
Overview and Scrutiny

Promoting a sense of belonging: social cohesion in Lewisham

Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee

November 2012

Membership of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee in 2012-13:

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Councillor Joseph Folorunso (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Jackie Addison

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Chair's Introduction



To be inserted.

Pauline Morrison
Chair of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee

Executive summary

Cohesion and belonging are complex and multifaceted ideas. Both, as words and concepts, are used regularly in Council policy, in committee discussions and in everyday life. However, they may mean very different things to different people. It is also easy to use the term 'groups' in discussions about cohesion and assume that there are cohesive collectives of people who share identities. It is easy to imagine that these 'groups' have common understandings about issues affecting their communities yet evidence submitted to the Committee indicates that this is not necessarily the case. Citizens, individually and in collectives, often view community issues in distinct and diverse ways. Depending on the issues at hand as well as the context, location and history of a question- people living together, working together or studying together might view similar events with entirely different perspectives.

There are many services, activities, events and occasions that play a part in enhancing community cohesion. With this in mind, the Safer & Stronger Communities Select Committee resolved to carry out their review by building on previous community cohesion work in the borough. Their starting place was the work of the 'community cohesion in Lewisham steering group', which was commissioned in 2009 to examine community cohesion locally. Drawing from this work, the Committee was able to narrow the focus of their review on to these key areas:

- Community and civic events
- Citizenship ceremonies
- Local assemblies
- Intergenerational activities

People from many different countries call Lewisham their home and in a myriad different ways they are connected to communities from across the world. An excellent demonstration of this diversity was the celebration of the London 2012 Olympic Games, which saw Lewisham host a popular and successful festival on Blackheath. Central to the event was a big screen showing live Olympic coverage. The organisers report that the event was a major success and in their evidence to the Committee, they spoke about the good-natured competition and sense of community spirit that was brought to life by the celebrations. 'Jamaica, Land We Love' was sung alongside God Save the Queen in the spirit of harmony and people from across the borough, with connections to the world, came together to share in the community spirit and good feeling generated by the summer of sport. It is in the context of inclusion, equal access and celebration that the Committee embarked on this review.

Purpose and structure of review

At the 11th April 2012 meeting of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee, members agreed to carry out a short review into social cohesion in Lewisham. The aim of the review was to gather evidence about Lewisham's approach to promoting cohesion and belonging. The Committee were particularly interested in finding out:

- How the services, activities and campaigns carried out under the headings identified by the community cohesion in Lewisham steering group had promoted social cohesion.
- Whether these had been as effective as they could have been.
- If there had been ways that these could be improved or new approaches that could have been taken.
- What other councils had successfully done to promote cohesion.

An outline of the information required for the review was agreed by the Committee in May 2012 and evidence-taking sessions were held in July and September 2012. Evidence was received from the following:

- Liz Dart (Head of Neighbourhood and Community Development, LBL) and Ade Joseph (Local Assemblies Coordinator, LBL) about the local assemblies programme.
- Lesley Jones (Events Manager, LBL) about the community live site on Blackheath for the Olympics.
- Councillor Peggy Fitzsimmons, Jane Hopkins, Beatrice Scott, Christine Castro and Tessa Pearce about the Positive Ageing Council.
- Lesley Jones (Head of Communications and Community Involvement), Susan Asquith (Community Involvement Manager) and Joy Burnett (Community Involvement Officer) from Lewisham Homes about their community involvement work.
- Martyn Manlow (Registration Manager, LBL), Matthew Spencer (Group Manager, Service Point, LBL), Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services, LBL) about citizenship ceremonies.

The findings from the review are presented in four sections. Each section outlines the evidence provided to the Committee:

1. Local assemblies
2. Community events
3. Citizenship
4. Intergenerational unity

Defining cohesion

The Committee looked at previous research into cohesion during their initial consideration of evidence for the review. Members reviewed the work of the community cohesion in Lewisham steering group, which was set up by the Lewisham Strategic Partnership (LSP) in 2009. This group was commissioned

to carry out research, assess levels of integration and determine which factors had a positive effect on cohesion. The group considered the national and regional context of their work as well as hosting workshops and discussions to develop a local understanding of cohesion and belonging. It was agreed that a cohesive Lewisham could be described as a place where:

1. People feel they belong and are proud to belong.
2. People's differences and similarities are recognised valued and respected.
3. People from all backgrounds have equal life opportunities.
4. People from all backgrounds are able to interact with each other, sharing experiences while developing mutually supportive and positive relationships.
5. People work together, with common values towards a shared vision – in their neighbourhood, workplace, school and in the borough at large.

The group identified a number of factors, which it felt, had positive and negative impacts on cohesion in Lewisham:

Factors having a negative impact on cohesion:

- Intergenerational tensions
- Population churn
- Overall deprivation
- Crime and fear of crime
- Anti-social behaviour

Factors having a positive influence on cohesion:

- Voluntary sector and the level of volunteering
- Community events
- Diversity
- Education and early years providers

In response to the findings of the steering group, the LSP's Stronger Communities Partnership drew up a cohesion delivery plan, which set out three specified outcomes:

- Community cohesion is an underpinning principle in service provision across all sectors,
- There are positive relationships between people from different backgrounds
- The contribution that all communities make to the boroughs quality of life is encouraged and valued.

The Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee resolved to build on this work for their review. Members looked at the range of services currently being delivered by the Council and its partners and decided to focus on local democracy and decision-making; events and celebrations; citizenship and intergenerational collaboration.

The Committee concluded its review and agreed its recommendations in November 2012.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The local assemblies programme should continue in its efforts to engage with a wide cross section of citizens. Using existing channels and links with partner organisations in health, housing and the community and voluntary sector, coordinating groups should work to develop good practice, share ideas and build on their successes.

Recommendation 2:

Following the commissioning of the local assemblies survey in Autumn/Winter 2012, assembly steering groups and assembly chairs should be encouraged to use the information gathered to build on what they do well. Specifically, assemblies should use the feedback explore ideas for developing a sense of belonging in their communities.

Recommendation 3:

Local assembly chairs and coordinating groups should work with organisations representing minority groups in the borough to encourage more local people to get involved in their local assembly and local assembly steering group.

Recommendation 4:

The Council and its partners, including health, housing and community safety should continue to work together to share expertise about events, consultation and community involvement. Publishing and web resources should be shared to maximise the audience for community events.

Recommendation 5:

The 'welcome pack' being developed by Lewisham Homes for new residents should include relevant information about Local Assemblies and other opportunities for residents to become involved in their communities. Furthermore, all local housing partners should be encouraged to include this information in their communications with residents.

Recommendation 6:

Building on the success of the Big Lunch, groups wishing to hold similar community events should be encouraged to make use of public buildings, community spaces, schools and other indoor space (particularly when the weather prevents the event from being held outdoors).

Recommendation 7:

The Mayor should be invited to refresh his letter of welcome to new citizens on behalf of the Council.

Recommendation 8:

All Councillors should be encouraged to attend a citizenship ceremony. Dates of meetings should be made available to Councillors so they can meet with new citizens. Councillors and other local people who have made a difference

in the community should be invited to welcome new citizens by presiding as dignitaries.

Recommendation 9:

Further information should be included in the packs given to new citizens at citizenship ceremonies. The pack should include information about how citizens can get involved in a range of activities in their local area, particularly the local assemblies programme.

Recommendation 10:

An article on citizenship ceremonies should be commissioned for Lewisham life. Where possible, ceremonies should also be promoted in other local media.

Recommendation 11:

The Council and its strategic partners in health and housing should formally recognise the important work of the Positive Ageing Council and of other older people's groups in the borough. In doing so, the Council could mark international older peoples' day on the 1st of October annually. [Link](#)

Recommendation 12:

The Council and its partners should encourage younger and older peoples groups to explore further options for intergenerational activities and initiatives. The Committee has discussed the potential for further scrutiny in this area and will consider further scrutiny of citizenship activities for young people as part of its work programme for 2013/14.

Findings

1. Local assemblies

- 1.1 The 18 ward assemblies provide every neighbourhood in Lewisham with an opportunity to develop a shared vision for their area. Each has agreed on a set of priorities and these have been developed into an action plan to help local people successfully achieve their ambitions for their neighbourhoods. Assembly meetings, events and activities also enable people from different backgrounds to meet, share ideas, deal with local problems and celebrate together.
- 1.2 The Head of Neighbourhood and Community Development was invited to give evidence to the Committee about the role of assemblies in building cohesion. She set out a number of ways in which the programme enables local people to develop a sense of belonging. The Committee heard that the assemblies programme encourages local communities to become more cohesive by:
- Organising celebrations, festivals and carnivals that bring communities together and provide an opportunity for people from different backgrounds to interact.
 - Utilising community facilities, key buildings and public spaces such as parks; connecting local people with their neighbourhoods. Hosting meetings in different places to ensure that these spaces are in frequent use by all sections of the community. Through local assemblies, communities may also look to preserve local landmarks or key buildings.
 - Creating a focal point for activities and shared interests, which might gather citizens around a particular campaign or encourage neighbours to work together to resolve a local issue. Assemblies provide a neutral place for people to debate issues of importance and build on their shared experiences.
 - Recalling history, key events in the past and local memories. Assemblies might preserve local stories and commemorate events of importance.
 - Developing a sense of pride in and care for Lewisham's neighbourhoods, which bolsters a sense of belonging. Assemblies encourage citizens to work together to improve their local area. Officers gave the example of a War Memorial in Grove Park, which the assembly helped to clean and restore. Volunteers worked on the project and the assembly provided funding.

Representation and membership

- 1.3 Evidence provided by officers indicated that the assemblies programme had a positive influence on cohesion in Lewisham. However, members of the Committee were also concerned that formal involvement in assembly activities might not be representative of local populations. Monitoring information collected at meetings indicates that the involvement of Black and minority ethnic citizens is not representative of the local population. However, involvement in the assembly outside of meetings is not routinely monitored. Participation in events, celebrations, other community groups and local projects may well be more representative of the Lewisham population.
- 1.4 Evidence indicates that at each assembly meeting around a third of the participants are newcomers. Some citizens attend only to hear about specific issues or topics they are interested in. There is also a core group of people who are fully involved with setting the assembly's work programme and dealing with local priorities. A steering group of citizens helps to drive each assembly's agenda, consult with members and draw attention to ward priorities.
- 1.5 Members of the Committee were interested to explore new avenues for assemblies, which would encourage participation in local democracy to prosper and grow. Recent work by the Lee Green assembly highlights the role that assemblies can play in focusing local concerns. The assembly worked with officers from the Council to develop proposals for parking in the ward. The issues raised by the assembly required careful consideration by all groups in the local area. Ultimately, through the co-ordinated approach to tackling this difficult local issue members of the assembly were able to change arrangements for parking in Lee Green and feed into the review of borough wide parking policy.
- 1.6 At each assembly meeting attendees are asked to fill in a short survey. At present the survey does not include any questions relating to cohesion and belonging. However, as part of their ongoing improvement work, the assemblies' team decided to commission a more detailed survey, which had the space to include questions about cohesion and belonging. The survey took place in Autumn 2012. Members of the Committee were asked to input into the survey in order that it might provide information for this review or its recommendations. Members were keen to ensure that the questions would give participants the opportunity to express their views about the impact of the assemblies process. It was agreed that once the analysis of the survey had taken place, it would be made available to the Committee.

1.7 Summary

The local assemblies programme fosters a sense of belonging and promotes cohesion by:

- Creating a place for people from different backgrounds to come together, share experiences and develop a shared vision for their locality.
- Involving citizens in local democracy and decision making as well as enhancing the role they play in their neighbourhoods.
- Serving as a focal point for a community, developing a shared identity for neighbourhoods and preserving the use of community facilities.

1.8 Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The local assemblies programme should continue in its efforts to engage with a wide cross section of citizens. Using existing channels and links with partner organisations in health, housing and the community and voluntary sector, coordinating groups should work to develop good practice, share ideas and build on their successes.

Recommendation 2:

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Recommendation 3:

Local assembly chairs and coordinating groups should work with organisations representing minority groups in the borough to encourage more local people to get involved in their local assembly and local assembly steering group.

2. Community events

- 2.1 Communities thrive when they have places to come together and celebrate. Events and activities supported by the Council contribute to cohesion in the borough by creating opportunities for people to meet collectively, share experiences and act in unison. On occasions, people might come together to celebrate and at other times they might gather to grieve, or to recall tragic moments from the past. At a fundamental level, events and activities provide opportunities for citizens to communicate with their neighbours and broaden their understanding of the lives of others. The Council's support for groups wanting to host their own events and celebrations also encourages communities to work together to solve problems, fundraise and reach

agreement about issues of importance. The Council and its partners organise, support or contribute towards the following events:

- Blackheath Fireworks
- Lewisham People's Day
- Big Lunch (including Jubilee for 2012)
- Lewisham Olympic Big Screen for 2012
- New Cross Bursary Award
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- Annual Memorial Service
- Armed Forces Day
- Remembrance Sunday
- Andy Hawkins Memorial Lecture

2.2 Other events include local celebrations to mark national observances, such as Black history month, which celebrates the involvement of Black and minority ethnic communities in British history and culture; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans history month, which celebrates the lives and achievements of the LGB&T community and Carers week, which recognises and upholds the important contribution of carers. There are also many other festivals, small events and exhibitions that the Council supports, advises on or encourages. The list above is not definitive.

2.3 Drawing on the breadth of experience, knowledge and expertise in the Council's Community and Neighbourhood division, officers provided evidence to the Committee about the role of events in creating cohesion and promoting a sense of belonging. The Committee heard that events impact positively on cohesion in the following ways:

Creating opportunities for mass participation: bringing people together to celebrate

2.4 The Blackheath fireworks provide citizens with opportunities for mass participation, bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to enjoy an event alongside each other. The fireworks are the most popular event held in the borough. The event is part of a national celebration but the depth of experience is limited to the enjoyment of a good night out, surrounded by other members of the community and a fantastic fireworks display.

2.5 It is difficult to assess the impact of mass participation. There were approximately 100,000 people at the Blackheath fireworks last year but it would be difficult to quantify the benefits in measureable terms. Anecdotal and documentary evidence suggests that the fireworks are well received and that there is a good level of attendance from a broad cross section of Lewisham's population. Developing a detailed understanding of the events impact on cohesion and belonging would be difficult.

Providing opportunities for people to try new things

- 2.6 People's Day is an annual event, which enables people to get involved with their community and learn more about what happens in their area. There are hundreds of local organisations and thousands of individual performers involved in staging People's Day each year. The programme is put together in partnership with other public sector and many third sector organisations to highlight every aspect of Lewisham life.
- 2.7 People's Day is the most costly event to stage because of the large number of participants and the need to create a safe environment that can cater for the whole community. The depth of experience on offer at this event is clearly much greater than other mass participation events, although it caters for less than a third of the visitors that Blackheath fireworks attracts.

Empowering individuals and communities to deliver their own events

- 2.8 The Big Lunch is a nationwide initiative, launched by the Eden Project aimed at encouraging people across the country to sit down in their own street with their neighbours and have lunch together. Big Lunches can provide participants with the opportunity to meet new people, who they may not otherwise have met, help those who may feel isolated in their homes and they generate a feeling of pride in a local area. A Big Lunch can be anything from a simple gathering of immediate neighbours – in a garden, on the street – through to organising a bigger street party, with food, bunting and music.
- 2.9 Lewisham residents have enthusiastically embraced the concept of the Big Lunch. In 2012 it coincided with the Jubilee celebrations and therefore included an element of celebrating British culture. The last two years have seen very poor weather conditions, which has had an impact on the success of the day. Nonetheless, it remains a very affordable way of encouraging grass roots neighbourhood events with the emphasis on low-key local celebration.

Joining in a nationwide celebration

- 2.10 The events, activities and celebrations around Lewisham Big Screen on Blackheath for the Olympics were planned to enable local residents to join in the national celebration of London hosting the Olympics. The screen itself was the focal point of the event and attracted the most visitors but there was also a funfair, sports and arts activities, stalls and a performance venue in the Spiegel Tent. The Big Screen took place over the entire 17 days of the Olympics. The largest attendance was at the Opening and Closing ceremonies with over 12,000 people attending each.
- 2.11 A number of the performance partners that normally play a role at People's Day hosted events in the Spiegel Tent including an intergenerational tea dance, BSL event, Sing Out! Choirs showcase, youth music and dance showcases etc. The Committee heard that feedback from the Big Screen had

been overwhelmingly positive with residents expressing their gratitude at being able to feel part of London hosting this world event.

Revitalising neighbourhoods: fostering a sense of belonging and place

2.12 Officers from Lewisham Homes' community involvement team presented evidence to the Committee about the Community events sponsored by the organisation. They highlighted the following key points:

- In the past year, almost 3000 Lewisham Homes residents had been involved in nearly 100 community events and activities.
- The organisation had also been developing its work in the area of corporate social responsibility – specifically it had been working to create work experience opportunities with its contractors and its anti-social behaviour diversion activities had been broadened into youth opportunities work.
- The community involvement team had been asked to advise other authorities about good practice.
- The organisation was also working to bring community facilities back into use.
- Residents had initiated many of their own projects, drawing funding from a variety of sources, including Lewisham Homes' community improvement competitive fund.

2.13 Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs), which enable residents of Lewisham homes to engage with the organisation, are supported by the community involvement team. There are currently 31 committees across the borough, though there is a lack of take up in some areas. Where people live in homes that are not represented by a TRA residents can be co-opted onto areas based forums. There are also other mechanisms for residents to make themselves heard:

- Through partnership working

The Committee heard that there was a great deal of co-operation between partner organisations in Lewisham. Lewisham Homes works with the assemblies programme, other landlords in the borough and it has close ties with teams from across the Council.

- Surveys

Lewisham Homes intends to carry out a borough wide survey called 'Get Involved'. It is due to take place in April 2013. The survey will provide listing of all the involvement opportunities available and residents. Respondents will also be able to indicate their interests by returning the survey or by registering online. The survey will also provide existing residents, who are already involved in some aspects of their community with a chance to refresh their interests and to become further involved in their neighbourhood.

- Community events

Inspired by London 2012, residents in Honor Oak organised mini-Olympics with funding from the community improvement competitive fund. The event was designed to break down barriers, deflect stigma from the estate and enable people to get to know their neighbours. A variety of events and activities for people of all ages were designed to bring the community together and dispel the myths surrounding the estate.

- 2.14 The community involvement team also plans to produce a 'Welcome Pack' for new residents to provide information on local TRAs, where applicable, as well as links to the organisation's training programme and involvement opportunities available to residents.

Reflecting on history and joining together in remembrance

- 2.15 The Council supports, funds or coordinates a number of historic and commemorative events each year. The Committee received information about these events and their importance in the borough calendar. Each event has an impact on cohesion and belonging in different ways. Some enable people to remember or to grieve and others celebrate struggle over adversity. However, all provide opportunities for Lewisham's community to come together and make a collective statement about the importance of reflecting on history:

- New Cross Bursary Award

The award was instigated in 2005 in memory of the fourteen young people who died as a result of the fire that took place on 18 January 1981 at 439 New Cross Road. The bursary enables two young people to study, who would otherwise not have had the opportunity.

- Annual Memorial Service

The service was started in the 1950's by the Council as a way in which bereaved families across the borough could come together in grief at an annual event.

- Armed Forces Day

The day is a celebration of the contribution by all those people past and present who have served in the Armed Forces. It takes place at the end of June each year as near as possible to 27 June. This date was chosen as it came a day after the first Victoria Cross was awarded in the 19th century.

- Holocaust Memorial Day

The memorial is held annually on the 27th of January because this is the date Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated in 1945. In dialogue with the Jewish community a small committee, chaired by a Councillor, was set up to plan Lewisham's events from 2001. The committee comprises people of different faiths, representatives from the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education as well as from the local synagogue.

It was decided by the memorial committee to stage a multi-faith service at the synagogue and a theatre production at the Broadway Theatre, comprising

drama, poetry, dancing and singing from pupils from numerous Lewisham's schools to make young people aware of the Holocaust. A launch takes place in one of the schools in November each year.

- Remembrance Sunday

The Council has staged services to mark Remembrance Sunday since the 1920's. Two services and parades take place each Remembrance Sunday, one at the New Cross War Memorial and the other much larger service and parade in Lewisham High Street. It is the Council's opportunity to remember the people from this borough, both from the armed forces and civilians, who have made the ultimate sacrifice in all conflicts over the last century and in current conflicts.

The Council's event coincides with the national service of remembrance in Whitehall. Attendees respectfully stay silent for two minutes from 11 a.m. The passing traffic is stopped by the police. It is a chance for everyone to reflect and remember the debt owed to those service people who did not return or who have been badly injured as a result of conflicts.

- Andy Hawkins memorial lecture

Andy Hawkins was leader of the Council from 1971-1984. He served as an Alderman and then a Councillor from the mid 1950's until 1986. He was given the Freedom of the Borough in 1990. The lecture is held annually in recognition of the enormous impact his service had in shaping the borough.

2.16 Summary

The Council hosts a number of community events. The impact of these events on community cohesion is difficult to quantify in measureable terms. However, the programme enables people from different backgrounds to come together, to celebrate, or to commemorate, and to interact with people from different backgrounds.

Lewisham Homes also has a number of initiatives that are designed to involve residents in decision-making and to enable citizens to drive improvements in their neighbourhoods.

The Council and its partners also support local groups to host their own events. These events bring people together to organise and coordinate. These events do not require a great deal of input from the Council or other large organisations but they can have a significant positive impact on their neighbourhoods.

2.17 Recommendations

Recommendation 4:

The Council and its partners, including health, housing and community safety should continue to work together to share expertise about events, consultation and community involvement. Publishing and web resources should be shared to maximise the audience for community events.

Recommendation 5:

The 'welcome pack' being developed by Lewisham Homes for new residents should include relevant information about Local Assemblies and other opportunities for residents to become involved in their communities. Furthermore, all local housing partners should be encouraged to include this information in their communications with residents.

Recommendation 6:

Building on the success of the Big Lunch, groups wishing to hold similar community events should be encouraged to make use of public buildings, community spaces, schools and other indoor space (particularly when the weather prevents the event from being held outdoors).

3. Citizenship ceremonies

- 3.1 Citizenship ceremonies are a statutory duty for local authorities, which Lewisham has embraced. Prospective citizens are required to swear an oath of allegiance to the United Kingdom before they can be formally accepted as British. Regular ceremonies are held in the Council's civic suite to enable applicants to take this oath. The occasion also provides to opportunity to formally welcome or re-connect new citizens to the community. At each ceremony, there are approximately 40 new citizens, along with their children and guests. Officers from the registration service ensure that participants are made to feel welcome and that individual circumstances and cultural differences are respected. New citizens are also encouraged to become involved in the ceremony and to mix with other new citizens. Positive feedback from attendees and the continued popularity of Lewisham's ceremonies indicate that the service is performing well.

Welcoming new citizens

- 3.2 New citizens are given a welcome pack, which contains formal information from the home office, details about how to apply for a British passport, a welcome letter from the Mayor, information about the union flag and a Lewisham pin badge. A dignitary attends the ceremony to welcome the new citizens on behalf of the local authority and to present certificates. Local Councillors, the Mayor and other well-known people in the borough, including Sybil Phoenix OBE, often take on this role. Other notable dignitaries in the past have included Terry Waite and the Registrar General.
- 3.3 As part of the proceedings, the dignitary is invited to give a speech. Dignitaries come from all over the world, and some tell of their experience of arriving in the UK with limited resources and knowledge of the country. They talk about the contribution they have made to the community, including serving as Mayor of the Borough, becoming local councillors and in some instances even receiving recognition from the Queen. New citizens are able to see at first hand that people from all backgrounds have opportunities to succeed.

- 3.4 Dignitaries usually give some background information about Lewisham and encourage the new citizens to join in the day-to-day life of their community. They also ask new citizens to and take pride in the borough and to use their skills for the benefit of their community. On occasion choirs from local schools are invited to lead the national anthem and sing other appropriate songs. Schoolchildren also learn about citizenship at school so it gives them an opportunity to gain an understanding about nationality and the citizenship ceremony process. This creates further links with the local area and builds on the positive experience of community for new citizens.

Symbols of belonging and national identity

- 3.5 The ceremony is usually held in the Council Chamber, which is dressed in red, white and blue decorations for the occasion. The union flag and a portrait of the Queen are also on display. New citizens are invited to join in singing of the national anthem and as part of the ceremony, they are asked to affirm their allegiance to the United Kingdom. At every ceremony, three volunteers are asked to come forward to read a verse each of a short poem about the Union flag, celebrating Britain and reaffirming the new citizens' allegiance to their new community.

Becoming British

- 3.6 The letter from the home secretary to new citizens reads:

As a full and equal citizens I know that you will help to make the United Kingdom a more prosperous, generous and open society. A society in which we recognise and respect each other's cultures and faiths against a background of democracy, law and tolerance... There is much that is good in British society. And together, working as a community, we can make it even better.'

(Message from the home secretary 2012)

- 3.7 People of all nationalities, from many different backgrounds, interact with each other before, during and after the ceremony to share experiences. At the ceremony, when the new citizens are called to come forward to receive their certificates, their country of birth is mentioned and people often seek out other citizens from their home country to talk to after the ceremony. After everyone has received their certificates, they are asked to congratulate the people around them for becoming British. Officers informed the Committee that this is an important, often moving, moment for new citizens.
- 3.8 Due to the openness, efficiency and quality of Lewisham's offer, people from across London come to the borough to have their citizenship ceremony. Therefore, borough specific information may not be directly applicable to participants at ceremonies. Nonetheless, citizenship ceremonies provide the Council and its partners with an opportunity to tap into an enthusiastic new resource. New citizens may bring skills and experience from different cultures, which might be of benefit to their neighbourhood or local community.

3.9 Summary

Lewisham has embraced the idea of citizenship ceremonies and the service is proving popular with new citizens from across the city.

At each ceremony, there is a local dignitary, who formally welcomes new citizens on behalf of the borough.

The ceremony incorporates the Union flag, music by British composers, references to the monarchy and singing of the national anthem.

Ceremonies provide an opportunity for new citizens to hear about the good work happening in Lewisham.

3.10 Recommendations

Recommendation 7:

The Mayor should be invited to refresh his letter of welcome to new citizens on behalf of the Council.

Recommendation 8:

All Councillors should be encouraged to attend a citizenship ceremony. Dates of meetings should be made available to Councillors so they can meet with new citizens. Councillors and other local people who have made a difference in the community should be invited to welcome new citizens by presiding as dignitaries.

Recommendation 9:

Further information should be included in the packs given to new citizens at citizenship ceremonies. The pack should include information about how citizens can get involved in a range of activities in their local area, particularly the local assemblies programme.

Recommendation 10:

An article on citizenship ceremonies should be commissioned for Lewisham life. Where possible, ceremonies should also be promoted in other local media.

4. Intergenerational work

4.1 Communities can only be successful and cohesive if the concerns and cares of all citizens are understood and respected. The Committee heard that intergenerational tension has a corrosive effect on cohesion and the desire to belong may be seriously undermined by fear and misunderstanding between groups. The Committee received evidence from the Positive Ageing Council (PAC), which works to support older people and develop mutual respect and understanding between generations.

4.2 The Committee considered the PAC's annual report as part of the review. Members of the PAC steering group were also invited to share their expertise

about intergenerational dialogue with the Committee. The group informed the Committee that their aim when working across generations is to harness the wisdom and experience of older people and the enthusiasm and ambition of young people in order to improve services for all citizens. The group aims to promote understanding between groups and combat negative stereotypes.

4.3 As part of their intergenerational work members of the group have been active in addressing anti-social behaviour on public transport. Working with Transport for London, the PAC helped to design a marketing campaign, which encourages people using public transport to show consideration to others. This work not only benefits older people it also serves to make public transport safer and more efficient for people of all generations. The group has continued to work with transport providers to deal with issues and concerns as they arise.

4.4 The PAC also works with young people's groups, including the Young Mayor's team, to disseminate information about intergenerational best practice to schools. They use a variety of different approaches to encourage good citizenship on transport and to build links between generations in neighbourhoods and communities. Through its work, the group has found that older and younger people often enjoy meeting each other and sharing their experiences. In order to facilitate communication between people of different ages the PAC arranges regular opportunities for people from different generations to interact. In the past, these events have included:

- A day trip to Brighton with the PAC and a group of young people.
- Christmas Lunch, prepared by the Young Mayor's Team.
- Christmas celebration for the volunteers at Seniors Club with entertainment provided by the Young Mayor's Team.
- Table top discussions

4.5 The events and activities organised by the PAC help to improve understanding between older and younger people by facilitating discussion, providing safe spaces for ideas to be shared and by demonstrating that both groups share common ground. Evidence presented to the Committee shows that both young and old have experiences, ideas, ambitions and hopes for the future to share. The Committee heard that the combined wisdom, creative energy, experience and positivity of both generations can be used to break down barriers, encourage innovation and find solutions to shared problems.

4.6 Recommendations

Recommendation 11:

The Council and its strategic partners in health and housing should formally recognise the important work of the Positive Ageing Council and of other older people's groups in the borough. In doing so, the Council could mark international older peoples' day on the 1st of October annually. [Link](#)

Recommendation 12:

The Council and its partners should encourage younger and older peoples groups to explore further options for intergenerational activities and initiatives. The Committee has discussed the potential for further scrutiny in this area and will consider further scrutiny of citizenship for young people as part of its work programme for 2013/14.

Monitoring and further scrutiny

- The results of the local assemblies' survey should be presented to the Committee for scrutiny.
- The Committee will consider further scrutiny on the role of citizenship education as part of its work programme for 2013/14.
- The Committee will consider further scrutiny of Lewisham's interaction with hard to reach groups as part of its work programme for 2013/14. This work might include scrutiny of approaches to the engagement of newly arrived residents in the borough in the democratic process
- A further update on this review will be scheduled for the 2013/14 municipal year.

Sources

Citizenship Ceremonies: [link](#)

Events in Lewisham: [link](#)

International day of older persons: [link](#)

Positive Ageing Council annual report (2011/12): [link](#)