

## Community cohesion - update

### Decisions

1. *Members to receive a presentation from Ruby Dixon, Head of Programmes, Beacons and Services at the IDeA who is leading the development of the LGA/IDeA work on community cohesion..*
2. *Members to comment on the current work programme.*

### Actions Required

3. *Officers to proceed with work as directed.*

**Action by:** *Secretariat (Safer Communities and Community Well-being teams)*

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## Community cohesion update

### Summary

1. *The Board will receive a presentation from Ruby Dixon, Head of Programmes, Beacons and Services at the IDeA. Ruby will give an update on the work of the IDeA in supporting local authorities to build and maintain community cohesion and discuss with members ways in which this can be supported by the Safer Communities Board..*
2. *This report provides an update to the Board on community cohesion work being conducted by the LGA.*

### Background

#### Policy context

3. *In their community leadership role, local authorities are best placed to facilitate community cohesion and integration. Councils have a long track record in promoting community cohesion and any future work will build on this strong foundation. As each local area is unique in its demographic and social circumstances, work on community cohesion in each locality needs to reflect particular local circumstances rather than taking a 'one size fits all' approach.*
4. *Local authorities have a key role in ensuring local partners work together to promote cohesion, for instance with the police to prosecute hate crimes and with faith and community leaders and the local media to challenge myths and stereotypes.*
5. *In the context of the attacks on London in July 2005, local authorities have a key role in tackling isolation, preventing extremism, and tackling racism and Islamophobia. The LGA is working with the IDeA, Home Office, ODPM, the Commission for Racial Equality and other partners to ensure that the role of local government is fully recognised.*

#### Strategic guide for local authorities

6. *The LGA and IDeA have recently published a guide for local authority leaders and chief executives. The Leading cohesive communities guide was published at the end of January and distributed to all member authority leaders and chief executives.*
7. *The guide comprises a strategic guide and a booklet of ten case studies from local authorities, with the focus very much on the role of leadership in building and maintaining cohesion. It forms a strategic partner to the more practical Community cohesion – an action guide, which was published in November 2004 and aimed at practitioners including officers and members.*

8. *The guide is supported by the Home Office, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Audit Commission. It was produced in consultation with the Commission for Racial Equality and the InterFaith Network.*
9. *At the LGA's Sustainable Communities Summit in Birmingham last month (13-15 February), a workshop was held in order to showcase two of the case studies and the key themes of the guide.*

### **Local authority roundtable**

10. *The LGA is looking to hold a roundtable for leading LGA members, local authority chief executives and a Home Office Minister in order to discuss community cohesion.*
11. *The roundtable would aim to identify current and future local priorities and needs, and share good practice and ideas. This discussion would help to shape the LGA's future policy direction and would also be an opportunity to communicate to a government minister what support or flexibility local authorities would like to see in order to support their work on cohesion.*

### **Future LGA work on community cohesion**

12. *Leadership for community cohesion at the LGA lies with the Executive, but this is a cross-cutting policy area and the Safer Communities and Community Well-being Boards have a significant interest.*
13. *The proposed roundtable would help to identify what should constitute the LGA's future work in this policy area.*
14. *Members of the Board may wish to discuss future areas for consideration.*

### **Implications for Wales**

*This work applies to England and Wales.*

### **Financial/Resource Implications**

*There are no specific financial implications outside the LGA and IDeA's existing resources.*

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