

SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW REPORT PREPARED BY CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION, SIR HOWARD BERNSTEIN

INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission was created in response to a requirement widely recognised throughout the community, that given the changing nature of its size and composition, it would be appropriate to examine existing practices in the way welfare services in particular are provided, and determine whether existing and future community needs are likely to be met. The Commission was also asked to consider whether existing Community Leadership structures remained appropriate having regard to the changing nature of the community, and the need to see more younger people involved in the way the community shaped its future. The arrangements for securing the composition of the Commission were the subject of consultation with all stakeholders, most notably the Greater Manchester Jewish Representative Council.

2. There were two distinct phases of the work which had to be undertaken:

The first phase, related to the production of a factual analysis of the size, location and demographic profile of the community. This work built heavily upon the outcomes of the 2002 census, and

The second phase, related to a series of structured interviews with key people, and a mailed questionnaire to a range of organisations, seeking input on current welfare and youth services.

The overall objective of this work was to examine existing practices, and propose alternative models for the reorganisation of planning, co-ordination, leadership and commissioning of welfare and youth provision.

3. This second report has now been produced, and is attached. This paper summarises the key conclusions contained in this report so that views can be collated.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

4. A number of outcomes are shown in the report and which were a consistent feature of the views submitted to the research team.

5. The dynamic nature of the community, and its dispersal north and south within the Greater Manchester area, means that single leadership of the whole community is not straightforward. The

advent of an increasing number of charitable or similar causes, means more competition for limited funding support. There is also the potential for reducing the impact of what funding support is available upon the lives of the increasing numbers of people who need support.

6. Few, if any, respondents declared their view that existing arrangements were satisfactory. While evidence of good practice was discovered, alongside remarkable examples of energy and enthusiasm throughout the many organisations active within the community, a number of issues were identified which the review team have identified for consideration:
- There is a need to improve awareness of the wider policy context within which all community organisations are expected to operate. This in turn will help to ensure that all funding services are fully exploited, opportunities to develop new services are considered, and service delivery through stronger co-ordination is improved.
 - Services are not developed consistently with the needs of service users clearly in mind. The report reveals a view that while organisations delivered services to a generally high standard, there was not enough emphasis placed on consultation with users.
 - More scope exists for greater collaboration amongst the many organisations active in providing welfare services within the community. Mergers, or more particularly greater joint working, either through shared services or overheads, would achieve greater operational efficiency, and reduce duplication as well as increasing capacity to meet needs more effectively. Indeed, there was evidence that since the Commission was established, and an increasing profile had been given to many of these issues, some organisations, in recognition of the problems and opportunities, had voluntarily taken steps to work more closely together.
 - The changing nature of the community and, therefore, the changing and potentially more challenging nature of economic and social needs which have to be met, demand that increased collaboration is actively promoted. The report reveals strong awareness about the need for more service co-ordination, building upon the work of the Orthodox Jewish Forum and the Care Forum, and the organisations operating within the residential care sector.

- Specifically social provision for young people is shown to be fragmented and in need of co-ordination. A cross-communal approach is not catered for, alongside support and advice. The Fed's services for children and families are under-resourced. In connection with services for older people, the Report shows that there is insufficient day care and domiciliary care provision to meet all needs, and services are operating at or near full capacity. The need for day care services, and residential care for the most frail, is likely to increase in all areas, especially South Manchester, and there is a gap in provision for services for people throughout the community with mental health problems.
 - In addition to achieving greater service co-ordination, the report reveals the need to provide support for organisational capacity building, community planning, inter-organisational collaboration, and information exchange and shared learning.
 - The Report also identifies the continuing problems of securing the active participation of younger people in the management of organisations, and providing leadership to help shape the future direction of the community generally. Views were expressed about how older people can encourage this to change, and how initiatives can be promoted to increase awareness amongst younger people on the range of opportunities available to play an active part in community affairs.
7. The Report indicates increasing evidence of very high, and potentially worrying, levels of economic and social needs being developed within in particular the orthodox community, which has seen very significant growth over the past few years, and which has tended to concentrate in the northern part of the City. There has however been a failure to engage as part of the review many representatives of the orthodox community as was envisaged at the start of the Commission's work. This has been unhelpful in providing a clear and informed assessment of the position, and further consultation with community leaders is essential, alongside discussions with public sector agencies, before a clear strategy and an action programme can be determined. This is identified as a major priority.
8. One of the key issues for discussion is whether the understandable desire to maintain religious boundaries in the way services are provided is sustainable in practice. The Review Report describes the large number of comparatively small organisations addressing similar needs within the orthodox community, which is seen as

wasteful in terms of human and financial resources. There are also serious questions raised as to whether such organisations have the capacity to address effectively complex needs which require specialist skills and provision, such as mental health needs, child protection, etc. There are concerns too about securing access to funding opportunities. There is on the other hand some evidence of some of the larger mainstream social welfare organisations developing links with the orthodox community, and many people who contributed to the Review expressed the view that that this process of collaboration should be continued and indeed, intensified.

9. Finally, there is the question of leadership. Current structures do not provide a comprehensive oversight of social welfare provision. Some interviewed questioned the relevance and effectiveness of existing structures generally, and most called for the active involvement of more younger people to shape the future direction of the community. The lack of training opportunities for promoting community participation by younger people was cited as a significant contributory factor.

MODELS FOR FUTURE CHANGE

10. The Report identifies options for re-organising the planning, co-ordination, leadership and commissioning of welfare provision within the community. A number of requirements are also shown if problems are to be mitigated, including the need to develop a community-wide strategy to deal with the full range of issues affecting social welfare and younger people. A new focus should also be given on renewing and enhancing existing structures.
11. The choices facing the community are broadly to either to allow change to take place naturally, which is described as the " Organic Change " model, or actively promote change in structures. Passive change would take place in the absence of leadership, without any strategic planning or coordination. This approach not only runs the risk of need not being met, but also services declining in both quality and standards. New funding opportunities would remain under-exploited, and there would be limited capacity to achieve shared learning or efficiencies.
12. Active promotion of change can take two forms. A Single Provider Model, where only one organisation provides services, and the Pluralist Model, which promotes an umbrella body to support a wider and diverse network of communal organisations. The former would be radical in the extreme, enforcing mergers which are likely to be expensive and operationally difficult, without guaranteeing either efficiencies or significant improvement in services to meet

present or future needs. The latter model would encourage diversity of provision while at the same time develop a strengthened capacity to share learning and training, reduce overheads, support co-ordination and community planning. While individual organisations would retain their own identities, there would be an absolute requirement to create a strong leadership focus to ensure the supporting infrastructure was both in place, and deliver the outcomes which were being sought. The new focus could also assume responsibility for driving the creation of a new Leadership Academy which some respondents considered essential to secure the active participation of younger people, alongside improved marketing about the range of volunteering opportunities available, more flexibility about volunteering roles, and improved mentoring.

KEY ISSUES FOR DEBATE

13. The Commission is anxious to promote the widest possible debate within the wider community. On the issues raised in the review report.
14. There is not in their view a do nothing option. The report has demonstrated a number of areas for improvement which is essential if the Community is to continue to flourish in the future. Of the different new models proposed the obvious option for particular consideration is what is described as the "Pluralist" model, which seems to reflect best the position of the wider community at the present time.
15. A number of other issues are highlighted where debate could be promoted.
 - The need to identify those people who are representative of all parts of the community with the commitment and credibility to play an active part in new leadership structures.
 - The need to build greater trust and awareness within the wider community about the need to develop greater levels of collaboration between the many agencies serving different parts of the community. This will require effective leadership from all parts of the community and an acceptance that the principle of collaboration is supportable.
 - The need to secure the active involvement of public agencies in the way self-sustaining communities are developed.
 - The need to support the development of new organisations to meet needs in the South Manchester area.

- The need to create a new focus on younger people and an improved capacity for volunteering and leadership.

Comments on these issues and the Report generally are requested by the end of April, 2006.

Comments should be sent, marked private and confidential to:

Sir Howard Bernstein
Chief Executive
Manchester City Council
Town Hall
Manchester M60 2LA
Or e-mail h.bernstein@manchester.gov.uk