

**Title:** Role of the Council in Community Cohesion

**What are the main issues?** *what is the policy background?, how does it link to the councils corporate priorities?*

Since terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, and the more recent attacks in London last year on our public transport systems, all councils need to think about if they are doing enough to promote good community relations and how they will respond in the event of a further attack by extremist Islamists.

The council has a key role to play in terms of community leadership and in working in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies in a time of heightened sensitivity. This is particularly important for a borough like Brent, which is proud of its diversity, and is home to many community and faith groups, including a number of different Muslim community groups.

Clearly, residents look to the council to show leadership and actively promote programmes which will encourage community cohesion, but they also look to the council to respond quickly and decisively in a civil emergency offering reassurance and working across communities to prevent reprisals and further violence.

**Why are we looking at this area?** Have there been recent legislation/policy changes? Are there any performance or budgetary issues?,

We live in an increasingly fragile world, where for many residents their sense of security and well-being, feels compromised. The official threat level in the UK is currently "severe", indicating that the security services believe that another attack is highly likely; against this backdrop the council needs to have a coherent approach to promoting community cohesion, including dealing with the immediate aftermath of another attack.

The background to this proposal is that the Council as a member of the West London Alliance, is one of six councils who make up the West London Community Cohesion Partnership. Very recently the Chief Executive of one of the WLA borough's, LB Ealing has been appointed the chair of a new Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion, so there is considerable local interest plus national interest from the press.

We know too that there is a golden thread which links community cohesion to CPA methodology, and we know that the work that we do which demonstrates our commitment to promoting good community relations, also helps us demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity, key in a borough like Brent.

**What should the review cover?** Give brief outline of what members could focus on, which partners to engage with, how residents/public can be involved.

Ideally, the review would look to agree with partners and other stakeholders (faith/BME community groups) our approach in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack.

The review should also focus on consulting with partners and stakeholders including faith and key community groups on the basis for an agreed community cohesion strategy for the borough.

The review should also agree with senior officers a range of PIs which the council can use in future to measure community cohesion in the borough.

And finally, the review should examine elected members understanding of the issues, and analysis their training needs.

**What could the review achieve?**, influence policy change?, improvement to service delivery?, budget savings?, develop partnerships?.

The review should give rise to an agreed set of protocols for Members, officers and with our partners in the event of a terrorist attack.

The review should also lead to the development of an agreed community cohesion policy for Brent, which reflects the position of the council, its partners and wider faith and community groups.

The review should lead to the council's adoption of a number of community cohesion Performance Indicators which would help track our progress (through the council's Corporate Equality Policy Action Plan) and links to CPA.

Lastly, the review should lead elected members to a better understanding of their role in promoting good community relations, increasing their confidence in dealing with these difficult issues.