CABINET

20 April 2004

SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY – 2004-2007

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report presents Cabinet with a draft Social Inclusion Strategy for consideration and approval. The strategy has been formulated by the Social Inclusion Strategy Informal Member / Officer Group. It has also been the subject of consultation with key partner organisations and interest groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

 It is recommended

1. that Cabinet approve the Social Inclusion Strategy 2004-2007.

2. that a Member of Cabinet be appointed as champion for social inclusion issues in accordance with action reference SI13 of the Social Inclusion Strategy.

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DETAIL:

1   Introduction

1.1   One of the Council's key strategic priorities for 2004-2007 is to promote social inclusion through a Social Inclusion Strategy. That strategy has now been drafted and is presented to Cabinet for consideration and approval (Appendix 1 to the report).

1.2   Cabinet is also asked to appoint a Member champion for social inclusion issues as recommended by action point SI13 to the Strategy.

1.3   The preparation of the strategy has been overseen by a small informal cross-party working group of officers and Members (chaired by Councillor Pines) which has met on three occasions. The minutes of the final meeting which commends the draft report strategy to Cabinet along with two other recommendations are to be found at Appendix 2.

1.4   A draft of the strategy was considered at a meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership. It was also issued for comments to a wide range of voluntary and community groups, including the Voluntary Sector Forum. None of the responses questioned the underlying principles and most were very supportive. Many of the detailed comments made have been used to modify the draft and shape the final version.

1.5   The strategy does not set out to add a new layer of targets or create a need for significant additional expenditure. Rather, it seeks to challenge both Members and service managers to ensure that the objectives of the strategy are fulfilled through careful prioritisation and an understanding of the impact of their decisions and choices on equality of opportunity and improving social inclusion. It should therefore be seen as one of the Council's core policy documents relevant to all services not simply one area of activity.

1.6   It is suggested that the strategy timescale should be co-terminus with the existing Corporate Strategy, covering the period 2004-2007.

1.7   Having been agreed by Cabinet the strategy will be widely circulated through the organisation and its key messages reinforced through training and departmental briefings. Principal Scrutiny Committee and Performance Improvement Committees may also wish to consider progress against the strategy in relation to corporate and departmental performance.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

2   CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

         The prioritisation of social inclusion in one of the Council's key priorities for 2004-07. The strategy is specifically referred to as a corporate document.

3   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

         There are no direct resource implications, but the strategy does suggest that consideration should be given to the extent to which the use of resources impacts on social inclusion. This may have significant implications in the future.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1   Draft Social Inclusion Strategy

Appendix 2   Informal Member Officer Working Group – Minutes 10th February 2004

Final Draft Social Inclusion Strategy

Introduction

Winchester City Council's Corporate Strategy sets out its overall vision for the District as being:

'… of diverse and dynamic communities, where people work together to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life now and in the future.'

This vision embodies a belief that all residents of the District should be able to participate fully in community life and benefit from the opportunities that are available in a successful society.

We are fortunate to live in a part of the country where a combination of environmental, economic and social factors means that most people are able to deal with the ups and downs of daily life without any direct involvement from the Council or any other agency. Winchester District does not suffer from the large areas of dereliction and decay that mark out some inner city areas, nor does it suffer markedly from the social problems which this causes. Our rural towns and villages are attractive and property sought after by those who can afford it. New developments such as Whiteley have brought major new employers to the District, as well as retail and residential growth.

But this is not the whole story. For a variety of reasons some people do not share fully in the benefits of living in the area. Although the number of people who currently suffer from serious social or economic disadvantage is relatively small this is no reason for complacency or inactivity. The Council has a duty to all its residents and intends to fulfil that duty. It has made social inclusion a key strategic priority for 2004 – 2007 in its Corporate Strategy.

This strategy sets out how the Council will work with its partners, particularly those in the voluntary sector, to promote social inclusion. The Council's aim is to ensure that levels of poverty and social exclusion stay as low as possible and that existing problems are tackled for the benefit of all.

What Is Social Inclusion?

In an ideal world everyone would have the means and the opportunity to make independent decisions about their own lives. They would live in a community which they supported and which supported them. That situation is unlikely ever to exist, but it is what the Council wishes to see achieved.

In many ways 'social inclusion' is a new way of describing something which local authorities, charities and voluntary organisations have been striving to achieve for many years. It means working to ensure that everybody is 'included' in the benefits of living in a modern, well organised society. It also means creating strong and cohesive communities which support people and people contribute to. Social inclusion is not about 'quick fixes' – it is a long-term process that needs to be part of the mainstream policy making.

Other organisations often talk about 'social exclusion' or 'people who are socially excluded' to describe a specific group of people who are being targeted by various policies and initiatives. Although this is easier to identify, the Council prefers 'social inclusion' as a term because it describes a process that happens all the time and involves everyone, rather than assuming that there is a fixed target group. The Fabian Society and New Policy Institute which have been influential in shaping policy in this are endorse this more positive approach:

'One problem with constructing a programme of action around social problems that one wants to get rid of (e.g. child poverty or teenage pregnancy) is that these usually directly affect only minorities of the population. Yet most of these problems are the consequences of factors which affect a much larger group of people'[1]

There is no single, universally accepted definition of what social inclusion is, but the definition that the Council has adopted is:

'Social inclusion is the process by which we seek to ensure that all our residents have the opportunity to fulfil their personal potential and to make an active contribution to creating better communities.'

In our work to promote social inclusion any factor that stands in the way will be a legitimate 'target' for action.

Anti-poverty work underlies most aspects of a social inclusion strategy. National research has demonstrated the clear link between poverty and many other social and educational problems. For instance, people who grow up in a low income household are more likely to end up unemployed, spend time in prison (men) or as a lone parent (women).[2] Lack of financial resource means that people cannot overcome problems which their more affluent neighbours might not find problems at all. A good example is isolation from services in rural areas – only a minor problem if a family can afford to run a car (or sometimes two cars) but very difficult to deal with if they cannot.

This type of poverty tends to be self-reinforcing. Research has shown that it is more difficult for the children of parents living on a low income to do well at school.[3] If those children then have low educational achievement they are themselves more likely to find well paid work difficult to find. Poverty can be hereditary even if ability is not. An effective social inclusion strategy has to address the root causes of poverty and the reasons why some people are able to take advantage of their opportunities and others are not. This includes job opportunities, housing conditions, educational achievement, rural isolation, lack of transport and fear of crime. It must also deal with some of the effects of poverty, particularly on a community-wide basis – such as anti-social behaviour and low aspirations. As the Joseph Rowntree

Foundation (an independent charity which researches social and community issues) has said:

"…any measures that successfully address child poverty, especially by giving more households access to jobs, are likely to have wide-ranging effects in the years ahead, that go beyond the improvement of the immediate welfare of poor children[4]

Some of the underlying issues that have to be tackled if we are to promote social inclusion in Winchester District include:

- unemployment
- low paid, low opportunity employment
- poor housing conditions
- family breakdown
- rural isolation
- poor public transport
- barriers created by disability
- poor educational achievement
- mental health problems
- parenting skills
- personal financial management

In the last few years the policy of Government, regional agencies and local government has been heavily focussed on social inclusion work. The Government has established a Social Exclusion Unit that leads on policy making in this area. The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and Government Office for the South East (GOSE) have produced a joint Social Inclusion Statement.

Work on social inclusion related issues covers a huge range of topics including:

- job opportunities
- rural isolation
- providing decent homes
- affordable housing
- fuel poverty
- education and life-long learning
- crime and anti-social behaviour
- benefits and taxation
- travel and public transport
- access to primary health care
- mental health

- drug and alcohol misuse
- sexual health

This work has complemented a range of local initiatives and voluntary work, some of which have been going on in the community for almost as long as those communities have existed.

Why Does Social Inclusion Matter?

For those individuals who suffer deprivation in some form or other the strain and distress can be substantial. The Council believes that for this reason it is morally right to play a part in eliminating deprivation. But there is also a strong economic argument for supporting such work. People living in deprived circumstances usually need greater financial support from the public sector and consume higher levels of public services. They often suffer from greater ill-health and deprived communities frequently suffer from higher levels of anti-social behaviour and crime, with the consequent cost of policing and reparation. There is therefore a powerful economic argument for trying to reduce levels of deprivation.

The Council does not see work on social inclusion as providing 'hand-outs' or doing for people what they would prefer to do for themselves. Rather it is seeking to invest in people and communities to help them build their capacity to create a better future.

The Council's strategy is consistent with the aims and objectives of the South East England Regional Assembly which agreed in February 2001:

'The South East could and should be a region in which we achieve social progress which recognises the need of everyone with strong communities free from high levels of crime and discrimination; with ready access to jobs, education, homes, services and amenities; diverse opportunities for everyone to live fulfilled and healthy lives and to realise their full potential.'[5]

Why have a Social Inclusion Strategy?

Many organisations are at work on social inclusion issues. There is a danger that without proper co-ordination and a clear definition of what we are trying to achieve many initiatives will not be effective and that time and money will be wasted.

Organisations that work with the Council need to know what we want to achieve and how we will define our priorities. Resources are limited and we have to identify our targets – though these may change from time to time as local circumstances change.

The Local Government Association (LGA) has set out the five main ways in which local government has a role in social inclusion work:

- as community leaders involved in local democratic processes

- as providers and enablers of services

- as employers

- by providing local research and information/research

- as leaders, co-ordinators or key partners in a wide range of community programmes

This strategy seeks to explain how the Council will make a difference through each of these roles.

The Winchester Picture

Winchester is at the heart of the most prosperous region in the country. It has not been affected by the large scale decline of traditional industries which has created such extensive deprivation in other parts of the country. A diversity of employment opportunities provides suitable work for most of those who want it, and the quality of education, training and other public services is generally high. The District does, however, have large areas that are very rural in character

where the accessibility of services is a problem for some people.

The Government measures deprivation using a group of indicators to prepare what is called the 'Index of Multiple Deprivation' (IMD). The IMD 'score' for each local authority ward is used as a measure of how deprived that ward is by almost all Government sponsored programmes or agencies. The IMD was last updated in 2000 and is now out of alignment with ward boundaries in Winchester, but it is still an important comparative measure of deprivation.

Overall the IMD shows Winchester to be one of the most prosperous council areas in the country. Winchester District is ranked 334th out of 354 districts in the country (where 354 represents the lowest level of deprivation). The scoring for individual wards shows that there is no ward in the 'worst' half of the IMD and several are among the top 5% of most prosperous wards in the country.

The number of people claiming job seekers allowance (i.e. defined as unemployed) in the District is very low at only 0.9%[6] of the workforce compared with a national average of around 3%. This is the lowest figure in Hampshire. There is a wide range between the highest and lowest rates in each ward, but even the highest rate (St Bartholomew at 2.5%) is below the national average.

The 2001 census shows that levels of car ownership, the quality measures for housing and other measures of household prosperity all put the District well up in the 'league table' of council areas. 30.2% of the adult population is educated to degree level or above – 50% higher than the national average.[7]

Quality measures for public services in the District are also, generally, very favourable. The state schools in the District score highly in OFSTED reports and exam results. Health and police services are also considered good according to external evaluation. Crime statistics for the District are some of the

lowest in the country. The rate of burglary is half the national average and the rate of car thefts just over a quarter of the national average.[8] Unfortunately, fear of crime still plays on the mind of many to an extent that the reality of crime does not justify.

However, as in other parts of the South East these statistics do not tell the whole story. There are people living in the District who do not share the same levels of achievement, opportunity or economic success.

There is no simple definition of what people 'ought' to have or be able to do so as not to be defined as 'disadvantaged' or living in poverty making it difficult to talk of numbers. We do know that in Winchester District:

- 3,000 people claim income support because they do not have enough money live on;[9]
- 18% of adults have no formal educational qualification (although this is not much more than half the national average);[10]
- Winchester town has the highest proportion of older residents in the mid Hants area, estimated at 16.9% by 2008.[11]
- Winchester is the most sparsely populated district in Hampshire and has wards which score in the worst ten percent of the IMD for access to services.

Higher levels of deprivation tend to be found in communities with a high proportion of socially provided housing. But it is important to recognise that by no means all of those people suffering deprivation are in easily identifiable locations. Someone living in tied accommodation on a private estate or an elderly person living in their own home may also suffer from isolation, a low income and a difficulty in gaining access to services.

In Winchester District, higher levels of deprivation are concentrated in four wards:

- St Luke
- St Bartholomew
- St John and All Saints
  (all in Winchester itself)
- Wickham (in the southern parishes)

These four areas have a distinctly 'higher' score in the IMD. Their more deprived status has been identified for many years and a number of different initiatives have sought to target improvements.

Winchester is home to a large prison and many people who have experienced high levels of deprivation pass through the prison each year. Some will leave prison and enter into the Winchester community.

Concerns have also been raised about the level of drug and alcohol abuse, particularly amongst young people. There is no evidence that the scale of the problem in Winchester is exceptional but it is nevertheless a matter of concern.

The Partnership Approach

There are many agencies and organisations that undertake work aimed at reducing levels of deprivation. These include central government agencies such as Job Centre Plus and regional agencies such as SEEDA. Local health services, in particular the Mid Hants Primary Care Trust, recognise the significant impacts upon health for those living in deprived circumstances. Local government, including the County Council and some parish councils, is actively engaged in anti-deprivation initiatives.

At the heart of social inclusion work in the community is the voluntary sector – indeed the existence of an active voluntary sector is itself an indicator of social inclusion. Voluntary sector activity takes a wide range of forms ranging from very local work sometimes based on tiny charities through to the District wide work of organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux which provide a sophisticated professional framework for the work of

volunteers. Many faith organisations also have long established mechanisms for this type of work in the community.
In Winchester organisations such as the Trinity Centre and the night shelter have developed specialist services for people with a very specific range of needs. Many of these organisations have come together under the umbrella of the Alliance for Strategic Action on Poverty (ASAP) which has sought to co-ordinate policy in the District.

The City Council's Role

In researching this strategy local organisations were asked to give their views on the Council's approach to social inclusion work. It was clear that the Council had undertaken and was engaged in many activities that are highly valued in addressing the issue of social inclusion.

These include:

- providing grant aid to support the work of key local organisations working on social inclusion issues, such as WACA, the Trinity Centre and the nightshelter;

- working to improve the quality of delivery of its own services, particularly those which impact most on areas of disadvantage, such as benefit payments;

- reducing the cost of some of its own services to people in specific qualifying groups;

- developing new approaches to health related issues in the community through the 'Health For All' partnership;

- developing specific new initiatives in partnership with the voluntary sector – such as the pilot project to test the feasibility of establishing a credit union for the District and supporting community learning projects;

- working in partnership with other agencies to improve conditions in particular communities – such as the Winchester Neighbourhood Initiative (WNI) and Wickham Partnership.

However, some concern was expressed that the Council had not set out clearly what its aims and objectives are in relation to social inclusion. This makes it difficult for the organisations with which we work to plan their services and identify their role. It also makes it difficult for people working in the Council to design and implement projects and service improvements in a structured way.

There was also concern that the Council had not identified specific resources for social inclusion work – although the funding for some projects and activities was recognised.

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) brings together a number of organisations working across a variety of sectors to work together on improving many aspects of community life. Most of these have some impact on social inclusion issues, but the complexity of the LSP's work and the different focus of the partners makes clarity about priorities essential. The Council intends to invite the LSP to make social inclusion work one of its highest priorities.

<u>The Council's Social Inclusion Strategy</u>

The Council's social inclusion strategy seeks to be more than a list of actions that the Council will take to tackle specific issues.   Such lists are often useful but they are soon out of date and do not provide a basis for reacting to future events or planning 'where we want to be'.

The strategy therefore seeks to set out a clear aim and objectives based on a number of underlying principles.

Aims

The Council has set out its overall vision for the District in its Corporate Strategy. This vision applies to everybody,

regardless of status or background. Taking its lead from this, the aim of this strategy is:

'To ensure that the Council's policies and those of the partners it works with have the effect of increasing social inclusion and creating stronger communities'

The most effective means to increase social inclusion is to help create the economic and social environment in which the number of people living in poverty is as low as possible. This is by no means the complete answer – but it is fundamental to creating social inclusion.

Winchester District already has low levels of poverty, reflecting the quality of the current economic environment, the strength of its communities and the resources available to its public and voluntary services. It must be one of the objectives of a social inclusion strategy to ensure that this situation continues. High levels of employment, good quality public services and low levels of crime provide the foundation for success in social inclusion work.

But the Council recognises that creating the right economic and social environment is not enough on its own. People must have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and sometimes positive action will be needed to create that opportunity and to break cycles of low expectation and achievement. Discrimination on irrelevant grounds, lack of access to educational resources, transport or healthcare, childcare arrangements and the nature and quality of living accommodation can all reduce the chances people have.

Beyond this general creation of opportunity, some people will need very specialised help to gain social and economic independence. Particular attention will need to be given to the needs of children and young people, elderly people (particularly those who live in isolated areas) and people who have a disability or suffer from mental illness.

Some issues, such as community safety need to be looked at on a 'neighbourhood' basis as well as an individual one. It may be necessary to try to raise the status and aspirations of people living in areas which have traditionally been identified as disadvantaged and to tackle the general problems they face which may be affecting their quality of life.

Bearing these thoughts in mind, this strategy is based on four themes:

Theme 1
Improving economic prosperity

Objective

That the economic prosperity of the District is increased so as to provide a wide variety of good quality job opportunities for an educated, well trained and flexible work force.

Theme 2
Increasing opportunities for all

Objective

That individuals and communities are able to reach their full potential and are not prevented from doing so by barriers that do not need to exist.

Theme 3
Providing support and intervention

Objective

That people who suffer disadvantage as a result of their personal or family circumstances have access to a range of services which tackle the underlying causes of that disadvantage, as well as the symptoms, with the aim of enabling them to lead independent lives.

Theme 4
Improving access to public services

Objective

Ensure that the quality of public services is equally good in all areas and to target limited resources carefully to create the greatest possible impact on social inclusion

Theme 1
Improving Economic Prosperity

Objective

That the economic prosperity of the District is increased so as to provide a wide variety of good quality job opportunities for an educated, well trained and flexible work force

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Background

The Council believes that a strong and diverse local economy with good links to neighbouring areas is a fundamental requirement to produce inclusion, opportunity and a high quality of life.

This includes providing a range of job opportunities including part-time work and work which is suitable for people who have not achieved high levels of educational attainment is vital. There is clear evidence that one of the most important factors in reducing disadvantage is to create opportunities for people to work. Since not everyone can do the same type of work or is able to work in a traditional pattern broadening the base of employment is important.

This process is not simply about creating jobs. It is also about making them accessible to people who may not be able to work without assistance. The availability of quality childcare for instance will be a key issue for many single-parent families. It is essential that those who work in lower paid jobs, or who cannot work at all, claim all of the tax credits or benefits to which they are entitled, increasing their spending power. Those who are motivated to do so should have the opportunity to improve their work status and move to higher paid employment. Disabled people should be supported within the workplace to ensure that they are not needlessly excluded from the workforce.

Unemployment levels are currently low and the local economy buoyant. However it cannot be assumed that this will always

be the case. Decisions taken now may have significant effects well into the future.

The Council does not support the view that wealth will inevitably 'trickle down' as the District becomes more prosperous. It does believe that only an economically prosperous area can create the scope and variety of job and training opportunities that will provide for all residents.

The Council believes that good financial planning and management is essential to the prosperity of individuals and families. Unmanageable levels of debt can be a major factor in creating poverty and family stress particularly in low income households. The Council will support services which provide advice on how to manage money and gain access to properly controlled and fair ways to help household finances.

Policy Statement

The Council will promote the economic prosperity of the District to ensure that there is a sustainable mixture of opportunities to work, train and to develop new business opportunities. It will support initiatives to increase access to work, training and the creation of new jobs where these are consistent with other policy objectives.

The Council will:

1.   Prepare a strategy for economic prosperity in the District which takes account of the need to promote social inclusion by creating a range of job opportunities across a broad base of employment types.

2.   Consider the impact on social inclusion of any decision affecting employment opportunities and access to those opportunities and give weight to those considerations in making a decision.

3.   Work in partnership with business, public sector employers and education providers to ensure the

provision of local academic and vocational training opportunities which will help to create a better qualified workforce targeted particularly at those areas with lower levels of attainment.

4. Form partnerships to promote new learning opportunities targeted at specific target groups who have difficulty in accessing traditional learning environments.

5. Assist in the establishment of more and better child-care opportunities, including private and voluntary sector provision, to increase opportunities for work.

6. Investigate specific means by which financial management and access to financial services can be improved for low income households.

7. Encourage the take-up of tax credits and other financial assistance available to help people into work and to support those who cannot work.

8. Investigate innovative ways of creating combined employment and living environments to meet changing social and economic circumstances.

9. Provide and properly resourcing a benefits service that meets the needs of working claimants and addresses the Government's objective of reducing barriers to work.

Theme 2
Increasing opportunities for all

Objective

That individuals and communities are able to reach their full potential and are not prevented from doing so by discrimination or physical and social barriers that do not need to exist.

Background

The Council believes that every individual should have the chance to fulfil their potential and to contribute to building a strong community. They should not be artificially held back by low expectations or their physical environment. Nor should they be prevented from doing so because of discrimination or prejudice.

This is particularly important in relation to children and young people who need to get the best possible start through having good education, a decent home and high quality leisure and recreational opportunities. The Council believes that it is important to try to break the cycle of deprivation that sees children from a deprived background denied opportunities because of where they live and what is expected of them rather than their ability or potential.

This is not about social engineering. People have different capabilities and aspirations. We do not want everybody to have the same interests or values. The point is to remove barriers that prevent people, particularly people who have not yet made many life choices, from achieving their best.

Policy Statement

The Council will work to counter discrimination and to remove barriers which prevent people from fulfilling their own potential and from participating fully in community and social life.

The council will

1.   Ensure it does all it can to reduce discrimination in every area of public life, particularly in relation to its own activities and those of organisations for which it provides funding. It will monitor the implementation of its own equalities and diversity policy and take action if it is found to be ineffective.

2.   Take action to overcome the stereotyping of particular geographic areas by improving the quality of the local environment and encouraging community self-help. In particular it will target resources at those wards with higher than average deprivation levels.

3.   Ensure that partners within the LSP and organisations provided with financial support are equally committed to equality of service provision and to refuse to fund any which discriminate in service provision.

4.   Support projects which will improve the housing conditions of individuals and families either through access to suitable accommodation or thorough improvements to existing accommodation.

5.   Work with partners to reduce health inequalities by improving access to health care, awareness of health issues and making improvements in local services

6.   Support local organisations which are working effectively with key client groups, in particular in relation to debt and financial management, access to services in rural areas, increasing the achievement of children and young people and the improvement of housing conditions.

7.   Work with representatives of local communities to improve access to those local services and facilities which are most important to improving social inclusion.

Theme 3
Providing support and intervention

Objective

That people who suffer disadvantage as a result of their personal or family circumstances have access to a range of services which tackle the underlying causes of that disadvantage, as well as the symptoms, with the aim of enabling them to lead independent lives.

Background

There are many circumstances in which people may have to rely on some support or intervention from outside to help manage a problem or difficulty. These may include people on a low income without the means to increase that income (perhaps due to disability, age or ill-health), people in difficult family circumstances and people with health problems, including mental illness or drug dependency.

There are a number of statutory services which provide support in these situations. There is an even greater range of voluntary and charitable organisations which provide support and caring services, many in partnership with the statutory sector.

It will always be necessary to ensure that a safety net exists for people who cannot deal successfully with the circumstances they find themselves in.   It is important that this is properly resourced and has no significant omissions.

The Council is only one amongst a number of agencies which is at work in this area but it does provide support for a wide range of voluntary services. It also has an important part to play, particularly through the work of ward councillors, in

acting as an advocate, ensuring that services which are required in a particular area are provided effectively by a suitable means.

In some cases there will also be a need for generic preventative work, for example in relation to substance abuse, to reduce the likelihood of individuals developing problems in the first place.

Policy Statement

The Council supports the provision of support services and interventions to assist people facing specific economic, health or social problems with the aim of helping them to take control of their own situation.

The Council will:

1.   Monitor the level and quality of support services available and act as advocate on their behalf of their users.

2.   Co-operate with LSP partners to target financial support to the voluntary sector to organisations which provide active support to key target groups.

3.   Give funding priority to projects which are designed to target people or communities which have greatest need in relation to social inclusion.

4.   To fund innovative projects and the core costs of key organisations which are complimentary to, but which do not substitute for, the statutory duties of LSP partners.

5.   Promote the take-up of Housing and Council Tax benefits to ensure that eligible claimants are able to make successful claims.

6.   Ensure that Council facilities and services are readily accessible to all and address the needs of those living in areas which cannot rely on regular public transport.

Theme 4
Improving access to public services

Objective

To ensure that the quality of public services is equally good in all areas and to target limited resources carefully to create the greatest possible impact on social inclusion

Background

The quality of public services and the way in which the living and working environment is cared for can be a crucial quality of life issue. For those people who rely exclusively on public service provision to meet their health, education and housing needs the quality of service they receive is vital to their well-being. More than that, it is essential to their ability to function effectively in society. There is evidence that the quality of public services can be related to income levels – and a perception that public services are not provided to the same standard to those who are less affluent or well-educated when it these people who need the services most.

Winchester District is fortunate in that by any measure it has many high quality public services. Standards of healthcare provision and education in particular are high according to national indicators.

However, because Winchester District is not a priority area for Government expenditure and because the numbers of people on low incomes is relatively small it is sometimes easy to forget the needs of this minority in service provision.

It is also true that the cost of reaching and achieving positive outcomes for some people, particularly those living in more isolated rural communities can be relatively high which means hard choices for public bodies with limited resources.

The key issue is effective targeting. This means considering very carefully how particular programmes, subsidies or benefits will make a difference. For

example, blanket subsidies in the cost of a service based on broad criteria may give discounts to people who do not really need them (though they are pleased to get them) but may not be adequate to help people for whom cost is a real concern. This involves some hard choices, but it is an area in which the Council needs to improve its performance to make the best use of resources.

<u>Policy Statement</u>

The Council will ensure that its own services meet high standards and that those standards are provided to all residents. It will work with its partners to ensure that their services also meet community needs and it will draw attention to areas for improvement and development.

The Council will:

1.   Make the case for national and regional funding of important projects and services to ensure that Winchester's needs are properly recognised at this level.

2.   Ensure that opportunities to utilise special sources of funding are fully realised at a local level.

3.   Appoint a member of Cabinet as 'champion' for social inclusion issues and nominate a director to take the lead at management level.

4.   Include in all Council service business plans specific reference to measures designed to promote social inclusion.

5.   Consider the impact of any new Council policy on social inclusion and target resources as effectively as possible at those in greatest need of assistance.

6.   Where we have discretion, give careful consideration to the impact on social inclusion when setting fees and charges for Council services.

7.   Review the impact of new strategic policies and priorities of LSP partners in relation to social inclusion and ensure that the general impact is to increase social inclusion.

<u>Action And Review</u>

This strategy document sets out the framework for action on social inclusion by the Council. It will have no effect unless it is translated into action, but a long-term strategy is not the place to include detailed service by service objectives.

The Community Strategy produced by the LSP identifies high level targets for improvements in quality of life in the District, many of which are directly applicable to social inclusion. The Council endorses these and commits itself to working with partners to achieve them.

To do this, the Council has specified that the annual business plans produced by all departments will include specific reference to social inclusion and how the department will seek to meet the objectives set out in this strategy. The Council will pay particular attention to ensuring that those services it provides which impact most directly on social inclusion issues are run effectively and perform well against both statutory and local targets.

Members will review and monitor those business plans through Performance Improvement Committees.

The Council's Cabinet will monitor the overall effectiveness of the Council's policies and the achievement of the priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy.

The Council will specify social inclusion targets in the conditions it sets on revenue grants (through service level agreements) and will raise issues of concern in relation to social inclusion with partners through the LSP and other partnership bodies.

References:

1   Responsibility for All: A National
        Strategy for Social Inclusion – Fabian
        Society and New Policy Institute 2001
2   Preventing Social Exclusion – Social
        Exclusion Unit March 2001
3   Child Development and Family Income
        – Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1999
4   Child Development and Family Income
        – Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1999
5
6   SEEDA/SEERA/GOSE (and others)
        South East Region Social Inclusion
        Statement 2002
7   Hampshire County Council June 2003
8   Office of National Statistics June 2003
9   Office of National Statistics June 2003
10   Office of National Statistics June 2003
11   Office of National Statistics June 2003
12   Mid Hants Primary Care Trust Health
        Status Report September 2001

Social Inclusion Strategy 2004 – 2007 Action Plan

Ref	Action	Measurable Output	Targets Date(s)	Portfolio / Dept Lead
SI 1	Prepare Economic Prosperity Strategy for Winchester District	An adopted strategy which reinforces the Council's policies in relation to social inclusion and economic growth	December 2004	Economic Development / Development Services
SI 2	Establishment of a district wide credit union	Achievement of FSA registration and sustainable membership level for WADS	April 2005	Community Services
SI 3	a. Promote the take up of benefits and pension credits for elderly people b. Promote the take up of benefits and tax credits for people in work on a low income c. Promote the take up of benefits generally to underclaiming groups	Two campaigns to be run in strategy period, building on 'It's OK to Ask'	November 2005 April 2007	Finance and Resources /Community Services
SI 4	Achieve top quartile performance in all benefit processing activities based on Audit Commission Performance Indicators	Council's audited performance indicators will report achievement	April 2006	Finance and Resources
SI 5	Implement the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy and monitor performance against objectives	Publication of performance monitoring information to demonstrate achievement of equality and diversity targets.	Publication throughout strategy period	Personnel / Chief Executives
SI 6	Develop neighbourhood representation in Highcliffe, Stanmore and Winnall to improve community engagement and public service delivery	Effective community forums operating in each area	December 2004	Community Services
SI 7	Implement pilot neighbourhood warden scheme in Winchester town area	Warden scheme implemented and achieves high public satisfaction rate in	Implementation December 2004	Community Services

Ref	Action	Measurable Output	Targets Date(s)	Portfolio / Dept Lead
		evaluation	Satisfaction measurement December 2005	
SI 8	Incorporate social inclusion objectives into targets of Winchester Community Safety Partnership	Community safety strategy social inclusion related objectives incorporated	April 2005	Community Services
SI 9	Review Council fees and charges to test impact on promotion of social inclusion	Modification of those fees and charges or underlying policies so as to direct resources to those most in need of financial assistance	April 2005	All portfolios / departments
SI 10	Produce two practical schemes to increase access to Council services for people living in rural areas through electronic service delivery	Two completed and evaluated schemes operating in partnership with parish councils and voluntary groups	April 2007	Community Services/Finance and Resources
SI 11	Promote social inclusion objectives through targeting of grant aid to community / voluntary organisations	All service level agreements to incorporate specific social inclusion objectives	As part of annual grant giving	Community Services / Health
SI 12	Promote social inclusion through the policies and objectives set out in all key strategic documents	All strategic documents to make specific reference to how they will promote social inclusion	Throughout the strategy period	Chief Executive / all portfolios
SI 13	Appoint a Member champion for social inclusion issues	Cabinet resolution to appoint Member champion	April 2004	Community Services
SI 14	Review and support operation of inter-agency forum to build on work of Anti-Poverty Alliance	New inter-agency forum established with terms of reference and objectives	December 2004	Community Services / Finance and Resources / Health
SI 15	Ensure the needs of all customers are	Compliance with Council's obligations	Through the strategy	Chief Executive / all

Ref	Action	Measurable Output	Targets Date(s)	Portfolio / Dept Lead
	fully met in service provision and facility	under anti-discrimination legislation. Achievement of increased levels of satisfaction with service delivery	period	portfolios
SI 16	All departmental business plans to incorporate specific measures to achieve objectives in social inclusion strategy	Performance Improvement Committee to scrutinise business plan content and approve	March 2005/06/07	Chief Executive / all portfolios
SI 17	Cabinet to consider social inclusion impact of all proposed new policy measures or substantial service decisions	Specific modifications or additions to policy / proposals / service as a result of Cabinet consideration	Throughout the strategy period	All portfolios