

RED 1 JANUARY 2002

RACE EQUALITY DIGEST

Occasional briefing paper produced by Race Equality West Midlands for race equality councils and partnerships on issues of race relations.

Copies are available on www.rewm.org or from Race Equality West Midlands, St Swithun's Institute, The Trinity, Worcester WR1 2PN

Tel: 01905-29283 Fax: 01905-29317

© 2002 Race Equality West Midlands

COMMUNITY COHESION, BRADFORD, BURNLEY AND OLDHAM

Four significant reports

Race Equality West Midlands summarises below the key data relating to the National Community Cohesion Report, Sir Herman Ouseley's report on Bradford and the reports on Burnley and Oldham, which examine the immediate and underlying causes of the inter-communal violence and damage to property that occurred in spring and early summer 2001 in those northern towns.

The reports are significant in radically altering the national race relations agenda. Henceforth, the official promotion of ethnic diversity is likely to be tempered by a consideration of the need to promote community cohesion and prevent social fragmentation.

This has important implications for the work of race equality councils and partnerships, which, even after the constitutional changes proposed in 1989, retain, as one of their objects, the goal of promoting good relations between people of different racial groups.

While the national report makes no specific reference to the kind of organisation that might be required to promote local race equality work and community cohesion, all three local reports deal in some way with this issue. Their proposals are summarised under the subheading *Implications for race equality councils and partnerships*.

Race equality council and partnership members and staff are encouraged to read all four reports (or the digest below) to familiarise themselves with developing ideas of community cohesion and the changing role of local race equality work and organisation.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY COHESION REPORT

1.1 Report Title

Community Cohesion: a report of the Independent Review Team

1.2 Context

Following the spring and early summer 2001 disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, resulting in destruction of property and attacks on the police, and involving people from different cultural backgrounds, the Home Secretary set up a Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT). Chaired by Ted Cante, the CCRT sought the views of local residents and community leaders in the affected towns and other parts of England on issues that needed to be addressed to bring about social cohesion.

1.3a Location

Birmingham, Bradford, Burnley, Leicester, Oldham and Southall.

1.4 Chair of Panel

Ted Cante

1.5 Panel members

Bob Abberley, Ahtsham Ali, Ted Cante, Dave Hey, Daljit Kaur, Humera Khan, Bob Purkiss, Andrew Rowe, Darra Singh, Mohammed Taj, Baroness Udin.

Advisors: Dr Zubaida Haque, Michael Briggs

1.6 Date of issue

28 November 2001 to Home Office Ministerial Committee, published December 2001.

1.7 Funded by

Home Office

1.8 Terms of Reference

(i) To obtain the views of local communities, including young people, local authorities, voluntary and faith organisations, in a number of representative multi-ethnic communities, on the issues that need to be addressed in developing confident, active communities and social cohesion, and (ii) to identify good practice and to report this to the Ministerial Group, and also to identify weaknesses in the handling of these issues at local level.

1.9 Core concept

Community Cohesion. This concept is central to the report and its implications are explored at some length in Chapter 3 and Appendix C. Following Forest and Kearns, the domains of community cohesion are described as common values and a civic culture, social order and social control (involving an absence of conflict and incivility and a tolerance of difference), social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities (harmonious economic and social development, common standards, redistribution of public finances and opportunities, equal access to services and welfare benefits and acknowledgement of social obligations), social networks and social capital and place attachment and identity (p. 13). Community cohesion is about helping micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole. Divided communities need to develop common goals and a shared vision (p.70).

1.10 Main findings

While conscious of the existing physical segregation of housing estates and inner city areas, the team were surprised at the depth of polarisation of other aspects of daily living, with separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks. This separation resulted in people living parallel lives seeming not to touch at any point. With so little contact between communities, it was easy to see how ignorance could be exploited by extremists. There was a widespread failure running through most institutions, including voluntary organisations and political parties, to debate the issues raised by polarisation and to find solutions to it. A plethora of community initiatives with a baffling array of outcomes, boundaries, timescales and other conditions contributed still further to the divisiveness and perception of unfairness. The promotion of cross-cultural contact and community cohesion was rarely valued as an end in itself.

The team concluded that there was an urgent need to promote community cohesion and a greater sense of citizenship based on common principles. There should be a well-resourced national debate, influenced by younger people, leading to the development of an *infrastructure* that gave younger people a voice in democratic activity. A more coherent policy on education, housing, regeneration, employment, etc, should be based on a new concept of citizenship. To combat fear and ignorance stemming from lack of contact, each area should prepare a local community cohesion plan involving the promotion of cross-cultural contact, understanding and respect, and the 'busting' of myths. To ensure action ensues from the report, a new Community Cohesion Task Force should be established to oversee the development of local community cohesion strategies and the other proposals made.

1.11 Recommendations

The report contained 67 proposals (to be undertaken by a range of agencies) under the following headings: peoples and values, political and community leadership, political organisations, strategic partnerships, regeneration initiatives and funding, integration and segregation, younger people,

education, community organisations, disadvantaged and disaffected communities, policing, housing, employment, the press and media.

The attention of the press has focused on the proposal that church and faith leaders should voluntarily limit the faith intake in independent and state sector school, by offering at least 25 per cent of places to other faith or denominations in order to ensure a better mix of cultures or ethnicities. This seems to lend official support to criticism of the government's policy of creating more faith and specialist schools as potentially divisive.

The list of recommendations serves as a comprehensive and valuable checklist for current race equality council intervention but perhaps significantly, there is no explicit reference to the role that local race equality councils might play in the agenda proposed.

1.12 **Implications for race equality councils and partnerships**

Race equality councils and partnerships might have a significant contribution to make in the following areas:

- preparation of the proposed local plan to improve community cohesion;
- preparation of a communication strategy to enable community cohesion plans to be articulated, updated and translated into action;
- approach to recruitment and career progression in major key agencies, including the political parties;
- provision of diversity education and training for all key agencies, including the political parties;
- tackling the problem of mono-cultural community facilities;
- opposition to 'sweetheart deals' and 'back-home politics';
- projects to foster community cohesion, and in particular those that attempt to address the need of younger people in integrated settings;
- frank and honest local analyses of the nature of the separation of ethnic communities;
- contribution to local schools' citizenship curriculum (compulsory subject from September 2002).

1.13 **Length:** 78 pages

1.14 **Website:** www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/racism

BRADFORD REPORT

2.1 Report Title

Community Pride not prejudice, making diversity work in Bradford

2.2 Context

Sir Herman Ouseley's report identifies growing racial, ethnic and religious divisions between the population of Bradford and the need to tackle the situation with strong leadership and a unifying vision. The report is unique in having reached its conclusions prior to the April 2001 outbreak of violent interethnic disturbances and the destruction of property in the district. As the first of the four reports, it has been influential in setting the new race and ethnic relations agenda of 'bringing communities together'.

2.3a Location

Bradford (West Yorkshire)

2.3b Ethnic breakdown

Total population (1991): 475,450; 16 per cent ethnic minority; 398,300 white, 48,950 Pakistani, 3,900 Bangladeshi, 5,850 black, 12,600 Indian, 5,850 other. In 2001, the total population is estimated as 480,800 of which 20 per cent is ethnic minority (14 per cent Pakistani).

(These figures are taken from the Bradford District Census Information (population estimates and forecasts) at www.bradford.gov.uk. They do not form part of the Bradford report.)

2.4 Chair of Race Review Team

Sir Herman Ouseley

2.5 Race Review Team members

Sofia Akhtar; Insp Martin Baines; John Baker; Frank Hanley; Nasfia Hussain; Rukhsana Kauser; Dilshad Khan; Sir Herman Ouseley; Professor Jenny Pearce; Dr Donna Pankhurst; Qudrat Shah; Beatrice Williams.

2.6 Date of issue

July 2001

2.7 Sponsored by

Bradford Vision (a partnership including Bradford Council, West Yorkshire Police, Bradford University, Bradford, Keighley and Shipley Colleges, Bradford University Health Authority, Bradford Breakthrough, Yorkshire Forward and voluntary and faith organisations).

2.8 Terms of reference

- (i) To identify issues of shared concern and understanding in order to facilitate the building of bridges between communities where they do not exist and to foster and strengthen them where they are weak;
- (ii) to identify those issues that cause conflict and lead to polarisation between individuals and communities on the grounds of race, culture and religion, and suggest methods for resolution;
- (iii) to identify methods of working that will assist key institutions in the public, private and voluntary sectors, including faith organisations, to create ownership and responsibility in promoting greater understanding and respect between communities;
- (iv) to consider whether a racial equality organisation is needed within the District and, if so, to identify the role, structure and remit of such an organisation.

2.9 Core concept

Community fragmentation along social, cultural, ethnic and religious lines; self-segregation. While the report recognises the mutually re-inforcing links between self-segregation in housing, education and jobs, it singles out education, in particular the educational curriculum, as a significant area for policy intervention to prevent ‘fragmentation’.

2.10 Main findings

The report draws heavily on the views of local people; individuals from different communities, voluntary organisations, local and regional employers, public services and young people and the vulnerable and disaffected, whose opinion is rarely heard. Ostensibly, it provides a long list of their concerns with the disclaimer that they have not emanated from the review team. The comments appear, nevertheless, to have been selected carefully, and some of the race review team’s recommendations are based on them, indicating a degree of concurrence or approval, at least. This chosen method of using the diverse opinions of local people to underpin the report also gives the impression that it is somewhat loosely and casually structured.

The comments criticise community leaders who are seen as ‘self-styled’ and deliberately retaining the segregated status quo to stay in power. Different communities, it is said, seek to protect their identities and cultures by discouraging and avoiding contact with other communities and institutions. The self-segregation that exists is driven by fear of others, the need for safety from harassment and violent crime and the belief that it is the only way to retain faith and cultural identity. The white community perceive mono-cultural religious leaders as the advocates of segregation. Regeneration processes force communities and neighbourhoods to bid against each other for scarce resources, thus creating division, resentment and competition based on a ‘deprivation deficit model’, eg ‘our area is more dreadful than yours’. The views expressed are classified under a number of different heads, including discrimination, deprivation, lack of interaction, exclusion from decision-making, the local economy and labour market, policing, education and young people.

Ouseley's argument is that the once prosperous district of Bradford has suffered economic decline and that there are growing racial, ethnic, religious and class divisions among its population. The social divisions are accompanied by various fears. People are unable to talk openly and honestly about social problems either within or between communities because they fear repercussions or victimisation. Possible public and media criticism has led to a fear of leading and managing change. Wrong-doing goes unchallenged because of the fear of being labelled racist. Gang culture and the illegal drugs trade are not confronted. People are not prepared to face up to the negative effect on social integration of all white and all Muslim schools.

Relationships between different communities are deteriorating. White people feel their needs are neglected, while those of Muslims, in particular Pakistanis, are prioritised. Members of the Muslim community believe that Islamophobia and racism are blighting their lives and that they are being treated unfairly by decision-makers. They tend to stay together, retain a strong culture, religious affiliation and identity, and live in self-contained communities, maintaining strong links with Pakistan. The different ethnic groups are segregating themselves and retreating into 'comfort zones' made up of people like themselves. Their children go to separate schools.

New initiatives are needed to further social inclusion, eliminate institutional discrimination, promote diversity and highlight the strengths and achievements of the Bradford District. Courageous leadership is essential for instigating and sustaining any necessary change.

Funding regimes have failed to incorporate specific objectives to bring about social interaction and integration. A strongly-held view expressed to the review team was that local leaders had contributed to community division by their reluctance to challenge the perceived norms of allowing social and economic programmes to develop along self-styled cultural and faith-dominated tracks, leading to comfort zones, segregation and ghetto formation. The report recommends that all publicly-financed contracts, sub-contracts, grants and partnerships have explicit conditions and criteria in pursuit of equality. No publicly-financed community project should operate for one single community only.

2.11 **Recommendations**

The report contains eight recommendations as follows. The citizenship component of the National Curriculum should be revised to cover diversity, difference, rights and responsibilities. Bradford should set up a Centre for Diversity Learning and Living (see below). A workplace behavioural model of competing for public service employees should be introduced to improve provision for multi-cultural communities. Independent equality and diversity audits should be undertaken for all public bodies in Bradford. The positive failures of the district should be highlighted in all social and economic work programmes. Equality and diversity conditions should be highlighted in all social and economic work programmes. Equality and diversity conditions should be inserted in all contracts involving public funding (see above). Schemes should be developed to encourage community integration, harnessing

the abilities of all sections in pursuit of a strategy for the achievement of economic prosperity for all. A leadership and community programme should be mounted to convince people of the benefits to be derived from Bradford's cultural diversity.

In general, the emphasis of the recommendations lies in measures to combat communities' self-segregation through various policy initiatives, most of which operate at an educational, cultural, ideological or attitudinal level. The exception is the recommendation relating to contract compliance, requiring the receipt of public money to be conditional on measures to promote integration.

2.12 **Implications for racial equality councils and partnerships**

Section 14.14 of Sir Herman Ouseley's report is dedicated to the term of reference relating to whether a racial equality organisation is needed in Bradford and, if so, the form it should take.

The report proposes a new customised Centre for Diversity, Learning and Living for Bradford, with a council of members drawn from all principal stakeholders in the community, including private employers, public service bodies and voluntary organisations, which would annually elect a management committee and appoint appropriate staff.

The Centre would manage a set of activities to include an Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, an Institute for Inter-Cultural Studies, a Best Practice and Best Value Unit (to provide an independent equality and diversity audit of public services, and plan future policies and programmes) and Casework, Investigative and Support Services (to undertake advice, guidance and advocacy in cases of discrimination and racial harassment). Although the report refers to the demise of the former Bradford Race Equality Council and the differences of opinion over its closure, it appears to recognise the need for a local organisation to undertake racial equality work.

The proposed Centre emphasises educational and cultural approaches to equality and diversity, but its functions in relation to public sector policy development, community involvement and casework, bear an uncanny resemblance to those of race equality councils. It might easily be concluded that the proposal makes the case for a super-racial equality council, with resources and powers to enable it to intervene effectively in the city's race relations. If any criticism is to be made of the proposal, it must lie in the emphasis placed on educational and attitudinal approaches, and the correspondingly weaker attention paid to the key issues of housing and employment.

2.13 **Length:** 47 pages

2.14 **Website:** www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/racism

BURNLEY REPORT

3.1 Report Title

Burnley Task Force

3.2 Context

The Burnley Task Force was set up to produce an action plan for the future of Burnley, following a community conference arranged by Burnley Borough Council to discuss the underlying, as well as immediate, causes of the disturbances that took place in parts of Burnley during the weekend of 23rd to 25th June 2001. (Skirmishes broke out between white and Asian youths when a gang of white men attacked and seriously injured an Asian taxi driver on his way home from work. The following night at least 200 people took to the streets and a public house was subsequently petrol bombed by Asian Youths.)

3.3a Location

District of Burnley (East Lancashire)

3.3b Ethnic breakdown

Total population, 91,930 (est); 7 per cent ethnic minority; 4,500 Pakistani, 400 Bangladeshi, 500 other (figures provided in appendix to the report).

3.4 Chair of Task Force

Lord Tony Clarke

3.5 Task Force members

Iman Jehan Ali, Mozaquir Ali, Shopna Begum, Stuart Caddy, Nasir Elyas, Janice France, Reverend John Goddard, Lord Anthony Clarke of Hampstead, Marcus Johnstone, Sakeena Khan, John Knowles, Alick Mitchell, Charolotte O'Horo, Brenda Rochester, Gillian Taylor, Zaffar Ali (all apart from chair, drawn from Burnley, and including a number of young people).

3.6 Date of issue

11 December 2001

3.7 Funded by

Burnley Borough Council / Home Office?

3.8 Terms of reference

(i) To consider the events of June 23rd to 25th 2001, examine underlying causes and produce a detailed action plan proposing ways of addressing issues raised by the disturbances and (ii) to identify clearly within the action plan

recommendations that it wishes to be taken forward by other agencies, organisations and partnerships.

3.9 **Core concept**

The report is written by a local task force with the primary purpose of justifying in readily understandable terms, the accompanying practical action plan. In this sense, it eschews social scientific concepts and comes across as somewhat atheoretical in content. A useful distinction, nevertheless, is drawn between the immediate trigger of violent conduct and criminal damage and the deeper reasons behind Burnley's racial and ethnic division. In relation to the latter, the report makes extensive use of the concept of *segregation* in housing, education, employment and other social contexts, in a general situation of long-term decline. The absence of opportunity for white and ethnic minority groups to mix results in high levels of prejudice and distrust.

3.10 **Main findings**

The Burnley Task Force's primary emphasis was on producing an action plan to tackle the housing crisis, poverty and deprivation, ethnic divisions and distrust in Burnley, while at the same time ensuring maximum participation and ownership of the plan by local people, including youth, from all major ethnic groups. The report deals with the violent events of 23rd June to 25th June 2001, concluding that they were caused originally by criminal acts followed by deliberate attempts on the part of both white and Asian groups to turn the violent acts into racial confrontation.

The task force takes the view, however, that the disturbances needed to be explained at a more profound level, which it proceeds to do especially in sections on housing and community relations that show how the respective communities' misunderstandings of, and myths about, each other have arisen.

Burnley has a large surplus of housing, much of it in a poor state and unfit for occupation. Ethnic minorities with larger families are housed in smaller, older, privately-owned property, inadequate for their needs, while demand from whites for social housing is falling. The physical and environmental decline associated with both these processes has created a context in which disadvantaged communities feel neglected, a situation further exacerbated by the obsolescence of much terraced housing, falling housing prices, and increased vacancy rates. Many residents, living among derelict and abandoned property and accumulated rubbish, have to endure appalling conditions and are, in effect, trapped, having invested their earnings, time and effort in their homes as house values spiral downwards. There is little chance of moving to a better part of town.

The report concludes that, for many people, the equity in their home is their major source of wealth after a lifetime of work. The collapse of the local housing market has increased social exclusion, threatened social cohesion and made some of the poorest communities even poorer after a decade of economic growth. The social costs – evidenced in the June disturbances – of allowing these trends to continue could well be severe.

The task force is of the view that current levels of funding for housing regeneration and development are inadequate and that local authorities and the Housing Corporation do not have the capacity to deal with the extent of the housing market failure. The task force sees advantages in improving the Asian community's access to social rented housing.

In regard to community relations, the report describes how Burnley has developed areas with predominantly minority ethnic communities, centred around places of worship, clothing and food shops, voluntary organisations and their community facilities. There is a perception that these areas are exclusive to Asians, although there is still a high proportion of white residents.

The report repeats the argument that statutory and voluntary organisations have contributed to racial segregation through their employment policies, by colour matching whites to work with whites and Asians to work with Asians. It also mentions the perception by the white community that Local Authority money is spent predominantly in Asian areas, when much of the funding received is geographically restricted and cannot be spent in other areas.

Towns such as Burnley with so much deprivation, the task force believes, face even bigger challenges in bringing about racial harmony. Few opportunities exist for white and minority ethnic groups to mix. The chances of integration outside of the work place are remote. Communities remain separate and segregated, both at home and in the schools, where schools in, or near, predominantly Asian areas are virtually all Asian and, in white areas, virtually all white.

Significant divisions within Asian communities: Pakistani and Punjabi, Pathan and Kashmiri, Bangladeshi, Indian and Chinese, add to the problems of inclusion, representation and political articulation. The task force thinks that, if the Asian communities want to progress, then they have to be honest about the failings of their own communities. The white community, meanwhile, have been influenced by the British National Party, with local by-elections demonstrating a vote for this party of 21 per cent.

The task force observes that there is no single truly multicultural structure in the town, allowing young people from all sections of the community to interact: multicultural structures should be set up on a borough-wide basis as a matter of priority.

3.11 **Recommendations**

The role of the task force was conceived from the outset as a practical one of producing a set of recommendations, the majority of which form a comprehensive local action plan, the delivery of which is to be monitored by the developing Burnley Local Strategic Partnership. The range of issues is considerable and extends well beyond crime, police and community relations issues to wider social and economic problems. Recommendations are made for action with the various agencies expected to act in the following fields: local strategic partnership (2), planning for future disturbances (1), housing (17), community relations (8), community and voluntary sector (3), Burnley Borough Council (7), regeneration (6), Burnley's economy (5), the police (4),

the media (2), education (7), youth and community (12), crime and disorder (5), taxi and private hire industry (3), correspondence with Home Secretary re compensation (1), making a total of 83 recommendations (pp. 11-23).

Housing policy is seen to be of great significance, with Government, the Regional Development Agency and the Housing Corporation being urged to tackle the serious issues of private sector housing conditions and abandonment in Burnley and East Lancashire.

3.12 **Implications for race equality councils and partnerships**

A significant section of the report is devoted to relations between the different ethnic communities living in Burnley, and the dangers of adopting policies that encourage colour matching in service provision. The report also addresses the issue of the funding of race relations work, noting ‘the extremely worrying’ withdrawal of funding for direct race relations work in Burnley by the Commission for Racial Equality, in particular, the decision taken four years previously by the CRE, Burnley Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and Pendle Borough Council to withdraw funding from the Burnley and Pendle Race Equality Council. Support for race relations work in East Lancashire had been reduced from two full time posts with the now-disbanded RECs to no support at all (pp. 47-48).

The task force recommends that a report by the East Lancashire Development Unit on the future of race relations work in the wake of the collapse of the local race equality councils should be responded to positively and urgently and a new strategy developed. The CRE should reconsider its decision to withdraw resources for race relations work in the Borough. The Council should continue to support the Translation Unit and Equality and Access Team, while developing opportunities to encourage more ethnic mixing and multi-cultural initiatives (p. 51). There is a need for a multi-cultural structure to allow all sections of the community to mix with one another.

- 3.13 **Length:** 87 pages in manuscript format plus a further 200 pages of appendices.
- 3.14 **Website:** www.burnleytaskforce.org.uk

OLDHAM REPORT

4.1 Report title

Oldham Independent Review: One Oldham, One Future.

4.2 Context

Following a meeting between the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, and a delegation of local Oldham politicians, council officials, and police officers, an independent inquiry was set up to review the racial attacks, rioting and the activities of the British National Party which took place in Oldham in the run-up to the General Election of 7 June 2001.

4.3a Location

Oldham (Greater Manchester)

4.3b Ethnic Breakdown

Total population: 219,000; 11 per cent ethnic minority; 190,100 white, 14,680 Pakistani, 9,600 Bangladeshi, 1,980 black, 1,620 Indian, 1,020 other.

4.4 Chair of Panel

David Richie

4.5 Panel members

Maqsood Ahmad, Jan Atkinson, Waqar Azmi, Clive Dutton, Dr Zubaida Haque, David Richie, Sir James Sharples.

4.6 Date of issue

11 December 2001.

4.7 Funded by

Home Office

4.8 Terms of reference

- (i) To consider the underlying causes and problems of tension between the communities in Oldham which have given rise to individual and collective acts of violence and disorder over a number of years;
- (ii) to consider, in particular, the responsibility of the statutory agencies in delivering social inclusion and securing the regeneration of the town, and to assess the contribution those agencies, the business community, and the community and voluntary sectors can make to bringing about those ends;
- (iii) to identify and recommend courses and programmes of social action designed to tackle problems at source and rebuild community

confidence. Reporting to: Oldham MBC and Greater Manchester Police and Government.

4.9 Core concept

Social integration, involving respect for cultural diversity but based upon greater degrees of residential, educational and social mixing and a recognition of the need for communication between communities through the medium of English, greater education in cultural awareness, more prosperity, and a safer environment (p. 7). A secondary concept recognised as hindering integration is that of the voluntary *self-segregation* of communities (see p. 4 and p. 9).

4.10 Main findings

The report first examines the industrial history of the town and its dependence on cotton textile production. In the 1960s, labour for the mills was recruited mainly from the Mirpuri area of Pakistan and later from Bangladesh and came to live in particular neighbourhoods of Oldham encouraged by the availability there of cheap housing, shops and other facilities, places for worships and the presence of other mother-tongue speakers sharing the same customs. Simultaneously, white people moved elsewhere to new or larger properties. Patterns of settlement meant that Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and whites simply did not meet one another to any significant degree. The panel was sceptical as to whether communities currently wanted to have much to do with one another, concluding that the main cause for residential segregation were the preferences, both within the indigenous and Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, of people 'to live with their own kind'. The panel felt that the patterns of separate development had to be challenged vigorously.

The report deals thoroughly and in turn with 'segregation' in housing, education, the local economy generally, health, policing, leisure, culture and community interaction, regeneration, governance, and the media. The panel concludes that Oldham lacks strategic direction and any vision for future development and, in particular, has failed to face up to the deep-seated issues of segregation in the town. The report is comprehensive, incisive and hard-hitting as, for example, in its section on governance:

'Since the riots, there has been little evidence of a bi-partisan approach to the future of the town, despite efforts of the current leadership to share more information with the opposition, and offer more participation through the new governance arrangements for local authorities, than had been the case under Labour. There has been no real evidence of the parties coming together to form a strategy for community relations within the town, Above all, the sense of urgency of the present situation, and the need for high profile leadership to guide the town towards a new future has not been at all clear to us'.

4.11 Recommendations

Recommendations relate to all the main sections of the report as follows: housing (12), education (25), employment and economy (10), health (9), policing (17), leisure, culture and community interaction (23), regeneration

(5), governance (18) and media (6), making a grand total of 125. Those relating to housing, education, and the police are possibly the most significant. In regard to housing, the Panel recommends the creation of an Urban Regeneration company by June 2002 to undertake a targeted programme of housing clearance with replacement of some 300 homes a year. (This should be considered in an Oldham context in which almost 9000 privately owned homes are unfit and 13,000 are in need of substantial renovation). In regard to education, the report has provoked controversy on account of the importance it attaches to people from the sub-continent achieving proficiency in English. It also criticises local faith secondary schools (Blue coat, Crompton House and Our Lady's) for having no Muslim pupils, and recommends that 15 to 20 per cent of places be open to pupils of non-Christian background.

4.12 Implications for Race Equality Councils/Race Equality Partnerships

The panel observed that there was no forum in Oldham where people could openly discuss, in an unthreatening environment, the issues of race relations, including the stereotypes and myths about other communities, or be consulted about and involved in decision-making on issues connected with race and diversity. A new multi-agency forum was needed at which frank discussion could be had, good practice learned, and decisions taken, by key individuals on how better understanding could be promoted and communities brought together.

The Local Strategic Partnership would take responsibility for setting up a Race and Diversity Strategy Committee, to be chaired by the leader of the Council, with the Chief Executive and Divisional Commander of Police as members, along with key voluntary and other statutory agencies, including the Oldham Race Equality Partnership, ODACA, the Police Authority and local media. A series of local Race and Diversity Forums, focussed on three or four areas of greatest community tension and including community organisations, local councillors and individuals from the relevant estates, elected by local residents, would nominate representatives to the Race and Diversity Strategy Committee.

To support this work, the Council would appoint a policy officer in an overall co-ordinating role, with community facilitators in the local neighbourhoods seconded from relevant council, police or police authority departments. The overall cost of this arrangement would be in the region of £80,000.

Another proposal is that of 'integration proofing' – the suggestion that every submission/paper/document coming to the Council for a decision would include a specific section entitled 'effects on integration within Oldham'.

4.13 **Length:** 99 pages

4.14 **Website:** www.guardian.co.uk/racism