

Item 3

Integration, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism

Purpose of Report

For noting. To brief Members ahead of Andrew Stunell's presentation at this Board meeting.

Summary

This report sets out:

1. the government's approach to integration, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism; and
2. key implications of this agenda for councils.

Recommendation

Members to note this report as background information to assist discussions with Mr Stunell at this meeting.

Action

Officers to action Member suggestions as appropriate.

Contact officer: Helen Murray
Position: Head of Programmes
Phone no: 0207 664 3266
E-mail: helen.murray@local.gov.uk

Integration, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism

Background

1. At the Safer and Stronger Communities Board's meeting on 7 November 2011, Members requested Andrew Stunell, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Communities and Local Government (CLG), attend a future Board meeting to discuss the government's integration, community cohesion and preventing violent extremism agenda.
2. This paper therefore provides Members with background details about these policy areas and implications for councils and CSPs.

Summary of the coalition government's approach to integration

3. CLG launched 'Creating the Conditions for Integration' on 21 February 2012, the Government's approach to enabling and encouraging integration in communities throughout England.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/2092103.pdf>
4. It contends that England is better placed than many to meet the challenges of integration but there are issues in particular places. These challenges require collective action by stakeholders including councils, which the document recognises as being well placed to take a leading role through existing partnerships, but above all communities and individuals. The approach is based on five key factors:
 - 4.1 **common ground** - a clear sense of shared aspirations and values, focusing on what we have in common rather than our differences. This includes initiatives such as the Big Lunch, which encourages lunches with neighbours, and reforms to immigration and settlement rules to ensure appropriate knowledge of English and UK life
 - 4.2 **responsibility** - a strong sense of our mutual commitments and obligations, bringing personal and social responsibility. This includes the National Citizen Service, the Troubled Families team's work, and Baroness Newlove's work to deliver 'Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities' including the recently announced fund to tackle binge and underage drinking
 - 4.3 **social mobility** - people able to realise their potential to get on in life. This includes Pupil Premiums, extended free entitlement to early education, reforms to higher education, a new Work Programme and English language provision support to help those seeking work – the

Item 3

government announced on 29 February 2012 up to £10 million to help English language training for speakers of other languages

- 4.4 **participation and empowerment** - people of all backgrounds have opportunities to take part, be heard and take decisions in local and national life. This includes the Community Organisers programme, the Free Schools Programme and the Localism Act 2011 setting out steps to put power into the hand of local communities and neighbourhoods
 - 4.5 **tackling intolerance and extremism** - a robust response to threats, whether discrimination, extremism or disorder, that deepen division and increase tensions. Experience has shown that violent extremism can emerge from even the most cohesive communities but that extremist messages are less likely to find support in this environment.
5. This final strand came out of a review of the Prevent strategy, which concluded that the strategy to date had:
 - 5.1 included some unfocused cohesion activities but they had been productive;
 - 5.2 led to some parts of the community feeling victims of state 'snooping'; and
 - 5.3 raised controversy about how much the public sector should engage with possible extremists albeit with the purpose to achieve greater public good.
 6. The government has therefore adopted the approach of focusing Prevent on stopping people becoming terrorists and distinguishing this from cohesion and integration which is what needs to happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.
 7. Creating the Conditions recognises that integration is a vital local issue requiring a local response, with many references to localism and civic leadership, and strongly encourages local partners such as councils to take a lead. It acknowledges the excellent examples of locally-led action to build integration and challenge extremism.
 8. Creating the Conditions recognises that integration comes from everyday life, not 'integration projects. It also states that government must not dictate general solutions to complex local issues but create conditions for integration to flourish through its actions and funding.

Implications for councils

9. Understanding communities is a key part of the work of councils. The knowledge, expertise and maturity of councils has grown since the Cantle report in 2001 and through the recent emphasis on preventing violent extremism. Areas already map their communities to provide a clear understanding of who lives in the local area and where and this provides a foundation for understanding conflicts

12 March 2012

Item 3

between different groups and knowledge of the barriers and opportunities which exist. Local authorities are extremely experienced at monitoring tensions which are more easily managed if action is taken early. Local government has a strong record on deftly handling community relations and effective engagement with communities.

10. The overall thrust of this report is welcome. Although central government funding has been well received in the past, it has made little sense for Whitehall to dictate how this money should be spent. This report sets out an important challenge for public sector agencies to change their ways of working, so that the voluntary and private sectors can contribute and invest in their areas and local areas can take action on integration issues which are important to them. Councils are well placed to support these changes.