonies. All Councillors will be informed of new dates as they are agreed.

Officers are very happy to consider how to involve other local people who have made a difference in the community and will now look to see how this can best be taken forward.

5.10 Recommendation 9

Further information should be included in the packs given to new citizens at citizenship ceremonies. The pack should include information about how citizens can get involved in a range of activities in their local area, particularly the local assemblies programme.

Response

The Local Assemblies team have agreed to provide information on Local assemblies and how to get involved in the packs given to new citizens at the citizenship ceremonies.

In addition officers are happy to add further information to the packs where this will be helpful to those new to the borough.

5.11 Recommendation 10

An article on citizenship ceremonies should be commissioned for Lewisham life. Where possible, ceremonies should also be promoted in other local media.

Response

Articles on citizenship ceremonies have appeared in previous editions of Lewisham Life and officers hope to have another article included in a future edition.

5.12 Recommendation 11

The Council and its strategic partners in health and housing should formally recognise the important work of the Positive Ageing Council and of other older people's groups in the borough. In doing so, the Council could mark international older peoples' day on the 1st of October annually.

Response

The Positive Ageing Council (POSAC) is formally enshrined in the Council's constitution, recognised as a forum through which older people can influence decisions; and allowing the opportunity to place items on Mayor & Cabinet agenda. The two years since its inception have seen good dialogue around issues that affect older people. For example, POSAC were consulted on the Housing Matters work around older people's housing issues, and the Health & Wellbeing Strategy on matters relating to older people. POSAC worked with Fusion and Trinity Laban to develop older people's sport and physical activities including the provision of new opportunities in leisure centres. POSAC, working with the Pensioner's Forum, has produced a older people's directory which lists all groups and activities working with older people, and is being made available to GPs, front line health and council staff working with older people.. The Lewisham Community Police Consultative Group worked with POSAC to ensure older people's crime and safety issues are taken on board; and the POSAC continue to support and develop the lay visitors scheme. International Older People's Day has not been raised through POSAC, as yet, but is something that could be considered in the future.

5.13 Recommendation 12

The Council and its partners should encourage younger and older peoples' groups to explore further options for intergenerational activities and initiatives. The Committee has discussed the potential for further scrutiny in this area and will consider further scrutiny of

citizenship activities for young people as part of its work programme for 2013/14.

Response

'Intergenerational activities and initiatives' is a key area for the POSAC. Activities undertaken so far include a day trip to Brighton, 21st century tea dance at the Blackheath Olympic live site, and Christmas party at care homes. Future activities are planned including a cabaret show and bingo at People's Day 2013; and intergenerational initiatives around safe transport, which is an issue that has come out of POSAC meetings. Young people are regular contributors at POSAC meetings, including the Young Mayor. POSAC also support the City Safe Havens work and the Mizens were guest speakers at a POSAC meeting.

6. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this response.

7. Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this response, save for noting that the Council's Constitution provides that the Executive may respond to reports and or recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications

There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this response.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising out of this report although the individual recommendations from the review support Lewisham's commitment to promote equality of opportunity, inclusion and wellbeing for all its citizens.

10. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from this response.

Background Papers

1. [Promoting a sense of belonging: social cohesion in Lewisham](#)
2. [Mayor and Cabinet Report - Matters referred by Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee – promoting a sense of belonging review - 16/1/13](#)

For further information please contact Liz Dart, Head of Cultural and Community Development on 0208 3148637