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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose & Vision Building

This document is the first stake in the ground in the process of building better community cohesion in Tamworth. We have carried out an in-depth exercise in listening to the community cohesion perspectives of partners, preparatory to building an extensive Baseline. The aim is to build a vision for the future of Tamworth that is inspirational, challenging and inclusive of all residents; a vision in which political and institutional leaders are fully and publicly involved.

The aim is to encourage and support public debate around the underpinning values of a strong Tamworth culture. This will require political and community bravery; champions, ready to stand up to extremists; high profile community members able to walk the talk; champion myth busters, able to expose and discard inaccuracies about “others”; skilled elected members; and a Tamworth Strategic Partnership which works to support all of these actions. It will need the development of political, cross-party and cross-agency protocols, to ensure local petty advantage is not won at the expense of overall progress.

The Council decided to review and refresh its approach to promoting community cohesion and has sought independent external advice from Kamla Consultancy who have looked to capture Tamworth’s current practice, compare its approach with that of other leading authorities and ‘reality test’ programmes against current – and as far as possible, future expectations in the local community and amongst local partners.

Many of the people spoken to in developing this baseline were confident and knowledgeable about the subject albeit in certain circumstances. The emphasis appeared to be more about tackling race equality and valuing diversity rather than building cohesion between different elements of Tamworth’s communities.

In addition, although general understanding of community cohesion seems to be widespread, ownership of the community cohesion agenda is generally perceived to be with the Council. One way of promoting wider ownership could be by presenting a picture within the overall Vision of what a more cohesive Tamworth would look like. In part this could be achieved by re-visiting the symbols and branding currently in use and adding more narrative, particularly targeting different sections of the various communities may be a useful approach i.e. young people, the elderly, etc.

1.2 Methodology

In assessing the current state and level of community cohesion in Tamworth, Kamla Consultancy has:

- Undertaken a comprehensive review of key policy documents and other relevant data sources with a view to establishing the facts and assessing the approach to promoting community cohesion taken by Tamworth Borough Council and its Partners.

- Conducted extensive one-to-one interviews with key personnel across a wide range of organisations - including the Council, Local Strategic Partnership, Police, NHS, Voluntary and Community Sector - with the purpose of identifying what they see as the key issues, how well current initiatives are working and priorities for the future.
- Collated findings from a cohesion questionnaire - involving some 50 participants. The purpose of this exercise was to gather the views of key stakeholders from across Tamworth on the state of community cohesion in their localities and, more widely, their assessment of what was being done and key issues for the future.
- This baseline also takes into account the findings of the recent Government Commission on Integration and Cohesion and the recent DFES guidance on community cohesion for schools.

Where there is a failure of community cohesion the consequences can be destructive and immediate. However, since community cohesion fundamentally concerns human relationships, there are no shortcuts to improvement

1.3 A Brief History of Community Cohesion

Central and local government's approach to community cohesion developed in response to disturbances in three northern towns in 2001. In central government it was led by the Home Office and had a strong focus on crime and disorder and was associated with race and faith issues.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion was set up following the London bombings in 2005. It was not focused on work to prevent extremism. Instead the Commission looked at local and practical ways to build cohesion. As community cohesion was now led by a new department, Communities and Local Government, it was a chance to review the Home Office approach.

Communities and Local Government set out how it would implement the Commission's 57 recommendations in February 2008. This included that there would be a new national target for cohesion.

Indeed, the Government's support for greater local emphasis is also set out in its White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' which states:

'Local Authorities, as leaders of their communities, are best placed to understand the particular challenge their city, town or neighbourhood face ...and to decide how to respond. It is only at a local level that the underlying drivers of tensions between different groups - such as access to housing ... - can be understood and addressed. Only local authorities have the democratic mandate to offer and develop a shared vision, through the Sustainable Community Strategy for the area'

1.4 Cohesion is relevant to all parts of the Country

Some local areas have suggested that cohesion is not relevant to them, perhaps people seem pretty similar in their area or there are few people from minority groups. A

community in which nearly everyone is similar is not automatically cohesive. That similarity may be enforced by social norms, newcomers may not be welcomed and people may have limited freedom about how they live their lives. Differences between people go much wider than race or faith with age or background being more important in some communities.

1.5 Cohesion is about all parts of the community, not just race and faith issues

Cohesion is about relationships between different groups. They might be defined by race or faith, but that will depend on the area. Differences such as age, income, place of residence or even lifestyle, may be the cause of divides in some areas. Cohesion policies should be based upon local knowledge of where divides and tensions lie and not simply by looking at race or faith divides.

This sameness on the surface might appear to be cohesive, but unless the community can cope with difference, outsiders and change, it may fall apart when it is tested. This resilience comes from people being able to stick together and be flexible.

Cohesion is not about trying to make everyone the same. It is about giving people the skills to respect difference, to cope with change and welcome new community members. Alongside these skills there needs to be a shared sense of how to behave in public and relate to others.

Achieving better cohesion is about common sense solutions that will help people get along better, that is what will make any vision a reality. Building cohesion is about trying to influence attitudes and behaviours that exist within any complex social system in which there are multiple influences, many of which are unpredictable.

We have to use both common sense and social psychology to inform what will work to influence attitudes and behaviour. This reinforces the need for locally specific solutions, multiple actions and case studies which inspire local innovation.

It is possible to get distracted by pondering the meaning of cohesion, or seeking the end of the rainbow for a cohesion pot of gold. Focusing on developing a simple and common sense approach is what will bear fruit, with evidence suggesting that we can make a difference to people's views about cohesion and that engaging with and empowering local people is the best way to identify the issues that need to be addressed.

1.6 Building cohesion has benefits for individuals, groups and communities

Community cohesion can seem intangible, making it hard to explain, or justify what works to build cohesion and so get support for it.

Our research suggests that there are relationships between cohesion and a number of policy areas, including:

- Community empowerment including people helping each other out, coming together to solve problems and trusting one another
- Volunteering, which instills a sense of helping others

- Equalities and perceptions of fair treatment
- Preventing crime and anti social behaviour
- Sense of belonging and having friends from different backgrounds, which will bring other benefits.

1.7 The Causes of Low Community Cohesion

At its core, poor community cohesion is caused by **structural disadvantage issues**; the poor life, health, economic, educational, housing and recreational opportunities experienced by individuals by virtue of their membership of a particular group. These issues are complex, inter-related and long-term in nature.

Overlaid on these core issues are **service, information and resources issues**; the perceived inequity of public funding or support, the tendency for public services to “Instrumentalise” difference by aligning service provision with specific “communities”, the tendency for media and for gossip to focus on bad news rather than celebration, and the unintended consequences of a lack of service cohesion across public sector agencies, as perceived by the recipients of those services.

The third area concerns **inter-group tensions**; the real or perceived differences between groups – from the clearly visible (skin colour, age, and dress) to the fundamental (religion, attitudes to gender) - which may create, or be used to create, anger, distance and conflict.

The fourth area concerns **incident escalation issues**; the way that particular outbreaks of community cohesion tension can build, through inappropriate management, into serious and damaging breakdown.

1.8 The Accepted Definition of Community Cohesion

The Government's response to the Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion set out the following definition:

Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration, which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

It also set out a vision of an integrated and cohesive community, based on three foundations;

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.

And three key ways of living together;

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

1.9 Improving cohesion is about both targeted actions and taking account of cohesion in the delivery of other services

We know that cohesion is not just built by specifically aimed policies, but also by ensuring other policies and activity take account of the impact they can have on cohesion. For example, a regeneration project needs to include places for people to meet and undertake shared activities if it is to strengthen communities as well as build bricks and mortar. Also it is important that there are specifically aimed cohesion actions, not only activities that will prevent crime and disorder or promote equality or prevent extremism.

This is reflected in the separate parts of the definition above. The first elements are key foundations for building cohesion, which all service providers need to take account of, but on their own are not enough to build a cohesive community. The second elements will require targeted actions to build cohesion: building good relationships between people; helping people feel they belong and have opportunities to make a contribution; and helping people feel they have things in common with other people in the local area.

This document is about targeted cohesion actions but recognising cohesion is a cross-cutting policy area and taking account of cohesion in other policy areas is just as important. The approach set out in this document should aid identification of the most important cross-cutting issues in areas which need to take account of cohesion as well as key areas for targeted action. Focusing on recognising issues to start with is a good first step. Beyond that, local areas are often already undertaking sophisticated and innovative projects that will build cohesion, but they may not have recognised this or badged them as such. For example, work on providing public facilities, community development, regeneration, youth work, work to promote equality of opportunity and work to tackle anti-social behaviour will all contribute to cohesion. These projects will often make a difference in the long-term, so it is important they are combined with more short term work specifically aimed at building cohesion.

1.10 Improving cohesion is about multiple actions

Research has shown that in each area there is no single or small group of factors which can explain its level of cohesion. Even the level of deprivation, which is the strongest influence on cohesion, can only explain a few percentage points of difference. This multiplicity of influences on cohesion and the way in which they interact means that improving cohesion is about addressing multiple issues at the same time.

2.0 The Present Situation in Tamworth

Promoting community cohesion involves focusing on what can prevent groups of people in Tamworth understanding, respecting and interacting with each other. This is difficult to assess on a Tamworth wide basis, barriers differ between local areas such as new estates and pre-70s neighbourhoods. Indeed one barrier to local mixing is some Tamworth resident's strong identity with their local town. We also need to be aware of how newer communities are welcomed to Tamworth; from the overspill population of the 70s to the current day situation of new arrivals from the EU or Asylum Seekers who may experience particular problems, such as being unable to undertake paid work.

As stated previously, cohesion is not only about people from different racial backgrounds or people of different faiths respecting each other. Community cohesion is about the whole diversity of people living in the Borough having a sense of belonging, such as people from different generations or neighbourhoods having a positive view of each other.

Community cohesion emphasizes the rights that citizens of Tamworth have - such as having equality of opportunity, feeling safe in their local communities and the right to have a say in important decisions about the local area. It is also about people behaving as responsible citizens and showing respect for each other.

The move towards Locality Working is developing and taking shape and whilst there remain different structures within different partner organisations, there is an increasing commitment towards a more "joined-up" approach where practicable. There are also clear examples of localised service delivery through various statutory and voluntary partnerships. Clearly there are significant resources going into these local arrangements and it will be critically important to ensure that communication and understanding between organisations is clear and that the communities they serve are fully involved in their development.

The policing approach in Tamworth is strongly focussed on working with local communities. Major crime issues primarily revolve around drug problems - both dealing and usage, which are a source of tension within the Borough. Significant resources are being targeted by various agencies towards tackling the drugs issue and there is strong support from communities for the high profile approach of the Police. This commitment from various agencies to tackling both the criminal activities and the social and community consequences needs to be maintained.

Cohesion in Tamworth would benefit from increased clarity around its local image, supported by effective branding. What does Tamworth stand for? There is evidence of promoting Tamworth with a local, regional and national perspective. The 'TBC'/LSP logo however does not clearly encourage a '**different way of thinking**' in promoting cohesion and creating some sense of belonging to the wider community. A consequence of this could be that without a sense of identity people will find it more difficult to gain a sense of belonging.

Communities are changing. New communities, such as the arrival of immigrants, are creating new challenges for agencies. Demographic changes e.g. percentage of young people within an increasingly ageing population have an impact on the image and dynamic of communities. There is a need for new approaches to be fluid and flexible; promoting

equality and focusing on tolerance and understanding. Resources focused in response to any particular group should not be seen to be detrimental to any other sections of the community in order to address perceptions of imbalance within the white majority community. This is even more important in light of the current economic downturn and the movement of workers from other European countries seeking work in the UK.

Whilst Tamworth's community relations appear to be generally very good, some communities appear to be both residentially and socially isolated e.g. the issues of "Tammies vs Brummies" – a potential for "parallel lives". To build cohesion between individuals or groups with widely different value systems, all parties must be ready to **listen, understand and adjust**.

There seems to be a general sense of awareness about community cohesion issues among partners/agencies. There also appears to be a broad commitment towards "joined-up" working. Tamworth is generally perceived as a tolerant area – a place where people want to live and agencies look to encourage this feeling. The cohesion agenda is an issue that must be addressed in a joined up way, with the risk that a disjointed approach will make things worse rather than improve them.

The experience and skills to address the issues raised in this document are certainly present in Tamworth and the existing partnerships have shown that joined-up working is supported locally. The issue for Tamworth now is how strongly the challenge of building cohesion is taken up, through a recognition of how current actions can contribute and how resources will be identified and utilised to provide additional impetus.

The work to reduce economic and social disadvantage is fundamental to progressing community cohesion. Experience shows that actions and funding, aimed at addressing disadvantage by working with specific groups, may inadvertently add to inter-group tensions. By focusing on **building connections between groups**, the future approach to regeneration and economic development needs to be consistent with the community cohesion objectives.

2.1 Key challenges include

- The negative perception that adults have of young people
- Economic recession and increased competition between communities and individuals
- Integration of new and existing communities
- The potential for the polarisation of communities
- Successful management of Traveller and Gypsy encampments
- Empowerment and engagement of residents in the political process
- Combating myths and common misunderstandings.

2.2 Closing the gap

Closing the gap is about improving quality of life for Tamworth citizens, with a particular focus on making the fastest improvements for the people and for the places with the greatest need.

The LAA commits the Council and partners to a challenging range of targets to deliver safer and stronger communities, as well as addressing inequalities in health, economic well-being and other areas. The agreement includes all national floor targets, aiming to close the gap between the areas and people with the best and worst outcomes in the Borough. To help achieve this the agreement brings together a wide range of interventions, delivered through local public sector agencies, and facilitates the joining together of such interventions by the various organisations in the Borough. A crucial cross-cutting theme in the LAA is Equalities and Cohesion. As well as addressing the specific issues of disadvantage outlined above, the LAA also focuses on increasing levels of active citizenship and community empowerment, crucial to cohesion

3.0 The Start of the Journey.....

This is Tamworth Borough Council's first piece of work centered on community cohesion. Linked to the recent work on community engagement and consultation and also on the work around diversity and equalities, this sets out what community cohesion means in Tamworth and how it will continue to be developed, managed and resourced. It is focused and demonstrates that community cohesion sits at the heart of what Tamworth does.

The vision for the future of Tamworth, the Tamworth Sustainable Community Strategy document, sets a clear ambition to create a diverse and inclusive Borough. We see Tamworth as a place whose community is a strength, where people value each other and get on well together. We see Tamworth as a place that welcomes the contribution of everyone and that enables everyone to make a contribution. We see Tamworth as a Borough that provides equal opportunities for all and excludes no one. We see Tamworth as a Borough committed to social justice and reducing inequalities.

The community cohesion theme is visible within many of the strategic and policy documents of both the Council and the Tamworth Together Partnership. The Sustainable Community Strategy includes strong elements of community cohesion within its key priorities e.g. under the theme of Building Stronger Communities,

*" services will be aligned to focus on **integrated service provision**, key issues and localities within the Borough. This will enable LSP partners and service providers to create a reliable infrastructure with **facilities for everyone**, particularly young people thus contributing to the **reduction in anti-social behaviour** and tackling **health inequalities**. These localities will be cleaner and safer, having a strong **sense of community pride**. Good quality open space is an important **resource for local people** and **improving access** to it can have a **positive** impact on people's **mental and physical health and well-being**. The focus on providing well maintained, clean and safe open spaces will continue to ensure increased recreational use of these areas which **offer opportunities** for play, exercise and **social interaction**. Opportunities to **embrace new** recreational open spaces such as Tamworth's nature reserves and the RSPB Middleton Lakes nature reserve will also be welcomed"*

This baseline document is the start of a journey, a brief expression by Tamworth Borough Council and its partners of its perspective on community cohesion, the start of a dialogue, which should result in a robust and ambitious plan encompassing organisations and people of the Borough

TBC, in partnership with key stakeholders, is embarking on a process to strengthen its commitment by developing a wide-ranging programme of initiatives tackling key issues across Tamworth and in priority localities with a view to establishing the Tamworth LSP as an exemplar of community engagement, empowerment and cohesion.

Tamworth has maintained harmonious community relations to date. However, it also recognises that the state of community cohesion in Tamworth is changing in response to local developments, as well as national and international events. Consequently it is wary of becoming complacent and recognises the need to review its present community cohesion work and ensure that it remains at the leading edge of developments

The first and over-arching strategic intent, to take a lead in moving forward the debate about what kind of Tamworth society we want, is not a debate which will be settled quickly. The process of debate and discussion, of bringing different people together to understand each other's perspectives, if not to agree with them, is as important as the conclusions reached.

This proposed vision of cohesion for the future of Tamworth sets a clear ambition to create an inclusive Borough where people;

- Value each other and get on well together
- A place that welcomes the contribution of everyone and that enables everyone to make a contribution
- A town that provides equal opportunities for all and excludes no one
- A town committed to social justice and reducing inequalities.

Tamworth's track record of understanding community cohesion has been achieved, in part, by the LSP's commitment to the new emerging agenda of better partnership working and effective use of resources leading to improved service delivery through initiatives such as Locality Working, and the Council's determination that this agenda should be at the heart of its activity rather than at the periphery. In building local identity, engagement and empowerment, the localities should demonstrate that the different people of any neighbourhood have more in common than they have to divide them and, through the process of debating the key local priorities (such as service provision, local environment, street cleaning, parking, local facilities) develop stronger links than would be possible simply through discussions concerning "difference".

3.1 Communication

This is an issue for most organisations working with communities to understand and build cohesion, as opposed to simply seeing the issue along race or ethnicity lines, and encouraging greater tolerance. Clearly what emerges from the work in Tamworth to date is that where communities can be engaged in a direct and practical way the wider appreciation of cohesion is better understood by those communities

Communications in their own right can only achieve so much. For greater impact and effect communications must be practically focussed and directly engage with different communities including elders and young people in addition to those based on ethnicity or faith lines.

It is important to recognise the element of polarisation and tensions between different communities and also recognise the extent to which rumours and myths play a role in stimulating tensions and the risk of triggering incidents between different communities.

A successful LSP will maintain a positive relationship with the local press, and the general view found through drawing up this baseline was that local reporting often does not appear to be balanced. Certainly The Herald plays a pivotal role in Tamworth and the paper itself

needs to understand the impact its articles could have in building better community cohesion in Tamworth.

The fact that Talkback, the Council's general newsletter for residents, is distributed widely to all households and receives favourable coverage in surveys as the primary source of information for many residents is a positive and significant contribution that can be built upon.

Looking at communication as a whole it is clear that much has been achieved in the last year or two, both in terms of style and engagement. Ongoing progress in this area will assist Tamworth in promoting community cohesion across all communities.

A strong communications strategy, which promotes community cohesion over the long term, will benefit from a focus of individual media campaigns on aspects such as myth busting but also through targeting local communities and specific groups within those communities.

3.2 Performance Management

Critical to the above is the need to be able to assess progress and the ability to measure performance on community cohesion is a key element of an effective community cohesion framework. However, it is not straightforward and whilst there is a growing consensus on a range of indicators that attempt to either measure community cohesion directly or provide valuable information on the state of relations between communities, it is important to ensure that the framework reflects local circumstances and not simply follow a standardised approach.

In Tamworth this may include an Annual Statement on Cohesion in addition to a variety of LSP, Tamworth Borough Council and partners indicators.

The DCLG, LGA and IDeA are currently in the process of updating the original Home Office Guidance and this may well include additional indicators on;

- Willingness to help neighbours
- People pulling together to improve an area
- Having a mix of people makes an area a more enjoyable place to live.

Tamworth needs to have in place a robust and comprehensive performance monitoring framework which embraces the above guidance. In addition, clear and specific objectives, targets and PIs need to be included in Business and Action Plans for individual services and partner organisations.

3.3 Measuring community cohesion

There is no single answer to this. It depends on local circumstances, the resources available and the importance placed on particular outcomes. It will be worth looking at the experience of other authorities to examine practice.

Measuring the trends in cohesion will enable the various activities that are (or are not) making an impact. Most councils have indicators covering issues such as;

- Education and learning
- Housing
- Health
- Regeneration and economic development
- Policing and community safety
- Community and voluntary sector.

It's not about restricting measurement to 'hard' statistical information. Subjective and objective measures that cover things like residents' perceptions of the area through the Place Survey or focus groups, as well as information on unemployment rates will also be used; thus ensuring that information can be presented in different ways so that comparisons of different communities and groups of people can be made.

3.4 Sources of measurements

The key source of measurement against cohesion will come from through data on National Indicators linked to the LAA

The LAA is designed to help councils and partners in local strategic partnerships (LSPs) monitor activity within their Sustainable Community Strategy. These chosen indicators cover areas of **economic, social and environmental wellbeing**.

A set of 198 National Indicators have been set for English local authorities and LSPs. Each local authority has chosen 35 and the achievement of actions against many of these will contribute to an improvement to community cohesion.

The Communities and Local Government Department's Place Survey is a biennial survey, which will provide data closely related to community cohesion. Questions include;

- The % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.
- The % people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood
- Civic participation in the local area NI 3
- The % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality NI 4
- Participation in regular volunteering
- Environment for a thriving third sector

- Perceptions of anti-social behaviour NI 17
- Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour

4.0 The Way Forward

4.1 Strategy

Firm partnership is in place in Tamworth, as evidenced through the commitment to developing a Community Engagement Framework that incorporates cohesion. It is also apparent that within many Tamworth organisations, strategies and plans are in place, which can take advantage of both this Baseline and The Engagement Framework. The need to ensure that actions relevant to these documents remain in step is clearly important.

Much of the focus on addressing community cohesion strategically is now embraced by the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Is better cohesion achievable? Tamworth is certainly on the road to achieving this; successful partnering, a sizeable third sector, stable community relations, high performing partners, opportunities to link Government initiatives / funds to benefit Tamworth e.g. the emergence of Locality Working structures, built upon established lines of communication to most communities or the “Building Schools for the Future” plans, etc.

Perhaps more relevant in this report is what could cause the failure of these plans? Clearly there are many external factors which are beyond Tamworth’s ability to influence e.g. heightened international tensions, the recent economic downturn, housing market pressures, etc. Such factors have to be addressed as and when they arise and a strong local partnership will be better equipped to respond, but more important is addressing local issues which can cause failure:

- Failure to consult communities or act on feedback
- Bureaucratic / remote approach from statutory agencies
- Inadequate support to and from 3rd sector organisations
- Alienating some communities e.g. white working class
- Failure to develop appropriate communication at local neighbourhood level
- Failure to harness benefits of economic growth.

Whilst our report has highlighted some areas that Tamworth may wish to address, none of the above need become insurmountable difficulties for the Council or its partners.

5.0 Recommendations

Tamworth needs to;

- a) The central oversight and conduit for information thus far has been the Task and Finish Group convened by Tamworth LSP with representatives from the main partner agencies. This group should be developed and mainstreamed into a Stronger Communities Group under the LSP which serves to take forward the cohesion agenda in Tamworth.
- b) Raise the profile of schemes that promote interaction and celebrate diversity as widely as possible.
- c) Proactively work with the local media and ensure representation from the media on key partnership bodies across the Borough to help combat myths and channel positive stories. Develop a communication strategy to counter false perceptions about resource distribution.
- d) To manage and co-ordinate services and support for emerging communities in Tamworth.
- e) Particular attention needs to be focussed on youth issues across Tamworth, not just in terms of educational under-achievement, but also the culture which reflects residential patterns of segregation. There is a clear need for all youth organisations and agencies involved in youth activities, to work more closely together to address problems of disaffected young people from all communities.
- f) Developing a stronger awareness of the LSP across the wider Tamworth community would strengthen many perceptions among residents and identify the LSP as a truly representative partnership. A high level of commitment and resource within the LSP will be required to address these gaps.
- g) Continually review democratic arrangements in order to ensure vision and corporate priorities are effectively applied in the growing partnership framework. This will include ensuring that clearer guidance and specific knowledge is provided, so that Elected Members can effectively promote community cohesion issues and contribute and play a stronger leadership role at a local level.
- h) There is an evident need to provide specific knowledge for front-line staff, Elected Members and Managers on cohesion and how to deal with conflict within and between communities.
- i) Benefit from active input and support from the private/commercial sector, both in terms of supporting partnership working as well as targeting resources to support local schemes e.g. sponsorship/support from businesses to Tamworth youth and elderly activities allowing the extension of activities or to encourage greater involvement from emerging communities.
- j) Develop clear links with regional and sub-regional partnerships in planning locality based programmes and in jointly working to build and enhance cohesion.

- k) Be mindful of the changing mix of population in Tamworth and that both formal and informal consultation arrangements need to be kept under review to ensure they (a) remain effective and (b) allow for all communities to feel they are able to input.
- l) To develop dedicated support for specific groups, e.g. gypsies and travellers or asylum seekers. The Council has a policy on unauthorised encampments ,which could be enhanced through the Tamworth Together partnership developing a proactive approach to dealing with this target group.
- m) Recognise the need to focus on priority areas in order to ensure resources are targeted towards addressing deprivation and inequality needs and to develop good practice and to minimize tension between different communities. This will be a demonstration of the priorities within the Sustainable Community Strategy and highlight what work is taking place to “close the gap”.
- n) There is benefit to be gained from an increased awareness of, and input into community cohesion activities by the community and voluntary sector; in particular the key role of Tamworth CVS, whose connections to the diverse range of agencies and communities is recognised. The third sector is often used when consultation is required but not always proactively engaged fully on an ongoing basis across all partnership activities. By strengthening the effectiveness and representation of these groups, there is potential for them to be viewed more as a resource, indeed as partner agencies, rather than simply as consultative conduits. A more diverse approach to engagement with other community, voluntary and faith groups will widen dialogue and trust, contributing to directly and indirectly to better cohesion.
- o) Recognise the need for good data and research systems to inform strategies and plans. In particular the focus on, and agreement to, linking individual partner information to provide comprehensive data; and to feed this to the Staffs Observatory as a single custodian.
- p) We suggest that a Policy Statement should be adopted by the Council and LSP which underlines Tamworth’s commitment to the delivery of community cohesion (Please see below).

6.0 Proposed Policy Statement

6.1 For Tamworth, real community cohesion means;

- Living together positively
- Having a stake in society
- Building links and relationships
- Being proud of the Borough.

Under each dimension, we have set out a minimum acceptable definition, together with our aspired position.

6.2 Living together positively

- Minimum: people are able to get on with their own lives feeling safe that disagreement and disputes can be resolved fairly through agreed processes.
- Aspiration: the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued.

6.3 Having a stake in society

- Minimum: all parts of the community feel that they have a stake in its success.
- Aspiration: those from different backgrounds have, and feel they have, similar positive life opportunities.

6.4 Building links and relationships

- Minimum: intrusive or anti-social behaviour is significantly reduced.
- Aspiration: strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances.

6.5 Being proud of the Borough

- Minimum: Tamworth people feel good about their Borough.
- Aspiration: there is a common and compelling vision for the success of the Borough across the whole population.

7.0 Vision and Leadership

7.1 Vision and Values

The overall vision for building community cohesion in Tamworth is;

- Provision of affordable housing options in the Borough, which meets the needs of a changing population.
- Good access to community facilities and shops.
- Strong, healthy, vibrant and more sustainable communities, with opportunities for all to engage in community life.
- Provision of responsive services which meet local need, supporting both individuals and families.

7.2 This in turn is promoted through the following aims;

- Building a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities in the Borough.
- Honouring the diversity of people's backgrounds and positively valuing them.
- Making sure that people of different backgrounds have equal life opportunities.
- Continuing to develop strong relationships between people of different backgrounds in the workplace, in learning, in neighbourhoods, in leisure activity, and in all the services provided by all sectors in the Borough.
- Underpinning this commitment by adopting good working practices which reflect our own responsibilities as partners in multi-agency working, with regard to our legislative duties as employers and as service providers within the public, private and voluntary sectors.

7.3 Leadership

Certainly at the most senior level within the Council – both elected members and officers – there is a knowledge and understanding of the issues, and the democratic structures within the Council have given a high priority to cohesion.

We were also impressed by the degree of knowledge and awareness of the cohesion agenda by partner agencies – from the PCT, the Police etc. there was a commitment to maintaining strong community relations and recognition that barriers between different communities was something to work against. Not surprisingly, the Tamworth Together Partnership itself places strong emphasis on the Community Cohesion agenda and in particular the practical steps set out in both the LAA to tackle disadvantage, narrow the gap and strengthen community relations. Moreover, the degree to which partnership working has been embraced within Tamworth is significant – the Tamworth Together Partnership and its sub partnerships have considerable strength and are seen to be at the heart of much that was taking place in the Borough.

Indeed an inevitable observation arising from the strength of the partnership structures in Tamworth is the potential for confusion to arise between the effective partnering arrangements and the democratic structures of the Council. The Tamworth Partnership is inclusive, its operational approach is very open, there is far less parochialism between organisations than we have witnessed elsewhere, and it has a high profile both at strategic level and operationally. However, the Partnership is inevitably an undemocratic structure and therefore the need for local authorities such as Tamworth to continually review and update their LSP democratic arrangements in order to ensure their value and role is effectively applied, and that elected members can continue to add value and act as local representatives of communities, is essential.

7.4 Elected Members

We would envisage a far more active role for elected Members in building community cohesion at a local level. Rather than isolated and reactive interventions, we see the role of Councillors as crucial in helping to identify key issues, bringing voluntary, faith and resident organisations on board and developing local plans. But Members also have a key role to play in helping day to day, to mediate local tensions and in building bridges between communities. They also need to be prominent and visible in tackling negative rumours, misinformation, and political and religious extremism. In order to undertake these roles, Members will require a thorough understanding of the issues involved and the skills to tackle them.

Whilst there is all party support for Community Cohesion in Tamworth, to make further inroads and to respond to some of the issues highlighted in our report, there is likely to be a need to build further cross-party consensus on an overall strategy to continue to build community cohesion and, like other areas in the public sector, individual political parties need to consider how they can ensure they remain representative of communities they serve.

Whilst Tamworth can rightly claim some considerable success in the way in which it has tackled community cohesion and the leadership it has provided, there are a number of significant future challenges which will have to be grasped. Tamworth's population is changing; as for many other councils, the local leadership and partners will have to consider the impact upon key functions, especially housing, employment, education, and the shape and nature of its services. Similarly the nature and shape of the community and voluntary sector will have to respond to reflect the changing nature of the local population. Change is never easy, but can be facilitated by open debate and inclusive dialogue – and by clear and committed leadership.

7.5 Partnerships

We would not wish to challenge the degree to which partnering has been developed in Tamworth. Indeed it appears so natural that it is now accepted as the “norm” and partners contributions and thinking reflects this approach. In terms of community cohesion this must be for the good insofar as it should allow a much more integrated or “joined up” approach between agencies and a consistency between the various strategies and action plans promoted by agencies.

However, partnering is difficult to sustain particularly in difficult times or times of financial constraint. Furthermore once strong partnering arrangements are in place expectations of all agencies are raised – whether public, private or voluntary/community. All agencies or organisations, regardless of sector, will therefore expect to be able to fully contribute, to have their views listened to and indeed responded to – that is the nature of partnering. Sustaining such arrangements is not easy and requires a considerable input of time and resources – mainly by the local authority. That said, if achieved and maintained, the outcomes particularly in terms of community engagement and, by definition, community cohesion, can be immense.

8.0 Cohesion and the Engagement Framework

Effective Community Engagement and Community Cohesion are linked and the development of activity utilising the emerging Community Engagement Framework will certainly contribute to addressing issues within this Baseline.

This comprehensive framework captures work centred on community engagement, consultation and empowerment. It aims to assist the LSP and local communities in Tamworth to work together as effectively as possible.

The Framework will aim to reinforce those activities which occur in Tamworth on the authority of the *Tamworth Local Strategic Partnership*. This of course may be applied more widely, but the Framework will not seek to replace the community engagement strategies of partner agencies, which may have a different, but complimentary, focus.

High quality community engagement will enable public services to continuously improve by creating active and empowering relationships with local people. Alongside focused community development in areas of disadvantage, this ensures that service providers and communities are looking ahead together, building resources into services that are relevant to changing local needs.

The development of a Stronger Communities Group would provide a body that is charged with addressing quality of life issues in Tamworth linked to appropriate perception indicators. It should commit to dealing effectively with community issues, promoting positive behaviour and contributing to making Tamworth a safe place to live, work and visit.

The purpose of the group would be to work together to help make the community of Tamworth stronger and safer, thus increasing participation and engagement alongside reducing crime and disorder; instilling public confidence and strengthening the community, allowing multiple agencies and the community to tackle these problems in a creative and joined-up way.

The emerging Group should concentrate on those areas, which strategic assessment has identified as the areas of concern. This approach should enable the development of priorities which are evidence based. We believe that by concentrating your efforts on these priorities, you can secure the most effective and sustainable results over the next few years to build stronger communities with improved community safety and reduced antisocial behaviour.

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 How will Community Cohesion be managed in Tamworth?

In agreement with partners, the Council has taken the lead in helping to manage and improve community cohesion in Tamworth. This is not something that the Council can do on its own, and even with institutional partners this is not something that can be “done to” the residents of Tamworth. The most important role falls to the people of Tamworth themselves. However, the Borough and its people have a long and proud tradition of tolerance and will rise to the challenge given the right environment.

It should also be clear from the detail above that the “governance” of community cohesion is not a simple matter. Much of what the Council and its Partners do as their day to day activities has a direct bearing on the consolidation of community cohesion across the Borough.

We see potential for Tamworth to become an exemplar of good community cohesion in Staffordshire. This requires the need to bring the hearts and minds of the population behind this objective. To win the hearts, we need a compelling vision. To win the minds, we need a strong partnership approach and the collective will to develop and market a local vision.

The Council should look to promote wider ownership of the emerging Community Engagement Framework. This could be by presenting a picture within the overall Vision of what a more cohesive Tamworth would look like; in particular targeted at different sections of the various communities may be a useful approach.

Further work should be undertaken with communities in order to better understand and build cohesion, as opposed to simply seeing the issue along race or ethnicity lines, and encouraging greater tolerance. Where communities can be engaged in a direct and practical way the wider appreciation of cohesion is better understood by those communities

Tamworth has yet to make the underlying case for promoting community cohesion – including identifying the potential threat to growth, prosperity, inward migration and investment, and damage to the image of Tamworth should relations between its different communities deteriorate. We would advocate that the Council’s communications strategy needs to be stronger in terms of promoting community cohesion over the long-term and that action should also be taken to focus individual media campaigns on local communities, and specific groups within those communities.

There are a range of other key partnerships that help improve community cohesion. In all partnership forums, Tamworth should aim to move towards a position where policy will be developed in ways allowing for all sections of society, particularly those who are under represented, to express their views.

This document sets out a start point for community cohesion in Tamworth, to be delivered by the Borough Council and its partners. It is created to act as a catalyst to; ensure priority actions are identified and progressed while a more in-depth debate takes place, to

contribute to discussion about Tamworth's vision and values, and to help energise the Tamworth Together partnership. In addition to progressing the actions identified, the next steps in taking this baseline forward should therefore be;

- Vision building, partnership and institutional development
- Prioritisation and resource allocation
- Community Cohesion progress measurement and management
- Mapping existing community cohesion work
- An in-depth survey of attitudes and issues.

APPENDICES

Appendix I	Statistics
Appendix II	Interviews and Questionnaires
Appendix III	Good Practice Guideline / Case Studies
Appendix IV	Community Cohesion and related information
Appendix V	Interviewee list
Appendix VI	Thematic Issues