



To:
Councillor Will Evans
Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities

Please ask for: **Scrutiny**
Gofynnwch am:
Scrutiny Office **01792 637314**
Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrchol:
e-Mail **scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk**
e-Bost:
Date **30 November 2017**
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Community Cohesion and Hate Crime Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities following the meeting of the Working Group on 14 November 2017.

Dear Cllr Evans

The Community Cohesion and Hate Crime Scrutiny Working Group met on 14 November to look at the work to support and promote community cohesion and tackle issues around hate crime. This letter provides you with feedback from that meeting.

We would like to thank you, Jane Whitmore, Paul Thomas and Duncan Cahill of South Wales Police for attending to present the report and answer questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

Whilst the Working Group found the meeting informative and interesting, it did have some concerns and we would like to make the following comments:

- We heard that this is a developing area of work and that a partnership approach is very important.
- We also heard that there is an issue around how we tackle problems and bring communities together.
- We expressed our concerns about the reporting of hate crime in the media and on social media. We were particularly concerned about the Evening Post and other local newspapers reporting of hate crime and tensions within communities which could in turn encourage some members of the public to deliberately cause trouble. We would like closer working with local media to encourage more neutral reporting of these issues. We were informed that this is happening and that locally the relationship with the media is improving but that there is not much we can do nationally. We heard that it is very difficult to regulate social media. We feel that education is key to this.

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- The Panel were informed that the police are looking at different ways to obtain tension indicators for hate crime so that they can understand what is going on better. A piece of work needs to be undertaken to join up the information coming in. Councillors can feed into the process by contacting their Police Community Officers (PCOs).
- We had concerns about PCOs working in certain areas as people do not know who they are and what their role is.
- We were pleased to hear that Welsh Government is providing funding to seven organisations. We would like to know how effective these organisations are. Funding does not appear to be filtering down to a local level.
- The Working Group felt there is not enough community cohesion training and training sessions and one and a half hours are not long enough to cover everything that should be covered.
- The Council provides training on specifics but in terms of community cohesion the Working Group suggests we look again at our equalities training. We will share the learning we have from other areas with you and relevant officers.

Following the meeting, we discussed progress and made the following conclusions:

- We feel that the Hate Crime Strategy is a fairly robust framework and a good strategy.
- We felt that there is a lot of work to do on community cohesion as there is no overarching direction or strategy.
- Swansea's definition of community cohesion focusses too much on the crime element. We would like to see a better balance.
- We will be recommending to the Scrutiny Programme Committee that a further meeting of the Working Group be held in six months to focus on community cohesion, as we are concerned about the lack of a plan / strategy for this aspect. We think it would be helpful if the Community Cohesion Coordinator attends the meeting when it reconvenes in six months.
- We feel that community cohesion is a possible future scrutiny inquiry topic or matter which needs to be picked up by the relevant Policy Development and Delivery Committee.

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome any further comments on any of the issues raised however **we do not expect you to provide a formal response.**

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT KING
CONVENER, COMMUNITY COHESION AND HATE CRIME SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP
CLLR.ELLIOTT.KING@SWANSEA.GOV.UK