

Appendix III

Dudley MBC: Using effective media management to support the Prevent agenda

Report form the Institute of Community Cohesion – September 2009

Key messages from the review

- Council and partners have a clear narrative and set of messages about community cohesion but this could benefit from a review, reiteration and public demonstration that it is endorsed and owned by all partners
- The Council and partners have embedded communications about PVE and tackling violent extremism within communications about cohesion. There are clear messages about this and these are based around building resilience in communities. There is a view that although some people are clear about the goals and messages of PVE in Dudley this is not shared more widely, so overall there is a lack of clear understanding.
- There is a general view that the Editor at the E & S has an anti-public sector agenda. A number of examples of inaccurate reporting were identified, potentially helping to fuel myths e.g. Hall Street Mosque application.
- It is possible that the Council should have taken a more robust position in challenging inaccurate reporting. Marcomms is drawing up a case study on media management
- High profile community Muslim community leaders in the community who have taken the lead in dealing with media on the Mosque application. Muslim communities are diverse and it is important that all parts of the public sector have a good understanding of this diversity and are listening to a wide range of representatives as well as encouraging a wide range of representatives to become local leaders.
- It is critical that work continues to promote Dudley as a place for all communities and that the Council and partners generate community based stories highlighting tolerance and respect for all.

Key Challenges identified

- Creating a clear and shared narrative for Dudley about preventing violent extremism
- Number of current and potential threats in respect of community tension especially in terms of far-right. General election possible this year and council elections due in 2010 states that is likely that the BNP

and UKIP will increase their focus on what they see as populist campaigns to win votes.

- Applications for two more mosques in Dudley in the pipeline.
- Combination of elections, far right activity, hardening attitudes towards minorities and migrants (Research Ipsos MORI), planning applications for mosques and likely increase in outsiders moving in through regeneration means we need to maintain focus on communications about cohesion, and give more thought to communications on PVE.

Improvements/Recommendations

- Need to consider what channels are the most effective in reaching a broad range of audiences? Need to ensure media understand enough about PVE agenda so they can responsibly report on these issues
- Need to ensure that the clear messages about violent extremism in Dudley and the prevent work which is widely understood with the Council and partners and is proactively communicated (including need to address all forms of violent extremism such as BNP).
- Audit Commission has highlighted the key role of councillors in communication the PVE approach to local people. Need to ensure all councillors understand the broad thrust of this.
- Council needs to highlight internally and to partners where and how it is challenging inaccurate reporting. The media has a responsibility to report accurately and this should be highlighted constantly with editors.
- Because of recent appointments of the Leader and Chief Executive would be an ideal time to begin discussions around a new relationship between the council and Express and Star.
- Priorities for the new relationship should be background briefings on PVE, the 'mosque' issue, relations between communities and potential 'hotspots'. It is recommended that a 'hotline' be established between the Chief Executive/Leader and the Editor to minimise misunderstandings or misinterpretations prior to publication.
- Marcomms have identified the potential to develop closer working relationships with the Newsquest group. This could provide an opportunity to promote positive news about Muslim communities and work around PVE.
- That Chief Executive, Leader and senior Police Officers should seek a meeting with the Editors of the Express and Star and Newsquest papers to discuss the PVE agenda in Dudley.

- Work to continue on positive community based stories about Dudley as a place for all communities. From September there will be an insert in Dudley Together which will promote agreed messages about public authority work to prevent violent extremism
- The Council and partners should review how they support and use Radio Ramadan and Bridge Radio (Dudley's two community radio stations) to reach local communities
- Work should continue within Marcomms to map media channels used by black and minority ethnic groups.
- Need to highlight good work round mainstream Muslim communities whilst balancing this with coverage of other communities. It is critical that Dudley is promoted as a place for all communities and that discussions with editors include consideration of how this is best achieved.
- Consideration should be given to identifying and developing more community representatives who could become advocates for community issues and events working with the media. This would avoid the council and partners being seen as dominating and managing community news stories.

A Community Contingency Plan including the role of communications can be accessed at

http://insidedudley/corporate/info&res/contingencyandd/_emergencyplanni/_publicinformati/default.htm