

Panel Report 11 December 2001



To the people of Oldham, whose warmth and generous welcome to us is matched by our confidence and faith in their future.















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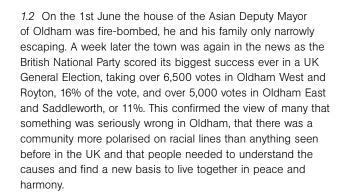
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INTRODUCTION David Ritchie, Chairman, Oldham Independent Review

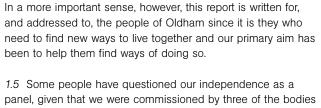
For three days in late May 2001 the eyes of the nation, and of a sizable part of the world, were on Oldham. The town whose main historic claim to fame was that it was once cotton spinning capital of the world was thrust into the limelight for the less worthy reason that it was the scene of the worst racially motivated riots in the UK for fifteen years. Every news bulletin was dominated by events in Oldham, for once eclipsing Northern Ireland as a story of inter-community tensions and disorder. British and International media camped out in the town, turning the Civic Centre car park into a forest of TV masts and dishes, with reports from Glodwick dominating the headlines and the pages of analysis inside the broadsheets.



1.3 The fact that disturbances broke out soon afterwards in Bradford, Leeds, Burnley and other northern towns did not reduce the significance of events in Oldham. If anything, it reinforced the need to develop an understanding of the town, what made it different from some areas which did not suffer disorder, what were the similarities with those which did, and whether there were issues of general application as well as those specific to the town. On 14th June, eight days after the General Election, the Home Secretary met a delegation from the town to discuss the issues and in the course of the meeting he asked them, and they agreed, to set up an independent review of what had happened and what needed to be put right. Home Office Minister Angela Eagle subsequently made two visits to the town to see at first hand what had happened, and to meet some of the people most involved in developing community relations within Oldham. At the invitation of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, Greater Manchester Police and the Greater Manchester Police Authority I was appointed to Chair the Independent Review on 18th July and the remaining panel

members (full list at Appendix 2) were appointed by 6th August.

1.4 We are submitting this report in a formal sense to the Council, the Police and the Police Authority, since they commissioned the Review, with a copy to the Home Secretary since there are many recommendations relevant to Government.



panel, given that we were commissioned by three of the bodies whose role we would be examining, and that officials of those three bodies were involved in supporting us. We can understand those concerns, but we reject them unequivocally. Our funding was provided by the Home Office. To supplement it, we did draw on staffing support from the commissioning organisations as well as from the Government Office for the North West, but the whole of our team were fully aware that, during the time they were seconded to us, they worked for us and not for any other organisation. Only one of our team, in any event, had had senior level involvement in any of the three commissioning organisations and she was only involved in the initial, setting up, phase of our operation.

1.6 This report represents our conclusions after four months or so of work, during which I am confident that the panel have grappled effectively with the issues confronting Oldham, and have reached a good understanding of how the town works. Our first decision was to open a drop-in centre in the Spindles Shopping Centre, right in the heart of Oldham, to enable members of the public to give us their views. We had a team of interviewers available during shop opening hours to take notes of people's views, and between first opening the shop at the beginning of August and closing, as demand dropped off, on 19th October we interviewed a total of 915 people. Where necessary, we had interpretation service available. In addition, panel members clocked up around 200 meetings with individuals or organisations in the town and many other informal discussions. We made a small number of visits outside Oldham to see how certain issues were handled elsewhere.

1.7 Part way through our work, the terrible events of the 11th September took place and there was real anxiety in Oldham about the likely effects of that on the attitudes of racists in the town, and also the effects of the subsequent intervention in Afghanistan. There was heightened tension, there was damage to a Mosque in the town, and some attacks on individuals took place which seemed to have been triggered by world events, and in which local Asian people were treated as scapegoats. There have been some particular difficulties at Oldham College between Muslim students and others which have been worrying. However, we were impressed by the responsible attitude of civic and religious leaders who did much to calm tensions.

The situation remains serious, and the potential for organisations such as the BNP to exploit people's anxieties is a powerful factor. If anything, the 11th September and its aftermath reinforces the need for Oldham to wake up to the implementation of this report.

1.8 We did not see it as our task to make comparisons between Oldham and other places affected by disorder, although, it must be said, on the face of it, similarities exist. The Government established a working group chaired by Ted Cantle to take a wider look at some towns that experienced violence and some that did not. Whilst we have not worked closely with the Cantle Group, we have met with them and made them aware of some of our initial findings. We expect our two reports to appear at around the same date, at which time it may be necessary to re-interpret some of both our findings.

1.9 Our conclusions are set out in a series of Chapters, reflecting the key areas relevant to inter-community relations in Oldham. This includes virtually every area of economic and social activity within the town. We provide our analysis of the causes of the recent disturbances, and a recapitulation of the events leading up to and in the immediate aftermath of the riots. The bulk of the report however is concerned with the future, and the solutions to the many problems we have uncovered.

1.10 Throughout our work, the importance of young people and their role in building a better, more united Oldham was never far from our minds. At one point we considered including a separate Chapter on young people. On balance we decided against because there is a youth dimension to virtually the whole of this report and every Chapter makes recommendations relevant to

1.11 At the outset, we set out a number of principles which have governed the recommendations we have adopted, and the most fundamental of these is that a system of separate development within the town, in which people from different ethnic backgrounds live lives largely separated from one another, is fundamentally unacceptable, and if not addressed will lead to worse developments in the future. In the course of preparing my parts of this report, I came across the following quotation by the Christian spiritual writer Donald Nicholl. Describing the relationship between different parts of society in Germany after the First World War he said "The different religious and political groupings in Germany were so deeply divided that it would have been almost unthinkable - even impertinent - for a representative of one group to have spoken up on behalf of another group. To begin with, these groups virtually never met one another socially; Catholics went to Catholic schools and



www.oldhamir.org.uk

In the wake of the disturbances the Oldham Independent Review has been established to enable all Oldham citizens to express their views on the future of the town.

Who am I?

The town has the very best chance to come through its present difficulties and build a future in which all its inhabitants, when they ask themselves the question "Who am I?" will put "an Oldhamer" very high up their list of answers and be proud to do so.

Protestants to Protestant schools; socialists had their comics for socialist children and communists had theirs for their children; Jews went to Jewish doctors and Catholics to Catholic doctors; all along the line they tended to meet only people of their own religious or political colour, whether they were worshipping or playing or being ill; and so they harboured the strangest notions about those outside their own community."

1.12 It would be an exaggeration to say that divisions in Oldham have reached the level described by Nicholl, but the lessons from that time remain ones which need always to be kept in mind. The fact that it is mainly self-segregation makes the task all the more challenging.

1.13 Our conclusions will not be comfortable for anybody, and we would have failed if they were. There are huge challenges in this report for policy makers and programme managers; for major institutions such as the Council and the Police, housing associations, the Health Authority and the Government; but above all for people's own attitudes. In some ways, these last will be the hardest to change. It is very easy to point at an institution and say "You must change", and we certainly do not duck from saying that where it is necessary. However, one of the most striking things we encountered in Oldham was people's propensity from all communities, to say "The Council must do this, the Council must provide additional resources here, the Council must organise us to do something." There is a willingness to put responsibility onto the shoulders of officialdom which too easily can be a reason for people not to shape up to their own responsibilities, beginning with their own attitudes. People must be prepared to look hard and honestly at these and where they need to change to decide to change them and then to do so. We will offer in this report some help on how to do that

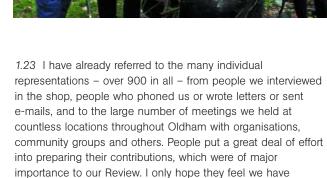
1.14 That attitudes need to change there can be no doubt. As a panel we were shocked by what appeared to be almost casually racist language on the lips of many white Oldhamers for whom 'Paki' is not only an acceptable term for Asians but the normal term in use. Such language is a short step from generic and crude assumptions about all Asians and in turn from the racist violence which has so disfigured the town. Racism in Oldham is not just a one way process and there have been many examples of attacks by Asians on whites. The issues are complex but the solution must involve people in all communities learning to value and respect one another as individuals and to recognise that categorising people solely by ethnic origin and reaching conclusions based on that fact alone is the start of a most insidious and dangerous process.

1.15 One of our most important conclusions has been the lack of opportunity for people to meet and talk across the community divides. As a panel, we have probably done more listening to people's views about community relations within Oldham than has been done for a long time. The process of meeting people, informally or formally, and letting them get issues off their chests had a value which went beyond just recording their views. It may even, in a small way, have contributed to a necessary healing process in the town. Even so, most of our listening has been to people from one or other ethnic group, with little opportunity to meet people on a multi-ethnic basis except (eg. in the case of the faith leaders' dinners) where we specifically arranged it. Much more needs to be done to bring about inter-community dialogue and our proposals for governance are aimed at achieving that.

1.16 For me, the most moving point in the four months came at a meeting with a group of young Asian women on 8th October. One of the women who lived in a mainly white part of town, described the sort of racist abuse, including people chucking bottles and other rubbish into her garden, which she experienced on a daily basis. As she described this, and the experiences of her friends and as she related these to her own young children and her fears that they too would suffer a lifetime of such abuse, she broke down and was unable to continue. Others at the meeting in turn described how they subjected themselves to a voluntary curfew keeping off the streets from about 7.00pm to avoid racist abuse. The fear, and the narrowing of horizons, which these comments conveyed were things beyond my own experience, and brought home more powerfully than anything else the need to tackle racism and racist attitudes wherever they are found, as a matter of the utmost urgency.

1.17 We also encountered strong signs of hope in Oldham for a better future. One is DREAM, an inter-faith group of youngsters who have been meeting together to build and develop understanding; there are multi-ethnic sports teams; Unity in the Community, a project supported by Oldham Athletic, the Council, the Police and others to bring youngsters from all communities to work together in a fun environment; the very successful shopping centre which serves all communities and the new motorway links and proposed extension of Manchester Metro. These signs give us confidence for the future. There is plenty of good to build on in Oldham, where the warmth of our welcome wherever we have gone has been enormously impressive. With this goodwill towards people trying to help, the town has the very best chance to come through its present difficulties and build a future in which all its inhabitants, when they ask themselves the question "Who am I?" will put "an Oldhamer" very high up their list of answers and be proud to do so.





they will not always agree with our conclusions. We are grateful to all of them.

d Police
2002.

1.24 We were also grateful for support in all sorts of ways from the Government Office for the North West, and to the Home

the Government Office for the North West, and to the Home Office who have paid for our work!

1.25 We could not have done this job without the loyal and

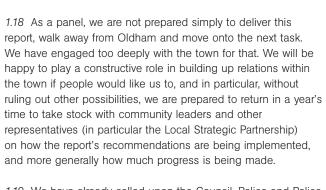
reflected the issues of concern to them even though, inevitably,

1.25 We could not have done this job without the loyal and unswerving support of our team in the shop. We had a team of interviewers, seconded to us from other organisations, and our thanks to all of them, and in particular to Nazmeen Kamora who stayed the course. Thanks also to Ann Evans for helping behind the scenes in the shop. Mark Kenny, Greater Manchester Police, did stalwart work for us, organising paper tracking and electronic systems, and was especially helpful to me on the Leisure and Community issues. Carl Krueger, Emma Maitland and Ian Horton from the Government Office North West were indefatigable in their support to the panel – loyal, discreet, immensely experienced and always keeping us in touch with the broader picture of Government policy. We could not have been better served.

1.26 There are two people without whom this report would never have seen the light of day. They are Rochelle Evans and Lori Hughes, who have done all our typing, office managing and generally keeping us up to speed. Each of them has worked extremely hard, and for long hours, to get us to the finishing post. Without them this job would have been impossible, and we owe them a huge debt of thanks.

1.27 To my fellow Panel members, also many thanks. We have travelled a long way together into country which was quite uncharted for any of us at the outset. The Panel have put in many hours, with many meetings in Oldham and elsewhere, in reading evidence and writing it up into this report. It has been a challenge for all of us, but an immensely rewarding one.

David Ritchie



1.19 We have already called upon the Council, Police and Police Authority to respond to this report by the end of February 2002. In our view, preparing that response should include a major public debate on our recommendations and we will be happy to facilitate that process if that would help.

1.20 Preparing a report like this is a complex business, which has involved a great many people. We have met nothing but kindness and support in Oldham in the four months since the Panel was established. It is not possible here to record all the names of people who have helped us. I should, however, record a particular debt of thanks to Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, who have given us practical help in more ways than I could recount. I would like to express special thanks to Richard Knowles, the Leader, David Jones, the Leader of the Opposition, and Chris Hilyer, Deputy Leader, for their unfailing courtesy and clear wish to see this process succeed. Andrew Kilburn, the Chief Executive, saw as clearly as anyone what we needed to achieve as a Panel, and offered help at every turn for which we are very grateful. Many others in the Council, Councillors and Officers, met us and gave us their views, without which we could not have done our work. Thanks also are due to Kristina Turner. Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel, Marketing and Communications), who was seconded to the Review in its early stages and helped set us up at our shop in the Spindles.

1.21 Greater Manchester Police was another of our commissioning bodies and our thanks go to David Wilmott, Chief Constable, Alan Bridge, Assistant Chief Constable, and in particular to Chief Superintendent Eric Hewitt and his team in Oldham, who at all stages offered us the support and documentation we needed.

1.22 The Police Authority, the third of our commissioning bodies, was also a great help to us, and with the Police, supported our programme to find out the views of young people in the town. Thanks to Maxine Moar, in particular, for this.

¹ The Beatitude of Truth, Donald Nicholl, Darton Longman and Todd 1997, page 47

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OBJECTIVES FOR A NEW OLDHAM

To make the obvious statement that communities in Oldham are insufficiently integrated is to beg the equally obvious question, what would an adequately integrated society be like? What criteria, limits and objectives should we have in mind to guide the solutions which we, as a Panel, are seeking?

2.2 The principles we have followed can be summarised in the following key words:

- a) proper understanding of current realities;
- b) valuing and celebrating diversity;
- c) respect; and
- d) commitment to a united Oldham.
- 2.3 On the first criterion, we have to acknowledge the reality that there are different communities in the town with strong cultural traditions and now some roots here and that all these communities have the right to co-exist. They are all communities of British citizens. One of them - the indigenous white population – can trace its ancestry in the town longer than others, but Oldham has always been a town of immigrants, from the rest of northern England in the 18th and 19th centuries, from Ireland in the 19th and 20th centuries, from Poland, the Ukraine and elsewhere after the last war. All have been accepted, even if in some cases, this took time. The African-Caribbean community came to Oldham in the 1950s and 60s, experienced real hostility and racism and still encounter discrimination. Nevertheless to a large extent they have been accepted as an integral part of Oldham life, and are living on good terms with their mainly white neighbours.
- 2.4 The British National Party met us and argued that multi-culturalism has never worked and that voluntary repatriation for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis should be introduced. Quite apart from the question what would happen if no one took up the offer, this policy constitutes a fundamental breach of the human rights of British citizens, designed in our view to intimidate, and it is as unworkable as it is disreputable. The reality is that these communities are as much British as any others.
- 2.5 The second principle is that the town should value and celebrate its diversity. Over the decades, different groups of immigrants have enriched and contributed to the socioeconomic life of Oldham in various ways. This has added to the already strong and vibrant culture in the town creating a new concept of what it is to be an Oldhamer, which should be celebrated.
- 2.6 Respect for others' traditions and viewpoints are equally important and are our third criterion. We think this is more than just passive acquiescence in what other people do or think.

Interchange, communication, interaction

There must be substantial interchange between people of different ethnic backgrounds which go beyond the purely commercial, and there must be a premium on more communication and interaction at all levels.



2.7 This leads to our fourth principle. Respect for cultural diversity must be balanced by acceptance that in key respects people must come together much more than has happened recently in Oldham, if necessary laying aside some of their cultural preferences. In our view, this must include the following:

- a) residential mixing. Ghettos are unacceptable. People must feel confident about living in mixed neighbourhoods which means freedom from fear of harassment, tolerance, and acceptance of the different customs and values of the different communities in Oldham.
- b) educational mixing. This is closely linked to residential, and in our view it is desirable in principle that as many schools as possible, should have mixed intake so that children growing up can learn one another's customs and cultural backgrounds and accept that stereotypes and racism are unacceptable.
- c) social mixing. Older people have a big responsibility to understand one another better, and to break down their own stereotypes. It is not enough just to rely on children to mix since children's attitudes are heavily influenced by those of adults. We also think it essential to create as many opportunities for social mixing (sports, other leisure activities, attendance at religious festivals, etc.), for older people as well as for youngsters.
- d) A recognition that communication between communities at all levels is an essential part of creating a mixed community. As part of this, there needs to be adequate understanding of the English language across communities and a willingness to listen to the other person's point of view.
- e) Greater education in cultural awareness across the community, and an understanding of what it means to be a citizen of Oldham, and which values need to be shared.
- f) A more prosperous Oldham for the future would do more than any other single thing to improve community relations within the town and to break down the climate of envy between neighbourhoods. There are no obvious solutions here, but we point to some possibilities.
- g) A safer environment within Oldham, where fear of crime is reduced.

2.8 We do not argue here for assimilation or absorption of any one group in Oldham by another. That would be a denial of diversity rather than its celebration. But we do argue for an integrated community and by that we mean one in which all citizens of the town, in looking at the things which identify themselves, see being an Oldhamer as high up the list. This will mean that they feel a stake in their community and in the future success of the town, with a common set of values as to what contribution individuals need to make and what it is right in their turn to expect from one another. There must be substantial interchange between people of different ethnic backgrounds which go beyond the purely commercial, and there must be a premium on more communication and interaction at all levels. Some aspects of this will take longer to achieve than others, but in our view these have got to be the common goals.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To understand the answer to the question how things have developed as they are, we have to look first at the industrial history of the town. In the late 19th Century, Oldham produced 30% of the world's spun cotton, and a very large proportion of the machinery used in textile production. Other industries had a foothold in Oldham, and at one time there was significant coal mining, but their importance compared with cotton spinning was always minor, and there were few towns so wholly dependent on one industry as Oldham.

- 3.2 This had two main consequences relevant to our Review. The first was that much of the employment in Oldham was relatively low skilled and, except for a few boom periods, relatively low paid. Despite efforts to improve the employment base of the town as the cotton industry declined Oldham has remained, relatively, a poor town (eg. seven wards in the worst 10% for deprivation on the government's Local Needs Index, three of them in the worst 50 wards in England). The irony is that other parts of the town are amongst the most affluent, for example Saddleworth, which is in the top 10%.
- 3.3 The second consequence of heavy dependence on a single staple industry was that, as working conditions and expectations improved in the nation generally, it became harder for mill owners to recruit people for anti-social work such as night shifts which were essential to the economy of their enterprises. So people willing to work these shifts were encouraged to migrate, initially from Pakistan, later from Bangladesh, which laid the foundation for the current Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities within the town. The first group of these migrants began to arrive in the 1960s, men first, followed by their families.

Immigration/Arrivals

3.4 The early arrivals from Pakistan formed a community which was culturally very distinct from the white population, in dress, in language, in religion and other customs, as well of course as in colour. The majority came from the same area, Mirpur, and working the night shift as a group meant that they had less contact with white society, and the English language, than many immigrants. Whilst other groups of immigrants had shared some of their differences from the indigenous population, none had shared all of them, and the degree of difference undoubtedly made the challenge of achieving an acceptable level of integration the harder. It has not yet been achieved, and the progress over the last 40 years has been unacceptably slow. Most of the above comments apply similarly to the Bangladeshi community, from the time when it began to arrive in Oldham in the late 1970s to the present day.

Patterns of Settlement

3.5 In common with most other immigrant groups, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have tended to live within particular neighbourhoods. This has been for very understandable reasons. For one thing, it was easier to converse with people in the mother tongue; for another there were security considerations since Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were subject to various types of racial abuse from their first arrival; shops, cheap housing and other facilities, and in due course places of religious worship, were also available; and there was the comfort of living with people whose customs were familiar in an unfamiliar environment.

- 3.6 In the case of the Pakistani community, Glodwick was the first area of settlement. Here they followed the West Indian community who were initially concentrated in Glodwick, though now much more spread out across the Borough. Over time, partly due to the operation of the housing market, since Glodwick consists mainly of owner-occupied houses, the area became very substantially Pakistani, though with a significant minority of Bangladeshis and a small number of whites and West Indians remaining.
- 3.7 The pattern of Bangladeshi settlement was similar, though concentrated in the Coldhurst/Westwood part of the town initially. Both communities are spreading since, unlike the white population, numbers of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are increasing rapidly (see Appendix 4). There are now significant numbers of Pakistanis in Coppice, and Bangladeshis in Werneth and parts of Chadderton. The tendency for the communities to stick together remains undiminished partly for the same reasons as before, partly from a perception that white people will not live with them. This perception is borne out by the phenomenon of white flight described in the Housing Chapter. Although there is some shared aspiration with white people to improve living conditions by moving to larger properties in different parts of the town, this tends to focus on areas such as Coppice where there are already a significant number of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. People's concern for security inhibits movement and it is understood for example that there are some very wealthy Pakistanis and Bangladeshis still living in small houses within the traditional areas.

Social Interchange

- 3.8 Whether in school or out of school there are few opportunities for young people across the communal boundaries to mix within Oldham. Except where people have significant contact in the workplace this is the case for adults too, and relationships between the communities at adult level are largely confined to business transactions (shops, restaurants, taxis). Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and whites simply do not meet one another to any significant degree, and this has led to ignorance, misunderstanding and fear.
- 3.9 The divisions are now such that we have had to ask the question whether people in the different communities actually want to have much to do with one another. For many white people the attitude seems to be that we would rather the Asians were not here, we will have as little to do with them as possible, and so we pretend that the Asians are not here. For many Asians, the attitude seems to be that this is a difficult and alien environment in which we find ourselves, we must protect ourselves from it and its corrupting influences, and we can do

Across the boundaries

There are few opportunities for young people across the communal boundaries to mix within Oldham. Except where people have significant contact in the workplace this is the case for adults too.

- that best by creating largely separated communities in Oldham modelled on what we have left behind in Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- 3.10 There are many in all communities who would strongly reject such thinking, which in any case would less represent the views of younger whites and Asians, but these views do exist and the consequences which have flowed from them are extremely serious for Oldham. Many policies pursued by the Council and other agencies over the years have reinforced the separateness between the communities, and in our view patterns of separate development now need to be challenged vigorously, and alternative strategies adopted, if riots and other evils are to be avoided. This is all the more important since, as Appendix 4 illustrates, the minority ethnic population of the town is set to rise from 13% now to 19% in the next ten years.
- 3.11 One consequence of separate development has been the growth of myths. Some of these are highly specific eg. that the Council has removed Oldham's Owl emblem from bits of street furniture, or that Council money has been spent building Mosques. Others are more general, eg. that all the Council's money is used to help the Asians, or that the police deliberately fomented the riots. Some of the grievances people have recorded are in our view justified, and we pick this up in our report, but many are no more than myths, and we deal with these in our myth-busting appendix, Appendix 6.

Custom

- 3.12 As noted above, customs of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people, do differ in significant respects from those of the indigenous community. When people do not speak the English language, this has acted as a barrier to integration. The consequent need to translate documents into mother tongues and the provision of English as an Additional Language support, is an irritant to many, though not all white, and African-Caribbean people, because it undermines their deep feeling that "English is the language of this town".
- 3.13 One concern expressed by service providers as well as others has been the difficulty of accessing the views of women in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, and the perceived lesser status of women, in terms of access to education, employment and leisure opportunities.
- 3.14 In the main, we have concluded that the main cause for residential segregation has been preferences both within the indigenous and Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities of people "to live with their own kind".



Racism and the British National Party

3.15 Over many years, the experience of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people has been one of frequently encountered racism. This has often been name-calling, sometimes discrimination and racist attitudes, and in all cases deeply offensive. It has led to real fear, and the self imposition, particularly by Asian women of all ages, of curfews which would not reflect the experience of comparable groups in the white community. It is not a universal experience, but sufficiently frequent for it to continue to be a deep source of division within the town.

3.16 Racism is not a one way matter, and there have been increasing examples in recent years of racist incidents some of them serious and well publicised, against white people in Oldham. These have served to exacerbate tensions.

3.17 It is clear that the British National Party, and other racist organisations such as the National Front and Combat 18, have exploited these divisions, and by countless misrepresentations, and the extensive use of the term "Muslim" in a derogatory sense as code for Asian, have exacerbated problems whilst generally keeping just within the law. We deplore their activities and look for continuing vigilance by the Police and the Local Authority to ensure that the law is not breached. We also call in the report for tightening of legislation in certain key respects. The BNP has exacerbated problems and undoubtedly by distribution of crude leaflets and other activity done much to stir up tensions. The mainstream political parties have a big role to play in countering this threat, as do churches and other organisations. We commend the approach of all concerned groups in Tower Hamlets following the election of a BNP Councillor there a few years ago, in making sure there was no repetition. At the same time, BNP success is in one sense to be seen as a symptom of problems in the town, since they would have no more chance of success in Oldham than (say) Guildford unless there was fertile soil for them to sow their seeds.

Housing

3.18 Owner-occupation remains the tenure of choice for most Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the town, and this too acts as an inhibiting factor on people moving away from traditional areas as do low wages and lack of savings. A high proportion of people own their properties outright (see more detail below in the Housing Chapter) and there is a real reluctance for people to move into rented accommodation, even though it may be sounder and offer more space. Nine thousand privately owned houses are unfit, and 13,000 in need of substantial renovations. Most are very small and inadequate for large families. The Council's improvement grant policy has built up expectations which cannot be fulfilled and which, for the most part, is very

poor value for money, with grants costing more than the improved value of the property.

3.19 Attempts at mixing Asian and white families in Council properties have been largely unsuccessful, because of racist victimisation of incoming Asian families. Where Council lettings are possible, the typically larger size of Asian families, and the restricted number of areas they are able to move to, means that they normally wait much longer than white families. However, there are some successful examples of housing association racially mixed schemes, with appropriate levels of management.

3.20 Another factor reinforcing segregation is the proportion of marriages between young Oldhamers of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage and husbands or wives from the sub-continent. These continue at a high level and since the new husbands or wives do not typically speak English or have much understanding of the cultural background to which they are moving, the tendency to remain in a separated community is reinforced.

3.21 Our main recommendations are as follows:

- a) A targeted programme of housing clearance and replacement of at least 300 houses a year (compared with the current 20).
 This should be focused on Asian and white areas, with the explicit aim of achieving racially mixed schemes of private and socially rented housing.
- b) The overall strategy should be the responsibility of a proposed Urban Regeneration Company, tackling both housing and other developmental needs over a wide part of Oldham.
- c) New models involving reinvestment of proceeds from cleared properties, interest free loans funded by Government and (where possible) mortgages should be part of the solution to re-housing.
- d) Group letting, housing several Asian or white families in non-traditional areas, should be tried.
- e) The new Arms Length Management Company to take over the running of the Council's housing stock should have the achievement of a more representative ethnic mix as a key priority.
- f) Litter and fly-tipping have been a problem in parts of the town, and a source of some tension between the communities. The Council's strategy of education and enforcement, even-handed between the communities, is the right one.

Educatio

3.22 Housing segregation has led to a substantial degree of educational segregation, and in turn to a very low level of



Learning about cultures

White children in their turn are not mixing with children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds and are therefore not learning about the culture of a very significant part of the town.

contact between most white people and most Pakistanis and Bangladeshis within the town.

3.23 Many youngsters reach school with limited if any command of English and the school environment which, for the children of early immigrants provided plenty of exposure to English spoken by fellow, white, pupils, no longer has this effect in what are substantially segregated schools. White children in their turn are not mixing with children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds and are therefore not learning about the culture of a very significant part of the town. At secondary school level, these difficulties persist, either because schools are fairly segregated at that level also, or even where they are not. the opportunities to form friendships at earlier stages in the school career have been missed. Achievement levels overall have been increasing at a good rate in Oldham comparatively, but the attainment levels of white pupils have been increasing more quickly at the higher levels than those of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

3.24 Key recommendations are:

- a) Greater emphasis is needed on raising the levels of achievement of ethnic minority pupils, with clear targets set for all pupils.
- b) Better sharing of experience is needed through use of an Annual Register of Good Practice.
- c) A firm push is needed on improving attendance rates, including truancy sweeps in conjunction with the Police, and a much tougher approach to the extended holidays taken by some Asian pupils to Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- d) Secondary schools should review their curriculum to take better account of vocational courses, and master classes or a gifted and talented academy established for the top 10 per cent of gifted pupils.
- e) Parents should be encouraged to make better use of Sure Start facilities, to encourage very young children's educational development, and family learning facilities should be built into all new school developments.
- f) At secondary level, specialist schools could be developed, attracting children from different communities. Where schools are close to the boundaries between communities, catchments should be reviewed to try to encourage more racial mixing and this should always be done where new schools are built. Parents should be encouraged to visit schools they might not have considered for their children and £6.4m of unspent school balances should be spent on facilities which would favour integration.
- g) Three faith secondary schools (Blue Coat, Crompton House and Our Lady's) admit no Muslims. This is divisive and in our

- view between 15% and 20% of places should be open to pupils of non-Christian backgrounds.
- h) The Oldham Schools Linking Project, bringing together young pupils from different primary schools in different communities, should be developed and supported by an annual £30,000 from the Government.
- i) Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children start school speaking enough English for lessons to be conducted in English, but this is impossible at present when many parents do not themselves have enough command of the language to help their children. This is particularly the case where young parents have arrived from the sub-continent with no knowledge of English. This is an issue which the Government has been considering with regard to future immigrants in similar circumstances. In our view it needs an effective answer if children's education is not to suffer, if employment prospects are to be improved and if in the medium to longer term (since it will take a generation or two) language barriers in Oldham are to be removed.
- j) For current residents of Oldham who lack fluency in English we propose an intensive programme of English teaching, linked to neighbourhood schools, and focused in particular on young parents to achieve this. This will require amongst other solutions, outreach teachers, working in the communities, to ensure maximum impact. Sure Start could be a mechanism to achieve this. The aim should be to help young mothers, and fathers, both for their benefit and more importantly that of their children. This programme should make a decisive and definitive impact on this problem and will need to last for five years. This should be underpinned by a high profile publicity programme which highlights the benefits of fluency in the English language.
- k) Better transition arrangements between pre-16 and post-16 education and employment opportunities are needed, particularly, stronger links with employers so that job opportunities are better understood.
- More vocational-based opportunities are needed for pre-16 year olds, and the Local Education Authority should link current work with the proposed new vocational GCSE initiative by DfES.

The Economy

3.25 Many have asked "Why Oldham, and not, say Birmingham, Manchester or Leicester?" Each of those cities has substantially larger minority ethnic populations than Oldham, many of them Asian. This is an issue which the working group, chaired by Ted Cantle, supporting the ministerial group on Public Order and Community Cohesion, is paying particular attention to and we look forward to seeing their conclusions. A major factor in the Panel's view is the different economic circumstances of

those cities and Oldham. At 3.6% Oldham's unemployment rate is not on the face of it so very bad, but there is great discrepancy between unemployment rates in inner Oldham and outer Oldham, between rates affecting different ethnic groups, and between youngsters and older people.

3.26 Oldham has done a good deal to replace the jobs lost in the cotton industry, but far too many of the workforce remain unskilled or with very low levels of skill, the new jobs have tended to be in low paid work, and the economy is insufficiently diversified into the higher paid areas particularly in the service sector. Most of the major employers have failed to diversify their workforce, and the Council, with only 2.63% of its workforce from the ethnic minorities, has notably failed in this respect. This failure, coupled with the lack of economic opportunities more generally, has meant that there has been far less opportunity in Oldham for people from different ethnic backgrounds to work together and build up that sense of team spirit which develops within a workforce and helps break down barriers.

3.27 Lack of wealth in the town has caused irrationally based concerns that the other person is getting more of whatever welfare benefits, public grant or other public expenditure are going, to fester in many parts of the town. Under-employment also gives people more time to brood on these resentments, and in the case of young people particularly, more time to make mischief. Poverty also has other more direct consequences, including limiting people's aspirations for self improvement, limiting the quality of their housing, limiting their leisure opportunities and limiting their health.

3.28 Our main recommendations are:

- a) There is an urgent need to improve skills in the workforce, nearly 30% of whom have no qualifications. Oldham Connexions are preparing a bid to help students who underachieve in education into full time employment and we recommend that this be pursued vigorously.
- b) The New Deal Programme is failing ethnic minority youngsters who are too often placed on basic skills training despite their levels of qualification; at the same time people who have no knowledge of English are not required to learn it under the New Deal as a condition of retaining benefit, and this is unfair.
- Discrimination on grounds of religion exists in the workplace, and this should be outlawed.
- d) The Council and other major public sector employers should, with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and drawing on examples of best practice, draw up a strategy by May 2002 for achieving a representative workforce.

- e) Training in cultural awareness should be mandatory for all Council employees and we recommend other employers to implement a similar policy.
- f) Public sector funded bodies, such as Housing Associations, should review contracting policies to ensure they do not discriminate against Asian contractors.
- g) Relevant organisations should develop a strategy to assist entrepreneurs across the communities, based on existing successful examples.

Health

3.29 Oldham has significant health problems, for example, people are 20% more likely to die prematurely than the average, and there are significantly higher risks for many diseases and high infant mortality. Problems are disproportionate amongst all poorer sections of the community, and in particular amongst the black and minority ethnic communities. Whilst these factors are not directly significant in promoting social disorder, indirectly they have promoted a lack of hope within different communities, and they will need to be tackled if promoting a harmonious and forward looking community is to succeed.

3.30 Main recommendations are:

- a) The NHS should ensure that Oldham receives the additional £9 million per annum which under the current funding formula it should have; this should be implemented by April 2004.
- b) A network of one stop shops for health care provision should be established, on the lines of existing examples, eg. in the Black Country and Peckham. Two such centres are already proposed for Fitton Hill and Hollinwood. The Private Finance Initiative may be the vehicle for capital funding; revenue should be a priority for the expanded NHS budget referred to. Better facilities, as outlined above will help also.
- c) 40% of existing GPs will be retiring over the next five years in Oldham. A proactive recruitment policy, possibly involving higher pay, should be considered.
- d) A more strategic, long term approach is needed to target key health priorities rather than the piece meal approach based on short term initiatives of the past.

Policing

3.31 Policing is the issue on which the perceptions of the different communities are most deeply divided. Most people, across the town, are agreed that those who rioted, and those who caused the riots, need to be punished, but beyond that such questions as who or what triggered the riots, how fairly has the town been policed over the years, the validity of racist crime statistics, the propensity of individual police officers to racism are

Policing and perceptions

On the whole, the policing of the town has been carried out honourably, in very difficult circumstances, but there can be no dispute that policing and the perception of policing was a contributory factor behind the riots.



all issues on which opinions are polarised. One point on which there is agreement between most white and Asian people is that the police are too slow in responding to incidents whenever they are reported.

3.32 We deal extensively with these questions in the relevant chapter of this report. Clearly, the perception that policing of Asian areas had been insensitive was a factor fuelling the events of 26th May and the following days. Indeed, it is clear that for some rioters it was the Police themselves who were the principal targets, not simply because they were attempting to restore law and order, but because of a sense of frustration and grievance. We have concluded that some but by no means all of those grievances have some foundations; at the same time, we heard on occasions there had been less rigorous policing of Asian areas than other parts of the town. On the whole, the policing of the town has been carried out honourably, in very difficult circumstances, but there can be no dispute that policing and the perception of policing was a contributory factor behind the riots.

3.33 Our main recommendations are:

- a) The police structure for the town needs to be one which is more sensitive to the community it serves; the present divisional and sub-divisional structures can get in the way of solving problems. Sector or geographic policing are alternative possibilities. We recommend a review of the policing structure by May 2002, so as to base this on identifying communities and their problems and improving rapport.
- b) The Community Affairs Unit should also be reviewed, to focus activities more on analysis and advice to operational units
- A database of best practice, innovation and new ideas to support divisions like Oldham should be established by GM Police
- d) A new and rationalised structure based upon a Race and Diversity Committee is needed to help tackle inter-community issues in Oldham.
- e) There has been much criticism of the release of statistics in January about Asian-on-white crime. There had been previous racial incident reports of a similar kind, and we do not criticise the release of figures per se. However, we recommend that release of such statistics should be part of a wider communications strategy and accompanied by extensive prior consultation with communities, and release of the figures in January was not handled as carefully as it should have been. The Racist Incidents Panel, which we propose, to absorb the current Racist Incidents Strategy Group, should give a sharper focus to strategy for tackling racist incidents.

- f) Police links with minority ethnic communities are at present based on a network of community leaders who in our view lack authority and credibility. A new network of facilitators with credibility in the local community is necessary to build bridges.
- g) A more effective communications strategy, to counteract myth and misunderstanding, is necessary, bringing together the Police, the Council and different communities of Oldham. It should be in place by March 2002.
- h) Some officers, certainly not all, have exhibited racist behaviour. We recommend that in all appropriate training programmes, particular emphasis is given to use of offensive and inappropriate language.
- i) There are 12 ethnic minority officers out of 402 in Oldham, and two support officers out of 67. GM Police should involve the Black and Asian Police Association to assist on strategies for recruitment and retention.
- j) Current Public Order Act bans may only extend to marches; the Government should consider widening its scope to include inflammatory activity beyond marches; BNP have circulated derogatory leaflets using the term 'Muslim' as code for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, as a means to avoid anti-racism legislation. We recommend that the Government should aim to prevent such usage in future legislation.

Leisure, Culture and Community Interaction

3.34 There is an overwhelming feeling amongst young people in all the inner areas of Oldham that there are insufficient social and leisure facilities for them. Many young people have said that they would like the opportunity to play sports on an inter-community basis, or with mixed teams, but those opportunities – with some notable exceptions – do not sufficiently exist.

3.35 The lack of facilities is a particular problem for young Asian people, given the overcrowding in many Asian households, the religious inhibition on pubs as places to frequent, and the denial to them of access to some new facilities, such as the Pakistani Community Centre in Glodwick. Young men are forced to congregate on the street, aimless and with time on their hands, which has helped develop a drugs trade for some and which helped facilitate the gathering of crowds to participate in the riots. More generally, there is an issue of young Asian people being between two cultures and not feeling wholly part of one or the other.

3.36 The pub culture and the racism traditionally linked to football supporting, coupled with similar patterns of unemployment/under employment and aimlessness have affected many white young men. The drugs trade is a significant

factor in many of the white estates also. In both Asian and white communities the step to racism has been a short one. Coupled with the residential segregation in the town, it has also led to a strong sense of territoriality amongst young men – "this is our area – and I won't go there because it's theirs" – which has exacerbated tensions.

3.37 Our main findings are:

- a) The Youth Service needs to have a new profile in Oldham. It should be combined with the Sport and Recreation development work within the Council in a new Unit, and the head should prepare, with others and by March 2002, a strategy for racially integrated sport and recreation provision for young people.
- b) Youth Work needs to be more closely linked to physical facilities and we offer support in principle for a PFI bid to develop ten new youth and community centres.
- c) The Unit should work with Oldham Athletic, Youth Associations, Football League and other organisations involved with football to develop more competition across ethnic boundaries, and in particular more multi-racial teams. We make similar recommendations in respect of other sports.
- d) We make a specific recommendation on the scope for developing music as a unifier between different communities based on work of the Dread Lion Foundation.
- e) Unity in the Community, promoted by GM Police, Oldham Athletic, the Council and marketing company M2M, is helping bring children from different communities together for sport, arts and academic work. The Panel support this project, it should be evaluated and if successful extended into future years.
- f) A database of existing provision for adult recreation is required, and a strategy for developing closer links should be produced
- g) Faith Leaders should take a higher profile in Oldham, concentrating on the whole town, not just their own communities. They need to meet together more regularly and organise cultural, education and related programmes for people of different communities.
- h) Community centres, should if possible not be named after ethnic groups and should be open to people of all racial backgrounds.
- i) A small task force should examine the feasibility of a new annual festival in Oldham – possibly the Oldham Awakes
 Festival – celebrating the entire life of the town.

Regeneration

3.38 One contributory factor to problems in Oldham has been the increasing dependence by government and other agencies on area-based programmes in recent years. This has meant that,

following a competitive bidding process, one or other part of the town has succeeded in attracting Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal for Communities, Sure Start or some other programme, leading to criticism from those unlucky in the competition that somewhere else has got more money than they have. In our Appendix 5 we look more closely at this issue. Whilst the area-based approach is understandable, it has exacerbated tensions.

3.39 More generally, we feel that a radically new approach is needed to regenerate the town in line with major proposals in this report.

3.40 Our main proposals are:

- a) A major new agency is required to inspire and then manage a programme of regeneration in Oldham, to be carried out by others. This should include economic development and housing. The model we propose is an Urban Regeneration Company, such as that in East Manchester, and it will require commitment from the Council, the North West Development Agency, Oldham Housing Investment Partnership and the Government Office for the North West, with other partners joining as necessary.
- b) Its area of operation should be an extensive part of Oldham, though it may be possible and desirable for areas to be brought within the remit of the Company gradually. Initial priority should be given to the M60/Metro route corridors and housing areas in Asian and white parts of the town.
- c) Central resources for the company which we estimate at £0.75 million per annum, are relatively modest, but its success will depend on priority from the Government for funding the necessary programme of action.
- d) The traditional pattern of area based initiatives, based on bidding rounds and relatively small areas, should be ended and Oldham's needs negotiated annually with Government under a Compact arrangement.

Governance

3.41 Oldham lacks strategic direction, and a vision for the way it should develop in the future. It has been good at bidding to the Government for special initiatives, without thinking through how these will contribute to an overall strategy. It has not tapped effectively into the business community, key professional people, other statutory strategy agencies and the voluntary sector. The Council too often wishes to have a controlling influence. There has been too little evidence, before or since the riots, of bi-partisan approaches to key policy issues, and in particular, a persistent failure to face up to the deep seated issues of segregation in the town which have been reported on since at least the 1970s.

Citizenship

Good citizenship is vital to a stable society, but in May in Oldham many citizens were clearly alienated.

Our main recommendations are:

- a) An Oldham Community Plan containing a twenty-year forward look at where Oldham should be, is necessary. It should be the responsibility of the new Local Strategic Partnership. This body, now being set up, will include all key players within the town.
- b) Central Government departments, co-ordinated by the Home Office and DTLR and operating through the Government Office for the North West, should look to introduce a new form of Compact with the Council. This will seek to support the long term strategy with a commitment to sustained main programme finance.
- c) Good citizenship is vital to a stable society, but in May in Oldham many citizens were clearly alienated. There is low voter turn out in local elections. The Council and the Local Strategic Partnership, working with the Citizenship Foundation and Local Learning Partnership, should develop a programme for citizenship in schools, colleges and elsewhere.
- d) Part of citizenship is recognising the challenges which go with being a culturally diverse town. A Race and Diversity Strategy Committee, with a network of local forums, and a Race and Diversity Policy Officer, should be appointed. The new structures will enable frank discussions of race relations issues and promote good community and race relations.
- e) The agenda of this report will require strong and single minded leadership. One possibility, which the citizens of Oldham could require and should consider, is an elected mayor. An alternative is to provide extra support to the Council leadership and Chief Executive, through the provision of mentors and development of new and more effective ways of working together.
- f) The Board of the new Local Strategic Partnership should be tightly drawn to ensure real debate and dialogue, and not just lip service to the idea of partnership. It should be the key strategic body in the town.
- g) The Corporate Management Team of the Council did not appear to have debated issues of segregation and other community problems in Oldham as frequently or in as much depth as necessary. Corporate Governance would benefit from an inspection by the Audit Commission.
- h) We were impressed by the Area Committees of the Council, which amongst other things did debate inter-community tensions. We recommend that the LSP should review the scope for more area delegation of Council functions.
- i) Every significant policy recommendation coming to the Council should address the question whether what is proposed will improve the understanding of diversity and community relations within the town.

- j) We were surprised to discover that there had been a number of irregularities in the electoral process in Oldham in certain inner city wards, particularly in the May 2000 local elections. We make a number of recommendations, including the need for review between the Home Office and the Local Government Association of whether current funding arrangements for elections discourage local authorities from checking registry entries more effectively, and also the need for closer links between the Council and the Police on handling claims of electoral fraud.
- k) We also received representations about links between political parties and particularly groups within the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, and the conduct of selection procedures for candidates for local authority elections by the Labour party. We recommend some tightening up of procedure.
- We received numerous representations alleging corruption and job fixing by a particular employee of the Council. We have referred these to the police and the Local Authority.

Media

3.42 We encountered concern that over a long period the media, in particular the Oldham Evening Chronicle, had presented events in a biased way, over emphasising attacks on whites, ignoring cases the other way around. There was also concern that media coverage during the riots had aggravated problems and encouraged rioters.

3.43 The media cannot be blamed for reporting facts, the facts in Oldham were dramatic, and therefore, so was the coverage. We conclude that in the run up to the riots, in some cases the media could have taken more care to present a more balanced picture of views particularly within the minority ethnic communities, and we make a number of recommendations on how the media can assist in promoting the multi-cultural face of Oldham.

Our main recommendations are:

- a) Local editors should from time to time (say every six months) be prepared to meet in Oldham for a discussion with the local community about coverage of issues in the area. This could be a meeting with the Race and Diversity Committee.
- b) The Oldham Evening Chronicle's recent coverage has been more balanced and much more even handed, but it should try to ensure it has a more balanced workforce.
- c) The media should sponsor an award for the person or organisation which has done most to bring communities together in the town over the year.

HOUSING

As we comment repeatedly in this report, the segregated nature of society in Oldham is at the heart of the town's problems, and that begins with housing. To some extent, there has been self-segregation at work. The desire for people to live alongside others of similar background, language, culture, customs and outlook on life is understandable.

So too, is a desire of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Oldhamers to escape racial harassment and abuse and, more positively, to live close to facilities such as mosques. However, we heard from many Asian Oldhamers that they did not seek to live in exclusively Asian surroundings, but that every time they moved into a new street, white people began to move out, and it is very clear that this phenomenon, popularly known as white flight, has been occurring on a wide scale. It causes resentments all round. White people feel uncomfortable about living with Asian neighbours and fear that the value of their property, in which they have often invested heavily, will fall. They therefore feel obliged to sell their houses and since, in most cases, and reinforced by estate agents' guidance, the only potential purchasers are Asian, house prices naturally do fall in a restricted market. Some Asian purchasers feel resentful that their arrival causes this reaction on the part of white people.

- 4.2 And so the process of segregation, particularly in the owner-occupied sector, which by far is the largest, continues and is self-reinforcing. It has been claimed that Oldham is the most segregated town in England. We have not tried to measure it, but it is clear that the degree of segregation is intense.
- 4.3 Given the long term nature of shifts in the housing market, and frankly the lack of desire of people from white and Asian backgrounds to live together, some commentators have suggested or implied that there is little that can be done to change things. Some residents have suggested that they would not want to change the position. We reject these views, mainly because unless people feel comfortable living alongside one another, we do not think Oldham could ever claim to be one society, for which there is common citizenship. At the same time, we recognise that realistically it will take a long time a least a generation to make deep inroads into the present situation. But a start has to be made somewhere.
- 4.4 There are also some powerful opportunities for change which need to be grasped and made the most of. Many of the owner-occupied houses, particularly in the Asian areas, but also in some of the white parts of Oldham, are at the end of their lives, and the only sensible strategy will be one of gradual but steady replacement, rather than patching and mending. This offers an excellent opportunity to create some mixed communities, and our proposals to achieve this are some of the most important in this report. Following consultation with tenants, Oldham MBC are currently working on a proposal to transfer management of their stock to an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO hereafter). In our view this should provide a good catalyst for encouraging better mixing of communities within the social housing sector with the achievement of better

enure	White	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other
Owner occupied	67.09	75.43	62.90	66.41
Local authority	24.14	3.14	19.86	25.48
Housing association	4.01	9.46	5.80	2.70
Provided by business	0.23	1.19	0.00	0.00
Private rental	3.78	9.84	11.43	5.42
Other	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00
Not stated	0.54	0.94	0.00	0.00
Total number of households	81,709	2,412	1,384	1,250

integration built into the planning process from the outset and organisations with experience of managing mixed schemes actively involved. We are aware that DTLR has recently rejected the Council's bid for the additional resources available for arms length management and clearly this is something that the Council will now need to revisit, although we understand that there will be a second bidding round in February 2002. In our view the need to deal with Oldham's housing problems is urgent and we would urge the Government to bear this in mind when deciding whether to support any future bid provided that the Council have taken note of our recommendations. However, we believe that in any case the spirit of the recommendations we make in relation to the ALMO can and should be applied to whatever arrangements are made for management of the Council's stock in the future.

Findings

- 4.5 In the 1960s and 70s minority ethnic groups settled in and around the town centre (in areas like Glodwick, Westwood and Werneth), conveniently close to the textile mills where they worked. They bought small terraced properties, built in the 1890s and early 1900s, which were usually two or three bedroom houses.
- 4.6 This began to change in the 1980s. Less affluent members of minority ethnic communities, particularly Bangladeshi, found that local authority housing was more manageable than a mortgage and also as longer term residents of Oldham, they were more likely to be considered for social housing. By 1989, minority ethnic groups comprised 6.6% of the Council's waiting list
- 4.7 However, a formal investigation by the CRE into the Local Authority's Housing Allocations in 1991 found that the Council were discriminating against Asian applicants by segregating them from white households into the centre of town and by placing them into lower quality housing in the Clarkwell and Waterloo Street estates. The Council had also failed to review its allocation policy and its ethnic data on households.
- 4.8 In 1990, the CRE also found that some estate agents promoted segregationist policies by steering minority ethnic and white residents into different areas; the minority ethnic areas being poorer and ones with already high minority ethnic populations.
- 4.9 The 1991 Census showed that a quarter of the white population of Oldham lived in local authority housing compared with 13% of Bangladeshis and 9% of Pakistanis. These figures were similar to the patterns of tenure across Greater Manchester.

- 4.10 A 1995 survey of housing tenures revealed that overall patterns among the ethnic groups had not changed significantly. A small proportion of the Bangladeshi community had moved from private (rented) properties to local authority housing whilst a small proportion of Pakistanis had moved from local authority housing into privately rented and housing association housing. However, white residents were still more likely to live in local authority housing compared with other groups.
- 4.11 Housing development and reform in Oldham has always been constrained by high rates of deprivation and poverty. The Alexandra, Coldhurst and Werneth wards rank among the most deprived 1% nationally on the Indices of Deprivation 2000 and four other wards St Mary's, St James, Hollinwood and Lees are among the most deprived 10%. Together, these wards comprise around a third of the overall population in Oldham.
- 4.12 From the evidence presented to us we would highlight the following:
- a) The issue of suitable, affordable owner occupied housing being available for existing owner occupiers in inner or West Oldham came up repeatedly.
- b) There is an impression shared by many white residents in Oldham that public resources generally favour non-whites.
 In addition, there is a perception that such resources are given to non-white private sector owners (in terms of grants for repairs and maintenance) at the expense of council house tenants.
- c) Linked to this is the perception that money available for other housing and regeneration initiatives are not divided equally between the different communities. Several people have suggested that it would be better to distribute regeneration funding in relation to need, so that money could be spent on poor white areas as well.
- d) There is also the perception by a group of white residents that non-white families have been unfairly advantaged in the allocation for housing, with local authority houses being advertised for non-white groups only.
- e) There is the perception that Oldham MBC as well as local estate agents are continuing to influence the location of minority ethnic communities in their choice of areas. Further evidence suggests that Oldham continues to have a number of estates which are considered to be 'no-go-areas' for nonwhite groups, particularly people of Asian origin.
- f) Residents on estates in different areas commented that there were no leisure or community centres for youngsters near their estates, leaving young people to gather together on the premises of the council estates.
- g) Overall most people said they were happy to integrate with

different communities, but they felt that there were individual white families on their estates who were exacerbating racial tensions and hatred between white and Asian families.

4.13 The Council has taken the lead in developing housing strategy within the borough across all tenures, working with the Oldham Housing Investment Partnership which also includes representatives from Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Some commentators have pointed to neighbouring local authorities which appear to have avoided some of the problems which Oldham has encountered over housing. The Council is now part of a network of 'M62' authorities which have been comparing respective performance, and we commend the benchmarking which the Housing Director and his team are now carrying out with Rochdale MBC, in particular. We suggest that this process is continued with further links explored and established as appropriate.

Private Sector Housing Strategy and Policy

4.14 One of the major problems identified for Oldham is an insufficient supply of appropriate (in terms of size and condition) and affordable housing for existing owner-occupiers who are living in unsuitable housing.

4.15 There is an oversupply of small terraced housing, typically "two-up and two-down", with 60% of the privately owned housing falling into this category compared with an average of 35% across the North West. One in ten households in Oldham are overcrowded and the figures for overcrowding are higher for some minority ethnic households. In terms of condition, we were told that almost 9,000 privately owned homes are unfit and that 13,000 are in need of substantial renovation.

4.16 A fifth of the households in Coldhurst and St. Mary's and around one in six households in Werneth and Alexandra are living in unsuitable housing. Areas slightly further away from the town centre also contain unsuitable housing, but to a lesser degree; in Hollinwood, just under one in ten households are living in unsuitable housing. OMBC's Social Inclusion Audit, published in July 2001, found that nearly half (49.2%) of Asian households were in housing need compared with fewer than one in twenty (4.4%) white households.

Replace or Improve?

4.17 Nearly three-quarters (73.4%) of properties are privately owned, a significant number in serious disrepair and/or lacking amenities. We met almost universal acceptance that the current drip-feed strategy of improvement grants was wrong and it seems to satisfy no one. One man had been waiting for thirteen years for a grant, despite seeing some of his neighbours benefit

from grants. Within the Asian communities, there was resentment that when grants were available they had to be used firstly to do repairs, with improvements only a secondary consideration, and resentment too about the cost of the contracted repair work, which left no margin for expenditure for improvement. There was resentment in white areas that Asian communities in Glodwick and Westwood seemed to be favoured for improvement grants at the expense of areas like Sholver and Chadderton. (This was because Glodwick and Westwood have both benefited from SRB funding, a fact which may not have been adequately explained, and the resentments relating to area-based programmes are picked up elsewhere in this report.)

4.18 More fundamental than any of these criticisms, however, is that the current strategy not only has no realistic prospect of ever being concluded, despite massive raising of expectations that grants will be available, since the resources simply are not there, but also that it is very poor value for money. To make any impact on repairs and necessary improvements, grants would often have to be well in excess of £20,000, whilst the resultant improved house will be worth little more than that – and a good deal less in some cases. In addition, the expected life of renewed properties, though intended to be thirty years, is often little more than ten, and the result is basically still the same inadequate accommodation if the family is large.

4.19 It has to be accepted that whilst there is still a reasonable level of demand for the housing in most areas, compared at least with other areas in the North where we are aware that the market has effectively collapsed, much of the traditional terraced housing stock is effectively obsolete. Given recent research into demand and the operation of housing markets in the region, the housing market in Oldham, which is currently dysfunctional with central areas experiencing static values over several years, is clearly vulnerable in the future. In our view action needs to be taken quickly and decisively to stabilise the housing market and avoid a spiral of neighbourhood decline, but more importantly in the context of this report, to support higher levels of integration.

4.20 Whilst there will be some scope for continuing renewal through improvement, the emphasis must shift in Oldham towards a programme of demolition and replacement. It was suggested to us that up to 9,000 houses need to be cleared at an average rate of at least 300 per year and this seems to us a reasonable estimate. In recent years clearance has been in the region of 20 houses per year. The cost of this significantly increased level of clearance has been estimated at £9-10 million per annum compared with the current OMBC housing programmes where around £4-5 million is available in total for housing capital expenditure in relation to the private

sector. To this must be added the costs of replacement housing and, in some cases, the gap funding needed to enable residents to take up the options of a new home.

4.21 We recommend a targeted programme of housing clearance and replacement. This should be the responsibility of the URC which we refer to in Chapter 10, but it will need strong commitment from the Government, the Housing Corporation and the private sector. In our view the government commitment to a level of funding to support a clearance programme of 300 homes a year. It may however be possible to accelerate this programme if private sector resources can be attracted on an appropriate scale.

4.22 We accept that this will require a significant increase in public funding, but given the crucial role that current housing provision plays in reinforcing segregation and the need for a significant restructuring of the housing stock we feel that this level of investment is both necessary and justified. We recognise that such a programme could not be confined to Oldham. In our view, however, there is a strong case for such a programme targeted on areas of high racial segregation, dilapidated housing and a still functioning though vulnerable housing market. Other solutions will be necessary for places with other characteristics.

4.23 Although we are recommending that the Council should receive additional funding to support a clearance and replacement programme, local authority resources for such a programme will come from the single capital pot.

We recommend that the Council make the application of funds from the pot to a housing clearance and renewal programme a top corporate priority.

4.24 The redevelopment of the cleared sites, and others already available for new housing, will need to be planned and phased carefully. Clearly there will be little benefit in replacing one type of monolithic provision with another or flooding vulnerable markets with too much or the wrong sort of housing. Mixed developments which include non-housing uses and choice in house size and tenure will be essential to encourage and support integrated communities. Several commentators have pointed to the redevelopment of Hulme, in Manchester, as a good practice example where lessons could be learnt.

We recommend that the replacement programme should be based on a clear strategy that will result in non-housing uses and a variety of tenures, including social rented housing, low cost home ownership, and varying shared ownership models. 4.25 This will only achieve better inter-ethnic harmony in Oldham, if it results in more residential mixing of different communities in practice. We are aware of some good, albeit small, mixed schemes run by associations such as AKSA and lessons need to be learnt from this. Accordingly,

We recommend that the strategy ensures that rented houses are allocated to people from different ethnic backgrounds, with appropriate housing management to support this, and also that the marketing of homes for sale should be targeted at people from different ethnic groups. The proposed Urban Regeneration Company will be able to influence the low cost home ownership marketing strategy, as will housing associations.

4.26 The Council, in its evidence to us, accepted the need for increased levels of clearance, whilst emphasising the importance of sensitive handling and we endorse that. It has to be acknowledged that unlike earlier clearance programmes, the demolition of houses will not always initially be welcomed by those living in them and significant levels of compulsory purchase (CPO) will be needed. Ways of providing sufficient incentives for people to move to new housing, rather than seeking a house similar to the one they have just left, will need to be found. The gap between the compensation householders would receive following CPO and the cost of a new home may be substantial. Limited evidence provided by OMBC suggests that recent CPOs have generated an average residual "equity" of just over £9,000 once outstanding mortgages had been paid off.

4.27 If a sensitive strategy is to be evolved, it must include several options for people who lose their houses under CPO, depending on their age, financial circumstances, family circumstances, and not least their personal choice. However, not all of the instruments needed yet exist. Classic shared ownership has not proved very popular with Asian householders in the past, and we will need models which meet the needs of white and Asian people involved in clearance schemes, whilst recognising the need to limit Exchequer subsidy to realistic levels. In due course a substantial element of this programme should become self financing as the recycled sums following sale flow back to housing associations.

We recommend that DTLR and the Housing Corporation should look at the necessary models. Two which in particular we recommend should be tested are as follows. In one, for younger households with an income which would sustain a mortgage, the householder would invest his or her compensation for the cleared property, add to it a mortgage, with any uncovered balance of cost to be met by an interest

free loan from a housing association, the subsidy coming from public funds. This model would not work for older people who have retired or who have no significant income. In their case, the compensation would be invested and the balance would need to be by way of an interest free loan. In both models, when the property was sold, the owner would retain his or her share of the proceeds, based on the amount of the original investment, and the proportion represented by the interest free loan would be returned to the housing association. Where negative equity exists, the Salford Homeswap Scheme, under which a mortgage can be transferred to a newer property, may also have merit, and should be considered.

4.28 In addition, we are aware that housing groups in the North West have argued for changes to the Compulsory Purchase powers to make it easier for them to achieve clearance of obsolete properties that may not be physically unfit.

We recommend, that there should be a new definition of the word 'obsolete' housing as the basis for compulsory purchase, having regard to inadequate size and other basic inability to meet modern requirements. Other improvements to the CPO process have been proposed to the Government and we recommend that these be investigated urgently and, if appropriate, implemented.

Continued Improvement Programme

4.29 Where improvement grants are the right and cost effective approach to particular housing problems, they need to be continued. However, as noted above, there are misconceptions about where the money currently goes, and in line with our general principle, that funding should follow need rather than be based on particular locality, it will be clear that properties in some of the most deprived inner area wards will continue to benefit from larger grants where these are made available.

4.30 The table below shows that Bangladeshis, for instance, are receiving high sum (and average) grants compared with white communities, but does not explain that this is because grants are allocated to wards like Coldhurst, St. Mary's, Alexandra, since they are significantly poorer areas, with houses in a seriously dilapidated state compared with wards such as Failsworth West, Chadderton South or Saddleworth Fast

4.31 We are also aware that the Government has recently set out new options in their Housing Policy Statements which will enable local authorities to use private sector housing renewal resources in a much more flexible way, including loans and

equity support. Clearly this will present an important opportunity for the Council to extend the ways in which they tackle housing renewal.

Social Housing

4.32 We are concerned that there are few Asian households in local authority housing or on the register. Black and minority ethnic (BME) borough residents are projected to form 19% of Oldham's population by 2011, and currently only 13% of applicants on the housing register come from BME communities. There is no strong evidence of improper allocation by the Council, but there is evidence showing that the minority ethnic groups wait, on average, much longer than other groups on the waiting list for accommodation. Bangladeshi applicants, for instance, wait on average, one and a half years for a three bed property and nearly three years for a four bed property. Pakistani applicants wait on average a year for a three bedroom property, and white applicants wait around a year for a four bedroom property and a year and half for five bedroom properties². However, the Housing Department argue that this is because BME applicants do not accept offers of accommodation outside their traditional areas of settlement and, therefore, the Housing Department are limited in the way that they can respond to this problem. We were disappointed that, at its last meeting this summer, when papers on these issues were on the agenda, the former Housing Committee of the Council failed to debate them in any depth, despite all the current problems in the town.

4.33 We are aware that a Tenancy Support Scheme has been set up to encourage the movement of BME households into different areas, but it is not yet operational, and we recommend a much more proactive policy in this respect. The fear of racial attack and harassment for some BME communities remains a strong and pervasive incentive for clustering. The proactive strategy we advocate must seek to change attitudes and behaviour by acknowledging and tackling these fears. There is also an absence of strategy to move white families into existing predominantly Asian areas. To establish sustainable Asian and white communities in non-traditional areas, strong support mechanisms will be required, and as noted above these have been successfully tried by housing associations.

4.34 We further recommend that the Council and registered social landlords (RSLs) should consider group lettings, housing several BME or white families together in non-traditional estates to counter some of the fears of isolation or threat from harassment.

We further recommend that marketing strategies by the social housing sector should be targeted to the specific Allocation of home improvement grants in Oldham MBC Source: Oldham MBC, Housing Department, 2001

Number of grants		Total sum of grant £		
White	1,364	Bangladeshi	8,352,954	
Bangladeshi	562	White	4,172,379	
Pakistani	296	Pakistani	3,355,324	
Indian	22	Indian	225,474	
Others	11	Black Caribbean	27,289	
Black Caribbean	7	Others	21,359	
Chinese	1	Chinese	10,661	

needs of young Asian people, who are more likely to be receptive to the idea of social housing, as well as to the more traditional, mainly white clients.

4.35 While some of the evidence from household surveys suggests that household sizes may be changing as a result of younger members moving to their own accommodation and, in some cases, having smaller families themselves, present projections indicate that demand for four and five bedroom houses will continue for the foreseeable future. This points to the need for a variety of social housing catering for large and small households in the future. It is clear that the Council recognise these issues as important, but we recommend that owing to the present deficit in the supply of larger houses, that meeting this urgent and current need should be a priority for the Council and RSLs.

4.36 We are aware that, although there is clearly work for the Council to do in the immediate term, proposals for transferring management of the Council's stock to an Arms Length Management Company (ALMO) are being developed. Although some commentators have suggested that outright stock transfer might have been a better option, we recognise that the preferred option has been reached following extensive consultation with tenants and that it reflects their wishes. We believe that this change in management arrangements provides an excellent opportunity for reviewing the current situation and that it could provide a powerful catalyst for change. However, for the full potential to be realised it is essential that the need to achieve more integrated communities is embedded within the planning and delivery processes and that organisations with a track record of delivering mixed schemes and that have the confidence of the minority communities are actively involved in the process before and after transfer

We recommend that the Council make the need to achieve a more representative ethnic mix an integral part of the planning process for the ALMO and that appropriate measures are incorporated into the contracts for the transfer of management responsibility. In addition we recommend that Registered Social Landlords with experience of managing mixed and BME housing schemes should be actively involved in the process.

Delivery

4.37 To deliver the challenge of housing renewal and replacement of the scale and nature that we recommend above we believe that a fresh approach to developing housing strategy and delivery needs to be adopted in Oldham. We have noted the existence of OHIP and accept that the Council will retain a

lead responsibility for housing strategy within the Borough. However the task is a huge one and needs a strongly focused approach if success is to be achieved without the distractions of managing large numbers of properties or the many other functions of the Council. It will also be important to link the housing renewal strategy to the other development needs of the borough which we pick up in the Regeneration and Economy Chapters of this report. For example it may be right to replace some cleared housing with non–housing uses and vice versa.

4.38 Accordingly, and on the basis of the evidence presented to us, we recommend that devising and implementing a housing regeneration strategy should be a crucial role for the Urban Regeneration Company proposed in this report. We are aware that this type of approach is currently being piloted in a number of areas including East Manchester, with some early success evident and we recommend that the potential of these models are investigated by OHIP, who could take the lead role in developing a model for the housing functions of the Urban Regeneration Company before being absorbed into it.

4.39 To make the difference now needed it is crucial that this organisation has broad membership at an appropriately senior level from key stakeholders in the housing field. This must include strong representation from private sector developers, the lending institutions and local people as well as links into the ALMO and LSP structures.

Traffic Calming

4.40 In some parts of the town traffic management schemes have been introduced. Whilst the Panel accepts the need for accident prevention measures, in some neighbourhoods, these add to a feeling of isolation and drivers' concern that they might face difficulties. This in turn adds to the perception, unjustified in our view, that some parts of the town are "no go" areas.

4.41 It also inhibits movement through areas and restricts trade and the use of facilities in some parts of Oldham.

We recommend that the Council in consultation with local communities review the current necessity and broader benefit of existing traffic management arrangements, particularly in Glodwick, by June 2002, and where actions are identified, such as removal of road humps in some areas, these should be undertaken before December 2002. We further recommend that the Council review its strategy in relation to future traffic calming in the borough, given the issues described above.

Chapter four **Housing**Chapter five

EDUCATION

Environmental Services

4.42 One issue which was mentioned by a large number of visitors to our shop was the state of cleanliness of the streets in Oldham, and a perception of white people that Asian areas were particularly prone to litter and fly tipping. We made several enquiries of the Council about this.

4.43 The position is that areas of the town where there is more poverty are more prone to this problem. This includes white areas, but those are typically less densely inhabited and there is a particular problem in some white areas of fly tipping and dumping on public open space. In the Pakistani and Bangladeshi areas, the problem is more on the streets and the back alleyways. In part, the problem in poorer areas is linked to that fact that people buy cheaper, second hand furniture and other goods which have a limited life and then need to be disposed of. The Council's recent introduction of a charge for removing large items of household waste may have contributed, but these charges are reduced for people on benefit, and there are other initiatives such as occasional provision of skips and special collections of household waste in particular areas, free of charge.

4.44 There is no doubt that the Council has had to put more effort into street cleaning operations in Glodwick, Westwood, Coppice and Werneth than in other parts of the town but the Council does have a long term strategy for dealing with the problems. It is encapsulated in the Community Litter Plan recently introduced, and specific area-based plans such as the draft Glodwick Litter Plan. A key requirement is education, for example letting people know that if they have large families they are entitled to a larger wheelie bin, or more than one. There is a big effort to educate young people across the town – the Eco Schools Project – in which the importance of a responsible attitude towards litter, waste disposal and other environmental issues is emphasised as part of the curriculum. We also commend the work of Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale to heighten awareness of environmental issues, for example by their Greening Glodwick initiative and other involvement with young people (including the Prince's Trust Volunteer programme) which has helped build bridges between communities, raise aspirations and give valuable training at the same time.

4.45 Another key part of the Council's approach to tackling fly-tipping and litter problems is enforcement, and we have seen the statistics which show that this is even handed across the different communities. In general, this is an improving situation in which Oldham has recently received a good best value report award on its performance, including its recycling performance,

and in our view it is not something on which we need to make any recommendations. We urge the Council however to maintain their efforts in this respect given its clear sensitivity with the public.

"Education is a continuous process. It starts in the home, and may continue in playgroups or nursery before school begins. It does not cease when formal education in school ends, but those schooldays constitute education's foundation. The purpose of school has always been to ensure that children acquire a basic knowledge and a capacity to learn, and that they will enter the outside world as happy and rounded, as balanced and qualified as possible: that central aim will always be there, cascading down through the generations."

'Choice and Diversity. A new framework for Schools.' DfES 1992

Pre-16 education

Introduction

- 5.1 The major issue in Oldham town is the segregated nature of society, and it is most evident in education and housing. To assume that all can be rectified overnight is totally unrealistic. Necessary action needs the support of all the residents of Oldham as we say repeatedly in this report and there must be a corporate will to enhance Oldham so that it becomes a vibrant, integrated and successful town within Greater Manchester.
- 5.2 At present, some pupils entering the education system at the age of five have rarely, if ever, had the opportunity to play, socialise with or learn alongside children from a different culture. In the current structure this may not happen until the child enters secondary education at the age of 11. It may not happen then. This occurs because parents choose their local school in their community, and Asian and white communities are quite separate.
- 5.3 The present depth of segregation has been allowed to develop over a number of years. The situation has not been successfully addressed and consequently community and educational divides are now well entrenched in Oldham. If the problem is to be addressed on the scale that is required, there must be radical solutions backed up by the resources to see them to fruition. There will have to be a willingness by all to make changes

Findings

- 5.4 In 17 Oldham primary schools minority ethnic children make up 80% of pupils and in 13 of these it is at least 90%. In six of Oldham's secondary schools minority ethnic pupils are less than 5% of the school population. In two other secondary schools they are 97% and 77% of the pupil population. (Source: January 2001 Annual School Census)
- 5.5 Overall forecasts for the numbers of children in education over the next six years show relatively minor changes in both primary and secondary sectors. Borough wide projections of school population indicate that there will be a 5.4% reduction in the primary school population over the next five years; and a 0.8% reduction in the secondary school population over the same period. This reflects a fairly stable school population generally, but action will be necessary because of changes of demand in particular areas or pressures on individual schools or groups of schools.
- 5.6 Within the overall population structure, however, it is clear from information produced by the Council's Policy Unit that there

will be a significant increase in the Bangladeshi and Pakistani populations. The number of white births is clearly on a downward trend as projected in the OMBC 1996 paper. Oldham has proportionally more children and young people than does the country as a whole, and this is particularly associated with central Oldham and with Oldham's Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities.

5.7 Four wards (Coldhurst, Werneth, St Mary's and Hollinwood) are within the 1% of wards with the highest rates of child poverty in the country. In Coldhurst and Werneth, around eight out of ten children live in poverty.

Achievements

- 5.8 The emphasis placed on education by Central Government has focused attention on measurements of school and individual pupil performance. Oldham Borough performs relatively well when compared with other Local Education Authorities (LEAs) with similar levels of deprivation and demography and education standards have risen over the last five years. However, there is still room for improvement to reach National Averages and to address the variations in the levels of attainment of the different ethnic groups and gender. In line with national trends, boys perform less well than girls.
- 5.9 In Oldham, between 1996 and 2000, the proportion of white pupils attaining 5+A*-C grades at GCSE increased from 35% to 44%. In contrast, the proportion of Pakistani pupils attaining at this level increased from 21% to 23% and Bangladeshi pupils from 20% to 27%. The gap between these groups has widened.
- 5.10 At the lower levels of attainment Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils have narrowed the gap in performance with white pupils. Between 1996 and 2000 the proportion of white pupils attaining 5+ A*-G grades at GCSE rose from 82% to 86%. The proportion of Pakistani pupils attaining at this level increased from 78% to 84% and Bangladeshi pupils from 59% to 77%.
- 5.11 The narrowing gap in levels of attainment between pupils of different ethnic groups at the middle and lower levels of attainment is a move in the right direction, but the widening gap at the highest levels of attainment is a matter of concern. Achieving 5+A*-C grades at GCSE plays an important role in determining the future educational, employment and life opportunities of young people; and some minority ethnic parents felt that the schools their children attend have much lower expectations of their children than do 'white' schools.
- 5.12 We recommend that greater emphasis be put on raising

the levels of achievement of the ethnic minority pupils, and that all pupils are set clear targets by which to measure progress and achievement. This can be achieved in individual schools through the Ethnic Minorities and Travellers Achievement Grant. We further recommend that schools and teachers focus on vital areas of support needed by individual pupils, on the effective use of in-class support, and in the innovation of fresh approaches and encouragement to ensure all pupils achieve their full potential.

5.13 There are areas of very good practice in some Oldham schools and evidence of tremendous value-added to the achievement of pupils. For example Breeze Hill School has been one of 200 pilot schools nationally involved in the introduction of value-added assessment. Breeze Hill have been able to show very good value-added achievement, being in the top 10% of the national sample. Part of the LEA strategy to raise achievement levels in schools has been the introduction of an Annual Register of Good Practice. Schools are invited to enter into this register any evidenced new initiatives and/or successful strategies they have used to raise achievement in schools. This has received little impetus, but certainly deserves greater recognition.

We recommend that better use be made of the "Areas of Good Practice Register" that is part of the LEA's strategy to share good practice. This is a valuable way of ensuring that successful initiatives benefit all schools across the Borough.

- 5.14 We are aware of the fact that key predictors for educational attainment are social class, period of residence in the UK and parental education. However, OFSTED have commented that there is a particular problem of authorised and unauthorised absence rates in Oldham.
- 5.15 In 1999/2000 both authorised and unauthorised absence rates in schools in Oldham LEA were higher than the national averages. The absence rate at primary schools has risen over the last five years. Arguably, pupils who do not maintain continuity of education through regular attendance at school are less likely to do well in assessments of their progress or in their GCSEs, increasing the risk of social exclusion. Attendance rates can be influenced by the ethos and policy of the individual school. We recommend that 'truancy sweeps' in conjunction with the police are a regular feature of the strategies adopted by the LEA to tackle this problem. We further recommend that Oldham LEA target their support and efforts to improving attendance, particularly in the primary sector.
- 5.16 The practice of extended holidays during the working terms

The Oldham corporate vision of race equality at work is that: "The Council aims to provide public services which are culturally and religiously sensitive and encourages social and economic inclusion. The Council also recognises and celebrates cultural diversity within an overall approach of promoting equity, fairness and respect for and amongst all the Borough's residents."

Oldham MBC Best Value sub committee 24th July 2001 Report of the Executive Director for Oldham MBC policy, performance and regeneration review of services to ethnic minority communities

of a school prohibit continuity of education and progression of skills for the pupils involved. Some children are able to recover, but some are not. Evidence from Oldham LEA shows a reduction of the numbers of families taking children out of school for extended periods of time following an extensive campaign entitled "Raise Attainment Through Reducing Extended Absence". However in 1999-2000 there were 665 pupils taken out of school for extended visits to Pakistan and Bangladesh, 58% for over six weeks, 31% for over 12 weeks, and 8.5% for over six months. The Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulation 1981 (SI 1981 No 1086) give the governing body of the school (acting through the Headteacher) power to grant up to ten days leave of absence each year to enable pupils to take holidays with their parents. This leave is discretionary, not an automatic entitlement. If parents request more than ten days the governing body itself is responsible for deciding whether or not to give approval. If the child is absent without the approval of the head or governing body for more than ten days the absence is unauthorised and could result in the pupil being removed from the school roll and /or proceedings against parents being taken by the LFA.

We recommend that all parents be made aware of the official regulations and legislation regarding pupils' attendance at school and the regulations about extended holidays in order to reaffirm the existing policy. Further guidance should be given to parents about the negative impact that these absences have on the child's level of attainment and the legislation should be implemented rigorously. We further recommend that Central Government be made aware of the negative impact that this situation has on a school's attendance performance. The rigorous way that school attendance figures are calculated should continue, together with the facility for recording the number/percentage of absences due to extended holidays/visits abroad. This would highlight the issue and help ensure better implementation of the regulations and consistency between schools.

5.17 There needs to be further development of vocational education in Key Stage 4 (children at age 14yrs-16yrs) to enhance the opportunities for young people. When interviewed many young people questioned the relevance of the curriculum in school to their future. This is not only an issue in Oldham, but nationally. The Learning in a Vocational Environment (LIVE) Project provides disaffected Year 10 and 11 students with a varied curriculum and potential NVQ qualifications.

We recommend that the LEA should link this work with the new Vocational GCSE initiative by DfES, to be launched in September 2002. 5.18 Oldham has been included in the third round of Excellence in Cities (EiC) Partnerships. The aim of EiC is to raise standards in all schools. Oldham has used this initiative to develop many areas of school provision.

We recommend that the identification through the EiC agenda of the top 10% of gifted and talented pupils in participating schools should be used to set up "Master Classes" at Key Stage 4, or a "Gifted and Talented Academy". This would not remove the more able from their existing schools, but would enhance the provision for the talented pupils, and bring together pupils from different schools and cultures, thus furthering the social inclusion agenda.

5.19 The initiative 'Grow Our Own' introduced by the Director of Education and Culture is a very positive move to open up pathways for young people to develop to their full potential. It allows young employees in the Education Division in positions such as, for example, Learning Mentors, Classroom Assistants or Bi-lingual Assistants to progress to higher levels gaining experience and qualifications en route. Applications have been positively sought from disadvantaged areas of the Borough.

We recommend that this initiative be pursued with vigour, and progress against targets reviewed regularly by the Director and Oldham Cabinet Member for Education.

5.20 Oldham has one "Sure Start" programme, which is operational in Hollinwood Ward, and one at the planning stage in the Westwood area. A further two will be implemented in 2002. Sure Start aims to improve education through play, socialisation and, in the case of ethnic minority children is a major means of communication through English language Further recommendations on the English language are found later in this Chapter. The education of young children through play and socialisation with their peers is a vital part of their development. Another advantage is that Sure Start brings together parents from many different communities.

We recommend that the Director of Education, working closely with relevant voluntary organisations, should prepare by March 2002 a major publicity campaign reminding parents of the importance of involvement in the development of their offspring, with regular attendance at such facilities. We recommend that Sure Start should be extended to other areas of the Borough. The costing of this would be approximately £3 million per year for the next 10 years. We further recommend that the Department for Education and Skills recognise the necessity to include in all rebuild of schools, primary and secondary, Family Learning Facilities.

The present Education Building Regulations, Bulletin 82, based on 'surface area per pupil' can work against this much needed facility if parents are to be involved in the education of their children, or personally involved in an Adult Learning/Skills programme. We further recommend that the DfES with some urgency update the present building regulations to ensure that they offer far more flexibility and that they reflect the new agenda for inclusive education and today's curriculum. This joined-up policy approach would thus reflect today's needs in educational facilities.

School Segregation and Schools Admissions Policies

5.21 At present the majority of the schools of Oldham serve the community in which they are situated. Because of the nature of the surrounding housing, segregation has naturally been extended to the schools. However, some of it has been caused by 'white flight' from both areas and schools. In our view, which is shared by many Oldhamers from different ethnic backgrounds who spoke to us, this segregation is a matter of deep concern, since it lays the foundation for lack of contact with and understanding of people from different ethnic groups. This in turn invites misconceptions and social divides. It is a high priority to tackle this problem. We looked at, and rejected, the idea of the bussing of pupils around the Borough, which has been highly controversial wherever attempted, of dubious success rate and contrary to the concept of parental choice. Oldham has adopted a strategy of improvement at all of its schools and is seeking to make local schools the first choice of parents in the area to enhance integration in the schools. Nevertheless,

We recommend that more consideration should be given to 'catchment areas' of schools, particularly where they are near the boundary between white and Asian areas, to try to encourage the integration of all groups into schools.

5.22 In this context, we were very disappointed that, despite all the difficulties, little thought seemed to have been given at the opening of the new Burnley Brow (ex-Eustace Street) school in Westwood, to the possibility of trying to attract children from the neighbouring white areas, which border the school. This school is a successful school and parents have expressed their willingness to place their children in a school which has a high success rate.

We recommend that wherever possible the rebuild of schools should make the opportunity for further integration of pupils, giving them and the school a new start. Far more encouragement needs to be given to parents to visit schools close to them that appear to serve only the needs of another ethnic group to their own. There are too many

misconceptions concerning the education of other ethnic groups from both Asian and white parents. An 'Open Door' policy needs to be adopted by all. We further recommend that all schools celebrate their success so that this success is heard of in the public domain, and thus enhances people's perceptions of the quality of education offered.

5.23 In the Oldham secondary sector are two Voluntary Aided Church of England Schools, which are both co-educational, and two Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Schools, which are also co-educational. In these schools, the school governors have decided admissions policies in accordance with the ethos and origins of the schools, and in at least one case. Blue Coat, its founding statutes. Blue Coat and Crompton House restrict entry to Anglicans, though Crompton House is now beginning to admit non-Anglican Christians. To qualify as an Anglican, a child must have regularly attended a Church of England with one parent for a period of years. Lord Dearing's report to the Archbishops' Council recommended that Anglican faith schools should be more inclusive of children of other faiths in the locality. Our Lady's admits only Roman Catholic children, whilst St Augustine's has opened 10% of its places to non Roman Catholics, including Muslims for a number of years. With the exception of St Augustine's, therefore, these schools are not making a significant contribution to integration between Asian and white communities and, in our view, are contributing institutionally to division within the town. Given that they are faith schools, it is understandable that they should primarily serve children of their particular faith, but, as the example of St Augustine's shows, it is possible to admit a significant number of adherents of other faiths without fundamentally undermining a school's ethos. The contribution which Blue Coat School, in particular, given its central location and proximity to the Asian parts of town, could make to integration is considerable. Given the high standards of these faith schools, we are confident that they would be popular with Asian parents if they had the option.

We recommend that the Governors of Blue Coat, Crompton House and Our Lady's, with the relevant diocesan authorities, review admissions policies and take whatever steps may be necessary to amend foundation deeds so as to offer between 10 and 20 % of places to pupils from other faiths. This, in turn, may mean a reduction of the high percentage of pupils (50%) attending some of these schools from outside Oldham. It is not widely known that these schools already offer open admission at Sixth Form level, so that Muslim children are able to attend at that stage in their careers. We further recommend that this open admission policy be widely publicised.

5.24 A very significant sum of education funds – £6.4 million across the schools in the Borough is held in the form of 'school balances' with the approval of individual schools' Governing Bodies. The LEA, through the Director of Education and Culture is working with Heads and Governing Bodies to ensure that these funds are used and that the individual schools balances reduce. In our view, this provides an opportunity not only to improve educational resources, but also to focus on possible strategies to encourage integration. This should be a priority for all schools and governing bodies, wherever located in Oldham.

We recommend that immediate steps be taken to ensure that money designated for the benefit of today's children should be spent on facilities, resources and initiatives that will benefit them. Schools and governing bodies should look at the possibility of using such funds to develop links with schools with a different ethnic mix, and should ensure that the money is designated for a specific purpose and not just as contingency monies.

5.25 In the United States 'magnet schools' attempt to encourage voluntary de-segregation by up-grading the quality of the education and educational premises so as to attract white students to schools in inner city areas. This policy has not created an incentive for residential re-location but has begun to de-segregate schools.

5.26 In Northern Ireland, integration has been achieved successfully in schools which are non-sectarian, and have been given additional resources by the state, as beacon schools. Given the problems of achieving integration by other means, and the long-term nature of measures to achieve residential integration proposed in the Housing Chapter, in our view attracting parents to send their children to schools because they are better resourced and have better standards must be a key part of the strategy. One possible approach is through acquisition of Specialist School status, which a number of schools in Oldham are bidding to achieve.

We recommend that the Director of Education and a group of secondary heads who are working towards Specialist School status should meet with DfES before March 2002 to draw up a strategy for using the new status to achieve integration. The American and Northern Ireland examples should be studied as part of this approach.

Social Inclusion and Citizenship

5.27 The 'Oldham Schools Linking Project' has as its aim the bringing together of young people from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds in order to break down some of the barriers, which

exist between different communities in Oldham. The project targets primary age pupils and uses the curriculum as a natural delivery vehicle. Working closely together allows children to gain more understanding of each other's cultures and identity. This exchange is the basis of better understanding and social inclusion on Oldham. There are currently 30 Oldham Primary schools involved in some way with this project. Funding has been secured for the next two years but it needs sustaining. Future targets for the project include a theatre project in collaboration with Oldham Theatre Workshop.

We recommend this initiative be pursued with vigour. It enhances social inclusion and is a positive move towards integration of children. We further recommend to Central Government that an annual funding sum of £30,000 be secured to ensure its future. This funding should be specific to the needs of Oldham – though no doubt it would have to be part of a wider programme covering similar areas – and be granted on a guaranteed basis for five years to provide the possibility of forward thinking and continuity. In addition we recommend that the DfES should continue to develop models for partnerships between schools.

5.28 Two key themes of social inclusion, one to improve local quality of life and the other to tackle discrimination and promote equal opportunities, are central to the core values set out in the Oldham Framework Document, produced by the Oldham Partnership Board. The document 'Excellence in Schools' (DfES) recognised inequality of educational achievement as a key factor placing young people at risk of isolation, non-participation and social exclusion later in life. Equal opportunity is one of the broad set of common values and purposes which underpin the school curriculum, and the work of schools. In our view, a key priority for Oldham is to develop a programme for young people on what it means to be a citizen in an ethnically diverse town, what are the rights and responsibilities which go with citizenship, what are the core values relating to being British and being an Oldhamer, and what are the different cultural backgrounds within that context which thrive in Oldham. Education in such a programme will give pupils the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels. It will also encourage pupils to play an active part in the life of their school, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world. The Government is developing its own thinking on citizenship and the subject is to be introduced into the National Curriculum for all pupils in 2002. Subject to the outcome of that work, we recommend the development of a programme of citizenship, on the above lines, by the LEA in liaison with schools, for introduction into the curriculum in September 2002.

"Social cohesion does not rest simply with minority communities integrating into British life, but on whole communities reviewing their futures."

Ouseley 2001: 'Community pride not prejudice'

5.29 In 1995 there was an Equal Opportunities Policy and a Race Policy developed within the Education Division but its impact has been patchy and ad hoc. At present there is a review underway by the LEA to measure the effectiveness of the policies. The majority of schools have developed their own policies, some of which are extremely effective and each school should have identified a co-ordinator for Equal Opportunity issues. Organisations in the area of education training and employment have leadership roles in promoting an Equal Opportunities environment.

We recommend that the LEA monitor the effectiveness of both its Equal Opportunity Policy and Racial Harmony Policy in schools across the Borough, with immediate effect and annually thereafter.

5.30 The 'Unity in the Community' project is an area of good practice which needs support from Oldham as a whole. It is relevant to the education agenda, and we describe it more fully in the Leisure Chapter of this report.

Language

5.31 One of the most difficult issues we faced as a Panel was the role of the English language in Oldham and its correct relationship with the mother tongues of people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. This was voiced frequently as a matter of concern by white and African-Caribbean Oldhamers, either in the shop or at meetings elsewhere. Altogether 150 visitors to the shop raised issues about the place of English in Oldham's society, the great majority of them white.

5.32 The main concerns of white and African Caribbean people we spoke to were that English was the language of the town and of England as a whole, and was therefore the only language which should be used for the conduct of business, in official or unofficial documents emanating from public authorities, and in public institutions such as schools. To a very considerable extent this is, of course, exactly how things are. But the translation of documents and public notices into other languages, the widespread availability of interpreters at public expense, and the teaching of English as an additional language at school, or other support to young children in their mother tongues, were resented. There was an element of fear in some white people's reactions, that their own culture was in some way threatened by the widespread speaking of other languages in what had always been a mono-lingual town. Police and health workers also commented that a lack of fluency in English, and the consequent need to use interpretation services, impeded their ability to deliver an effective service.

5.33 Within the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, there is no less recognition of the importance of English. It is seen as the language of educational, social and economic advancement. There is a strong desire that children in particular should acquire good English, as one way to overcome educational and economic disadvantage. To this extent, there is commonality between the views of white and Asian Oldhamers. The latter quite understandably wish to maintain cultural identity, including knowledge of mother tongues, but also recognise that the prime responsibility for achieving that lies within the home. Many Asian families welcome the opportunity for their children to study the mother tongues as academic subjects at school. It is important that these subjects should continue to be offered.

5.34 Problems do arise when children arrive at school with very little command of English and this is quite often the case. For example, in Glodwick Primary School 129 children out of 133 started school in September 2000 with little or no English language skills, as defined by the Council's needs assessment survey, and there are similar figures for most other schools in predominantly Asian areas. As we comment elsewhere, educational attainment amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi children is generally lower, at all stages of their careers, than the achievements of white pupils, and in our view lack of early years' exposure to English is a contributory factor, although certainly not the only one.

5.35 At present, support is given to children through specific English as an Additional Language programmes, and such programmes are essential in current circumstances. In our view, parents have a responsibility to ensure that when their children start school they do speak enough English for lessons to be conducted in English, but this is impossible at present when there are many parents who do not themselves have enough command of the language to help their children. This is particularly the case where young parents have arrived from the sub-continent with no knowledge of English. This is an issue which the Government has been considering with regard to future immigrants in similar circumstances. In our view it needs an effective answer if children's education is not to suffer, if employment prospects are to be improved and if in the medium to longer term (since it will take a generation or two) language barriers in Oldham are to be removed.

5.36 For current residents of Oldham who lack fluency in English we recommend an intensive programme of English teaching, linked to neighbourhood schools, and focused in particular on young parents to achieve this. This will require amongst other solutions, outreach teachers, working in the communities, to ensure maximum impact. Sure Start could

be a mechanism to achieve this. The aim should be to help young mothers, and fathers, both for their benefit and more importantly that of their children. This programme should make a decisive and definitive impact on this problem and will need to last for five years. This should be underpinned by a high profile publicity programme which highlights the benefits of fluency in the English language.

Parental Responsibilities

5.37 The reality of living in a multi-cultural society must become a central feature of a child's education and socialisation. The primary responsibility for this process lies within the family and home. Parents/Guardians and the extended family unit are the role models for the children. If parents display entrenched attitudes and the stereotyping of people from different ethnic groups, then that message will influence a child's thinking and perceptions of the society in which they live. Such intolerance will be perpetuated unless and until children are encouraged to integrate with people of other ethnic origin.

5.38 It is widely recognised that housing and educational choices produce market effects, which generate segregation. The patterns of identity and, in some cases, underlying racism implied by these choices need to be addressed by individuals. These choices are the rights of all people, but serious consideration needs to be given to the needs of future generations of Oldham citizens.

We recommend that all parents are mindful of their responsibility to equip their children in the most positive ways to develop the skills and attitudes needed to live in a multicultural society.

5.39 The children of Oldham are the future of the town. If the future is to be vibrant and successful, then every effort has to be made to enhance the educational and employment opportunities of the younger generation. The responsibility for this is in the hands of every citizen of Oldham. Each person could make a difference to the future of this Borough.

Post-16 education and training

Findings

5.40 Oldham's comparatively young population, with its particularly large number, proportionately, of young people from the ethnic minorities, has big implications for further education (FE). Overall, young people in Oldham are less likely to go into FE (66.6%) than the national average (70.6%), with more females (72.5%) going into FE than males (64.8%).

5.41 The following table gives the analysis by ethnic group of where people went on leaving school. This shows that African-Caribbean students were least likely to go into FE, whilst white school leavers were most likely to go into full time employment (16.1%) – retention rates of white pupils in post-16 education in Oldham are below the national average. Though not shown on the chart because of small sample size, Indian and Chinese young people are most likely to go into FE.

5.42 Qualifications at age 18 also vary significantly between the ethnic groups, with Indians, Chinese and white people more likely to achieve high qualifications than African-Caribbeans, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis.

5.43 On Post-18, a lower proportion of Oldham young people apply for higher education (HE), than the national average; in this respect Oldham is in line with towns of a similar socio-economic make up.

5.44 Adult skill levels, as measured formally, are low in Oldham. A Basic Skills Annual Report, 1998/9, showed that between 12 and 15 of the wards in the Borough had well over the national average of adults with 'very low' literacy and numeracy levels (15% and 12% respectively), and other studies have shown that many of the adult visitors to libraries in the town have very little experience of using IT.

5.45 From the evidence presented to us we would highlight the following:

- a) Students and teachers commented on the enormous mental jump from GCSEs to A levels, and in some cases the lack of preparation for this, and lack of explanation of choices.
- b) Low qualifications did lead to reduced job opportunities and exclusion from society's benefits, but at the same time it could be difficult to find training which led into jobs.
- c) Some young women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities said it was difficult to leave Oldham for HE opportunities because of parental concerns about distance and personal safety.

- d) Even those with degrees often could not find appropriate employment in Oldham eg. young Asian men with degrees forced to become taxi drivers.
- e) Adults across the spectrum felt there was not enough opportunity in their areas to acquire more skills or knowledge.
 Some women of Asian origin expressed disappointment at the lack of easy access to English lessons.
- f) Many commented on the lack of education on how to be a good citizen in Oldham. We pick this up in the Governance Chapter of this report.

Further (FE) and Higher (HE) Education in Oldham

5.46 From a social perspective, FE colleges in Oldham have provided some young people with their first experience of working in an integrated environment in the Borough. As we have noted, this is often not the experience of children at school. The two FE colleges showed a determination, from the very top, to increase its social interaction between students within the college and they enforce rigorous rules to that effect. These include strong anti-harassment procedures, with a strong code of conduct communicated to all students and staff when they arrive at the colleges. Both colleges have attempted to increase the numbers of student and staff from different ethnic backgrounds, and encourage a strong sense of ownership, with an annual 'celebrating diversity' competition open to all students. (Even so, they are not immune from tensions and pressures in the town more generally, and the amount of actual interaction, despite best efforts, can be limited by student's own preferences and in the wake of the events of 11th September, the colleges have seen a significant increase in tensions.)

5.47 The Oldham Business Management School (OBMS) is the only HE outlet in Oldham. It offers a number of courses at present, with the potential to offer more from Huddersfield, Manchester and Salford Universities. It should be accessible to some girls from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds, who are at present, reluctant to travel outside Oldham for HE opportunities, and since at present, young people who graduate outside the borough, tend to obtain employment outside, it may help to retain skills in Oldham which would otherwise be lost to the town. There is a question whether OBMS has managed to attract enough of the less qualified white young people in Oldham who lack further and higher education motivation.

Transition to post-16 Education and Employment

5.48 We share concern about the gap between preparing for GCSEs and the curriculum demands of A levels. The Oldham Local Learning Partnership (OLLP) consider that the situation has been significantly worsened because students now have only two terms rather than two years in the past, to be prepared for

their AS exams. This is a particular problem for students from lower socio-economic groups who may have less external help or family experience of post-16 education. The academic route is in any case not suitable for all young people, and some have told us that a more vocationally based education needs to be developed prior to 16 (see paragraph 5.17 above). This is not, of course, an issue unique to Oldham.

5.49 Although staying on rates into FE from some minority ethnic groups are higher, there is evidence that they enter at lower entry levels compared with white and Indian counterparts. Bangladeshi, Pakistani and African-Caribbean young people are less like to study for academic qualifications, more likely to opt for foundation level and NVQ courses in FE colleges, depending in part on prior GCSE achievement.

5.50 We have come across figures showing that during 2001 there were 67.9% of white Year 11 school leavers who were staying on in further education but 12.5% of those were staying on below the NVQ level. The comparable figures for Year 11 school leavers of minority ethnic origin were 79.7% and 27% respectively. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of minority ethnic and white young people leave further education with lower qualifications and achievements.

5.51 We also heard from some young people that Connexions, as it is now being piloted, was better at advice on education than help getting them into jobs. There was also some concern that it was not, at least as yet, developing its outreach strategy into local communities as well as it would need to.

We recommend that to improve transition there needs to be better partnerships between Year 11 and Year 12 course organisers and that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Connexions, schools and colleges should work together to provide study programmes and materials to assist this process. We further recommend that Connexions, working with the LSC and OLLP, should develop stronger links with employers and that they should bear in mind as they develop their service the comments about the need for better outreach to local communities.

Transition to Higher Education

 $5.52\,$ More needs to be done to improve access to HE, given the relatively low rates of HE entry in Oldham.

We recommend that DfES's Excellence Challenge Initiative, designed to increase achievement and aspirations among young people to improve uptake of HE places, be extended to Oldham

Vocational Opportunities and the New Deal

5.53 A study of the New Deal in Oldham highlights that minority ethnic young people are more likely to be placed in basic skills training on the New Deal despite the fact that they entered with high levels of qualification. We welcome the appointment of a new Training & Employer Adviser by the Employment Service with a remit to help minority ethnic clients with the different options and to provide other advice, but more needs to be done to ensure that they benefit from all the five options of the New Deal scheme. It needs to be better marketed in the local communities and there also has to be much more work with employers to ensure that they have effective equal opportunities policies.

We recommend that the Employment Service should investigate this and also, with the LSC and Connexions, consider how good and successful experiences of training are more widely publicised to overcome young people's negative experiences.

5.54 If a person's English is weak then he or she is sent to a New Deal Independent Assessor who assesses this and the client will be sent on a 13 week English course as part of the Gateway to Work programme. However, if the client has no knowledge of English then no action is taken and the individual retains benefit. This is perceived by white people as unfair and we agree.

We recommend that the Employment Service incorporate the learning of English from scratch into the New Deal so that where a client needs it, it is a requirement of claiming benefit.

5.55 We were not satisfied with the level of data on 16 to 24 years olds' education, or on adult learners across the Borough. In many cases it was not desegregated by ethnic group, let alone gender across different ethnic groups, which made it difficult to identity the exact nature of the skills deficit in the Borough.

We recommend that the Council, Connexions, the OLLP and the LSC carry out more detailed analysis to identify the needs and concerns of post-16 years olds, and that this evidence be published.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

Oldham as we have noted was once the world centre of cotton spinning, with over 60,000 employed in the industry in 1911 and almost 20,000 in engineering, much of this textile machinery making. Most of this industry has now gone and although the area is still more dependent on manufacturing than the average town the economy is more skewed than ever before towards the service sector.

Unemployment at 3.6%, 4.2% on the Labour Force Survey basis, is by historic standards comparatively low but much of the employment is low paid and the unemployment is disproportionately concentrated in the poorer parts of the town and in particular among the ethnic minority communities. A key priority for Oldham is to raise people's aspirations, encourage youngsters to improve their skill levels to national and international standards and on that basis to attract new investment to what is an inherently attractive place. All this needs to be in line with the vision we have already said is necessary.

- 6.2 This chapter should be read closely with the Regeneration chapter of the report, since that chapter contains recommendations about development within Oldham which will produce economic benefit and jobs for all communities. The main emphasis in the Employment and Economy Chapter is on improving access to employment for those communities which are most disadvantaged in the labour market.
- 6.3 We have found the following to support our arguments in this Chapter:
- a) of over 1,000 public submissions to the Panel, 15% including economy and jobs as an issue of concern;
- b) of the town's 1,000 large and medium sized businesses only 30, which includes the public sector, have more than 300 employees, whilst the majority have 50 or under. The town is becoming increasingly dependent upon its 4,700 small businesses of which many employ three or less;
- c) unemployment in Oldham stands at 4.2%. However, many wards of Oldham have unemployment rates higher than the average for the region and the UK. In Coldhurst and Werneth for example, it stands at 11% and amongst groups such as the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, it is at 25%, whilst in one of the most deprived white wards, Hollinwood, it is at 6%;
- d) unemployment rates for young people aged 16 to 19 are particularly high and at 8.9% are more than twice the Borough average. Youth unemployment is a particular blight in the inner urban areas, when it peaks at 20.9% in the St Mary's ward;
- e) nearly six out of ten jobs (58%) in the town are in relatively low paying industries;
- major public sector employers in Oldham have a workforce unrepresentative of the town's ethnic groups. Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, with an employee population of 11,621, only have 2.63% BME employees; and
- g) 95% of 400 businesses surveyed said that they had been affected by the riots; worst affected were the taxi and restaurant trade and businesses located in Union Street.

A key priority for Oldham is to raise people's aspirations, encourage youngsters to improve their skill levels to national and international standards and on that basis to attract new investment to what is an inherently attractive place.

The Local Economy

6.4 The pattern of Oldham's adjustment to the change in its economy has impacted on many but most severely on those from the town's ethnic minority groups who had originally met the demand for cheap labour as well as unsociable shift work which had become unpopular with white people. At Shiloh Mill, for example, there were over 100 men of mainly Pakistani ethnic origin out of 450 working at night shifts 'whilst white people worked at day times'. Most of them worked at Shiloh for 25 years. Now Shiloh has no spinning business nor associated employment.

- 6.5 In adjusting to change in the economy, those with transferable skills found themselves able to find employment locally or further afield. Those without such skills found themselves on the dole, in self-employment or learning new skills. This impacted on many but most of all on people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic origin since racial discrimination in a more competitive labour market, poor command of English, lack of transferable skills and often poor health stemming from their previous employment made them particularly vulnerable.
- 6.6 The new economy for Oldham has meant a mix of manufacturing, distribution and other service industries, with a significant representation of high technology industry. Names in distribution include Littlewoods, Great Universal Stores, and B&Q Warehousing whereas manufacturing, service and high technology names include Siemens, Marconi, Bae Systems, HMSO, the Daily Mirror, SSL, Sun Alliance, L'Oreal, and Northern Foods.
- 6.7 Whilst this economic restructuring has been enormously important for the town many of the new employers provide far fewer jobs than in the past. For example, of the town's 1,000 large and medium sized businesses only 30, which includes the public sector, have more than 200 employees whilst the majority have 50 or under. The town is becoming increasingly dependent on its 4,700 small businesses many of which employ three or less.
- 6.8 Oldham continues to be a predominantly low wage economy and new investors have in the past been attracted by low labour costs but this is no longer a viable basis for growth in a global market where more and more large companies can outsource in developing countries because of even lower labour costs. Oldham cannot, and should not if it is to have a prosperous future, compete on low cost but on providing the skills and other attractions needed by employers in a modern economy.

6.9 This includes availability of sites for development. Whilst many of the old mills have been reused successfully for distribution and other purposes, there is a shortage of good quality sites in Oldham suitable for modern use. In the Regeneration Chapter we refer to the potential of development corridors in Oldham and the role in this respect of the proposed Urban Regeneration Company. No less important will be improved access to jobs arising in Manchester and elsewhere in the conurbation.

Employment and Unemployment

- 6.10 Unemployment in Oldham stands at 3.6%. However, many wards of Oldham have unemployment rates higher than the average for the region and the UK. In Coldhurst and Werneth for example it stands at 11% and amongst groups such as the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities it is at 25%. Moreover, the four wards with the highest unemployment rates Alexandra, Coldhurst, Werneth, and St. Mary's also contain the highest proportions of minority ethnic residents. In the white parts of Oldham, Hollinwood's unemployment rate is 6% and St James' 5.5%.
- 6.11 The increasing unemployment levels, particularly among young people in Oldham was also brought to our attention. Overall the unemployment figures for young people (age 16-24) in Oldham is rising in contrast to trends in Greater Manchester and nationally. Among the 16-19 year olds Oldham has the second highest unemployment rate (8.1%) in Greater Manchester and among the 20-24 year olds Oldham has the highest unemployment rate (10.2%).
- 6.12 Nearly six out of ten jobs in the Borough are in relatively low paying industries. Notwithstanding the local decline in manufacturing at 30.9% it is still the main type of employment in the Borough with distribution, hotels and restaurants at 27.3%. Employment in relatively higher paid sectors is underrepresented in the Borough with banking, finance, and insurance accounting for 8.2% of employment.
- 6.13 The 1999 New Earning Survey shows that the average gross weekly full-time earnings in Oldham are £344.30, 86% of the national average and the third lowest in Greater Manchester. The average rate of pay of jobs on offer in Oldham Job Centre in April 1999 was £4.19, the lowest hourly rate in Greater Manchester.

Improving Opportunities for Young People

6.14 There is an urgent need to improve the skills and qualifications of the workforce, nearly 30% of whom have no qualifications. There is evidence of some improvement, for example the fact that the Oldham College, Oldham Sixth Form College and the newly established Oldham Business Management School now cater for 60% of young people who continue into further education.

6.15 However, there are those who are low achievers but engage in further education below the NVQ level and end up being unemployed and eventually on New Deal options or some sort of seasonal work. There are others, who simply have low aspirations. Most of the low achievers in Oldham end up having low paid and often casual work either in the distribution, retail or warehousing trades and once embarked upon this they are unlikely to get a decent full-time job in their lifetime. The idea should be, therefore, to target this group of people whilst still in full-time education through mentoring projects.

6.16 We also found that many parents of Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic origin placed high importance on the education of their children and had very high aspirations and expectations of them. Young people, however, were not given the guidance to help realise these expectations. There was also a lack of models or 'champions' in the community for the young people to follow. Community leaders were neither seen as champions or models for the young people.

6.17 We make a number of specific recommendations on how young people can be helped to make the transition into work in Chapter 5 Post-16 Education.

Employment and Equal Opportunities

6.18 A great number of people told us that they were discriminated against because of their postcode, or that they lived in 'Oldham'. Others gave more specific evidence of racial discrimination in the labour market and its demotivating effects. For example, though we did not test this ourselves, we were told of nearly identical job applications being made in different names, some clearly of Asian heritage and others white and only the latter being invited for interview. Still others mentioned prejudice against the wearing of clothes such as the hijab; one young woman who wore the hijab and did get a job, in Manchester, overheard a conversation between two colleagues on the lines "she's alright really – she thinks like a westerner". There were concerns too about the effects of September 11 and subsequent military action on the way white people will look at Asians and therefore on job prospects.

We recommend that the Government in its review of the law on religious discrimination should specifically tackle discrimination against people in the labour market.

6.19 As we have mentioned elsewhere in the report, awareness of where language and behaviour may be racist is at a low level in many parts of Oldham and we were dismayed that this even extended to some senior figures in the public and private sectors. We found it surprising that in a multi-cultural town like Oldham some senior officials did not understand that words like 'coloureds' are offensive. Nor was there sufficient understanding of racial equality issues, how racism affects people and communities and how equality for all should be promoted.

6.20 Few of the public sector organisations which claimed to have equal opportunities policies employed many ethnic minority staff. For example, the Council is one of the biggest employers in the town. It has had a legal duty under the Race Relations Act since 1976 to do two things: firstly, to work towards the elimination of racial discrimination, and secondly, to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations between people of different racial groups. The new Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 extends this legal duty to all public sector organisations.

6.21 However, out of the 11,621 employees of the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council only 2.63% are recorded as being from the black and minority ethnic communities – there are 74 Bangladeshis (0.65% of the workforce); 137 Pakistanis (1.18% of the workforce); four Black Africans; 23 Black Caribbeans and six Chinese. None are at senior management levels. Similarly, the Oldham NHS Trust has 3,840 staff of whom only 7.5% are of minority ethnic origin We comment elsewhere on the lack of black and minority ethnic police officers in the town and a number of people informed us of the difficulties they faced even in becoming Special Constables with Oldham Police. These are only a few public sector examples.

6.22 In our view the persistent failure of the Council and other major employers to face up to their responsibility to reflect the ethnic diversity of the town within their workforce has impaired their ability to respond adequately to the needs of the whole community. There is too little understanding of what a truly sensitive set of policies needs to be. This is one form of what the McPherson report meant by 'institutional' racism. Some local authorities have a much better track record of employing BME staff. For example, Haringey Council has had 40% or so BME staff for at least ten years, albeit in rather different demographic and social circumstances.

In our view the persistent failure of the Council and other major employers to face up to their responsibility to reflect the ethnic diversity of the town within their workforce has impaired their ability to respond adequately to the needs of the whole community.

We recommend that working with the Commission for Racial Equality, drawing on best practice models from around the country, and having regard to their obligations under the race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Council should draw up a strategy by May 2002 for achieving a representative workforce in the shortest practicable time. We recognise that the Council is downsizing which makes this harder but there is still a significant turnover of staff. We also recommend that the other major public sector employers should follow a similar strategy, linked to the policies of their parent organisations.

6.23 It is also open to the Council and the other public sector employers, to carry out a programme of positive action, including training, to attract employees into jobs from the black and minority ethnic communities, eg. where they need qualifications which typically they do not possess. Manchester College of Arts and Technology has experience of working with the emergency and enforcement services in Manchester on such lines, and we are confident that Oldham College too would be able to assist. In the particular case of Oldham, it may make sense for all the major public sector employers to collaborate on such an initiative, and we recommend that the Council, Police, and Health Service employers should collaborate on devising such a strategy.

6.24 Recruitment is one thing, ensuring that employees realise their potential within the organisation is another. Part of the answer is ensuring that people have the requisite training and skill development within the workforce, and we recommend that all the major employers in the town, public and private sector, should take into specific consideration the development needs of black and minority ethnic employees, as part of their wider training and development strategy. The CRE and OREP have said that they will be happy to assist.

6.25 We have less information about employment of BME staff and employment policies within the private sector, though such information as we have suggests that in many cases the track record is even worse. We would urge private sector employers to carry out an audit of their numbers of staff from different ethnic backgrounds, and recruitment and development strategies, in line with the proposals addressed to the public sector above.

6.26 If these strategies are to be effective, staff within organisations must be aware of the diverse society that they live in, and the need for sensitivity, appropriate behaviour and language in the work situation. A recommendation from the McPherson report was that employers should implement training for the staff about community and race relations. It is notable

that the Council, as the leading employer in the town, does not provide this training on a mandatory basis for all staff. Cultural awareness training is covered in a one-day course, which aims to:

- a) improve knowledge and understanding of Oldham's ethnic communities:
- b) relate the knowledge gained to working practices; and
- c) allow the knowledge learnt to be implemented in the workplace.

6.27 This course is welcomed but has had only a limited impact, as it is not mandatory. In fact, because it is not compulsory some managers have been reluctant to let staff attend as this would be at a cost, ie loss of staff and the necessity to cover the post in absence. The Social Services Department has ensured all staff are trained, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

We recommend that the Council make this training compulsory for all Council employees, both existing and new staff. This will have benefits internally as staff become more sensitive to the needs of other cultures. It will also help to ensure that racial discrimination, deliberate or unintentional is eradicated from the Council. This will assist in the recruitment and the retention of minority ethnic employees in the Council. The Council should ensure that all staff are trained by April 2003. The training provided must also be open to scrutiny and independent evaluation as to its effectiveness. We further recommend that other employers in the town consider their training provision in this area and implement a similar policy.

Contracts

6.28 Major providers of services in the town, such as the Health Service employers and the Council, and major developers such as Housing Associations, can influence future employment patterns in the town partly by their contracting function. We were told, for instance, that some housing associations did not have Asian contractors on their approved lists of tenderers. On the face of it, in a town like Oldham this is strange, and we recommend all organisations, particularly those receiving a substantial amount of public funding, to review their contracting policies urgently to ensure that there is no unfairness.

6.29 Another way to prevent discrimination is the insertion of local labour clauses in contracts. There have been difficulties about this in the past, relating to European law, but the CRE can provide advice and we recommend that all public sector

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employers should discuss with the CRE the potential for helping local people benefit from contracts.

Entrepreneurship

6.30 Given the proportion of small businesses in Oldham, support for start-ups and small business development in the town is of great importance. There are good examples in other parts of the country of initiatives to help small BME-owned businesses grow, and there is considerable potential, eg. in the clothing trade and food-related businesses to mention only two obvious cases. There are examples too of groups of women being encouraged to form co-operatives in businesses such as clothing manufacture.

We recommend that the North Manchester Business Link working with the Chamber of Commerce, North West Regional Development Agency and the Oldham Asian Business Association should develop a strategy to help entrepreneurs across the communities, based on the best examples of practice elsewhere.

Impact of Riots on Business

6.31 One of the most serious by products of the riots was a big impact on the levels of business activity in Oldham. 95% of 400 businesses surveyed said that they had been affected. Worst affected were the taxi and restaurant trade and businesses located on Union Street, some of which lost a very large part of their business for some weeks, but we are pleased to report that there has been a significant recovery, and in particular the retail sector has reported buoyant growth. Oldham is now making a strong recovery.

6.32 The activities of organisations such as the British National Party and National Front can cause serious disruption to town centre trading. So can the threat of such activity, or counter activity staged by organisations such as the Anti-Nazi League, even when it does not materialise. This strengthens the case for the recommendation we make in the policing Chapter about extending the scope of banning orders beyond marches, to include other forms of activity.

Future Developments and Implications

6.33 We comment in the Regeneration Chapter on the importance of new transport links and the role of our proposed new Urban Regeneration Company. In the Governance Chapter, we comment on the need for a new vision for the town. These are highly relevant to the economic development of the future.

6.34 We approve previous attempts of the Spindles and Town Square Shopping Centre to promote diversity in the town, eg. celebrating not just the major Christian festivals, but also Eid. Regrettably these have been disrupted by racist behaviour and therefore no longer take place.

We recommend that the Oldham Town Centre Partnership should take advice from the new Race and Diversity Committee on how to develop further initiatives of this kind to celebrate local diversity.

6.35 We commend the developments in the leisure, tourism and cultural industries within Oldham, for example, the Rochdale and Huddersfield Canal developments and the Cultural Quarter.

We recommend that the appropriate funding bodies, including North West Arts, North West Tourist Board, North West Development Agency and appropriate lottery funds should recognise the special needs of Oldham as a multi-cultural town and support the continued effective development of these initiatives.

Oldham as a whole experiences worse standards of health than the national average, with the poor white areas having serious levels of circulatory and thoracic diseases, and the Asian population being notably the worst off when it comes to a considerable number of diseases.

Although health was raised by only a small minority of those who we interviewed, 3%, the linkage between health, poverty and the disproportionate disadvantage suffered by the black and minority ethnic population of Oldham means that we had to take these issues seriously. A more effective strategy for handling them will be important for the future.

7.2 Health and income inequalities are closely linked and inter-related with other aspects of social exclusion. Lower income can have an impact on health, preventing people from having a healthy diet, making it harder to keep their homes warm and free from damp and restricting access to leisure and recreation activities. Ill health impacts on an adult's ability to participate in the labour market, and children's and young people's ability to participate in education. These are all critical factors for our Review.

Findings

Death Rates

7.3 People in Oldham are 28% more likely to die prematurely compared with the average for England and Wales and in Alexandra and Hollinwood Wards, rates of premature death are more than twice the national average. There is no major cause of death in Oldham that has a premature death rate lower than the England and Wales average. Rates at which people die prematurely vary greatly in Oldham, and are highest in the most deprived wards.

7.4 Premature deaths from respiratory diseases are 60% higher, from ischaemic heart disease are 40% higher and from cancer of the trachea, bronchus and lung are 33% higher than the England and Wales average, with Hollinwood (in particular) and Alexandra, Chadderton South, Coldhurst, St James' and St Mary's, all experiencing rates of ischaemic heart disease well above even the Oldham average and five wards with respiratory tract cancer 100% above the England and Wales average.

Infant Mortality

7.5 Not only are there inequalities in premature death rates, but there are also inequalities at the beginning of the life cycle. The infant mortality rate for Oldham is higher than that for the North West or England and Wales as a whole. The percentage of low birth weights (under 2500g) in Oldham is higher than for the North West or West Pennine area. The worst wards in Oldham are Alexandra (300% above the national infant mortality rate) and Coldhurst (200%). Premature birth and low birth rate can impair development and lead to cerebral palsy as well as heart disease, hypertension and diabetes in later life.

Good health is arguably the most tangible indicator of life experience within a community.

Poverty

7.6 Four wards (Alexandra, Werneth, Hollinwood and Coldhurst) are within the 5% most health deprived in the country and a further three wards are within the 10% of the most deprived wards.

Mental Health

7.7 Mental Health problems are interrelated with many aspects of social exclusion. Poverty, low educational achievement and employment, unemployment, fear of job loss, social inclusion and redundancy are some of the major risk factors for mental health. Mental health problems are a major cause of ill health, disability and death. Seven of the eight wards with the highest mental health needs indexed scoring in Oldham are the seven most deprived wards in the Borough.

Teenage Pregnancy

7.8 Conception rates for under-18s in Oldham are higher than in Greater Manchester and England and young mothers tend to be faced with significant economic and social problems with serious repercussions for their children also.

Other Issues

7.9 Amongst many other health issues affecting the town, and in particular its poorer and its black and minority ethnic inhabitants, are stroke, diabetes, pneumonia and tuberculosis.

Public Views

7.10 Of those commenting to the panel, three views were recurrent:

- a) a perception that large numbers of immigrants have stretched the already scarce NHS resources to breaking point. Whilst there are significant demands brought to health services by the growing ethnic minority population, it is not possible to reach such a conclusion. The issue of resourcing Health Services generally in Oldham is referred to later in this Chapter;
- b) some people said that Asians use Accident and Emergency facilities instead of visiting their GPs, as medication will be given freely at A&E Departments. There are some cultural differences in the use of A&E services by the public. For example, working class men are more likely to use A&E services rather than their GP and, more generally, inappropriate use of A&E services is more common amongst the lower socio-economic groups and people served by GPs with long waiting times for appointments. The Panel does not consider that the perception of Asians over-using A&E services is correct. Many Asians receive their GP's service from Asian GPs who share a culture and linguistic heritage

- and this relationship is likely to lead to great trust of the GP and therefore less inappropriate use of A&E services; and
- c) there was a perception that Oldham Royal Hospital operates an unequal policy with regard to relatives visiting patients. Whilst there used to be stricter visiting rules, which have affected mainly older white people's views of what is "appropriate", the hospital tries to be as accommodating to relatives visiting as possible. There are certainly no written policy differences between white and Asian visitors. Our suggestion is that hospitals should consider a policy to limit numbers of visitors per patient to a sensible number.

Overall Picture

7.11 Oldham is like many metropolitan boroughs with poverty and linked problems such as poor housing, unemployment, low educational and attainment levels, poor educational environment, all combining to have statistical impact, the most severe of which is the shortening of life expectancy.

7.12 In addition to these factors are the additional health problems of a community with a high concentration of residents from ethnic minority communities. The prevalent illnesses of these communities require a more concerted and specialist approach, with strategies and funding to match.

7.13 Good health is arguably the most tangible indicator of the quality of life experience within a community. A range of efforts will be needed to reverse current health trends, including better education, better housing and better economic prospects as well as more direct measures.

Resources

7.14 At present, NHS resources for Oldham are, by their own calculation, substantially below those which their formula requires. Oldham is not helped by its current linkage with Tameside and Glossop in the present Health Care Trust, which will be abolished in March 2002, when a new strategic health authority for Greater Manchester would be established with ten primary care trusts, one exclusively for Oldham.

7.15 To achieve parity within Greater Manchester will involve providing additional funding to the Oldham Primary Care Trust of £9 million per annum, and we recommend that the NHS produce a plan by June 2002 to be implemented fully by April 2004.

Stability

7.16 The above organisational changes, including the creation of a new Mental Health Trust, for Oldham, Bury and Rochdale, needs to be given time to settle down and work effectively, and play its role within Local Strategic Partnership.

We recommend to Government a period of at least five years stability, organisationally and managerially, within the Health Service to enable a regeneration and linked health care strategy to be followed.

Health as Part of a Wider Agenda

7.17 As discussed above, a healthy Oldham goes with one which is better housed, educated, more prosperous and with higher expectations. Collaboration through joint programmes and projects, and putting health at the heart of the Community Plan, is vital, and in this context we welcome the recent establishment of the Health and Social Care Modernisation Group, accountable to the Local Strategic Partnership.

We recommend that its Strategy should be reviewed by the Group itself, the NHS, the new Oldham Primary Care Trust, the new Mental Health Care Trust, and the new Local Strategic Partnership. The Review should look at progress against targets and whether any refinements or adjustments to the strategy need to be made. We further recommend that the Strategy should have at its core, targets for reducing health inequalities between different communities in Oldham.

Equality

7.18 No strategy aimed at reducing inequality and improving service to all communities can succeed without inspirational leadership and continual monitoring. Any new services must be tested to see that they will indeed improve the situation for black and minority ethnic clients, as well as for white clients and this will require certain specific measures. Accordingly, we recommend all staff employed by the Council's Social Services Department, West Pennine Health Authority, and the various Trusts, should receive thorough exposure to the requirements of a socially inclusive strategy, and the implementation of anti-discriminatory practice. This will require a team of trainers over a period, with continuing top-up provision for new staff and refresher courses with a pilot to be based on CRE Standards. We further recommend appointment of specialists within the organisations to act as advocates and champions of different minority groups. In addition we recommend that ethnic monitoring should be dramatically improved and made mandatory for a wide range of services, which should include regular reporting of performance against targets, to the Chief Officers of each organisation. Work on these recommendations should begin immediately and be co-ordinated between the different organisations, with a view to full implementation by September 2002.

7.19 Another aspect of equality is employment. This issue is picked up in the section of our report on the economy but it is worth emphasising that current representation of BME people in the workforce of the various health and social services organisations is unrepresentative of the population; not only are there too few BME employees, but they are, for the most part, employed in lower paid work. The Council's Social Services Department have developed a policy with implementation and monitoring arrangements for racial equality with an Officer to lead further development and implementation.

We recommend a similar approach across all health service organisations, where this is not already in place, and that there should be adoption by all organisations of the NHS Guidance on Managing Diversity.

7.20 The Panel have been made aware of examples where equal opportunities policies have not been followed by those contracting and sub-contracting for work to the Health Service. An example was that of a taxi cab company, contracted to provide service to the Health Authority, which had BNP members in its workforce and which subjected patients and staff to BNP propaganda in transit. This is unacceptable. Accordingly, we recommend that the Health and Social Service employers should require all contractors and sub-contractors to comply with appropriate equal opportunity requirements, including prevention of such occurrences. Draft conditions of contract should be agreed jointly by June 2002, for immediate implementation in respect of each contract as it comes up for renewal. All existing contractors and sub-contractors should be asked to comply voluntarily with these requirements, prior to contract renewal, with immediate effect.

Neighbourhood Services

7.21 In the Governance Chapter of this report, we make proposals for neighbourhood renewal and management which have a direct bearing on health provision. Evidence shows that locally delivered services, in surroundings people feel comfortable with, leads to an improvement in overall health outcomes and we consider that there is substantial scope for expanding neighbourhood provision within Oldham.

7.22 Accordingly, we recommend the development, possibly under PFI, of One-Stop Shops within neighbourhoods where health problems are worst, based on facilities developed elsewhere such as the Neptune Health Park Tipton and Peckham Pulse. These provide centrally co-ordinated facilities including GPs, dentists, opticians, pharmacists, health education, food co-operatives, mobile community healthcare

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teams, outreach ethnic minority teams, learning disability teams, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Social Security/Benefits and Housing advice teams. Such centres are already planned for Fitton Hill under the New Deal for Communities and for Hollinwood; our proposal is to extend this to other priority neighbourhoods. This will supplement the current Cottoning On initiative, to provide a virtual healthy living centre in Oldham.

7.23 Clearly, provision of one-stop shops in priority neighbourhoods will be expensive – at minimum £3 million depending on the services provided – but a number of facilities for healthcare in these areas are in very poor condition and the required level of investment in our view is fully justified.

We recommend that the West Pennine Health Authority, with the Council, other health providers, and relevant area initiative managers (New Deal for Communities, SRB), should draw up a programme for provision of such facilities, drawing on area based funding opportunities where they exist, and examining PFI possibilities, by December 2002. This should be agreed with the Local Strategic Partnership. This will be for implementation over the medium term and should be a priority for NHS Capital and Revenue budgets, within the expanded budget for Oldham which we recommend above.

7.24 An issue of some concern is that over the next five years the NHS estimates that up to 40% of existing GPs in Oldham will be retiring. How they are replaced will be a major challenge, given the complexities and demands of running a GP practice in a town like Oldham. It needs to be seen as professionally attractive for young GPs to be working in the town, and whilst the one stop shops, as they come on-stream, will certainly help by providing a better environment, in addition we recommend that the NHS Executive should be proactive in the recruitment of GPs for areas like Oldham and that they should consider whether, in towns such as Oldham, there is a case for higher pay to attract GPs.

Short-termism

7.25 Too many short-term healthcare projects have been established in different parts of Oldham over recent years, with little thought being given at the start to long-term sustainability. This has undermined confidence on the part of local people, and caused disillusionment to staff. Whilst there is still a need for highly targeted programmes, to meet specific needs, a more strategic approach is necessary, so that programmes last as long as they need to and fit into the overall strategy for long-term health improvement.

We recommend, therefore, that the NHS. West Pennine Health Authority, Primary Care Trust, Health Care Trust, the Council, the Government Office for the North West and the Local Strategic Partnership should review existing targeted programmes in Oldham, prepare a strategy to meet additional priority needs, and determine a short, medium and long-term programme, by March 2003. Implementation of the programme will depend on negotiation of resources within the overall expanded Oldham Healthcare budget and access, where possible, to special programmes such as New Deal for Communities. However, we further recommend, to Government they recognise the danger of penny piece, short-term initiatives of the kind seen in Oldham hitherto and that a more strategic approach to funding targeted programmes to meet the special health requirements of the poorest sections of the community be adopted.

The Police do not create the environment in which they work, but need to influence it, reflect it and respond to its problems. The policing of Oldham is a formidable task and what we say is underpinned by recognition of that fact.

Findings

8.2 Oldham, or 'Q' Division of Greater Manchester Police covers the entire metropolitan district and is divided into two sub-divisions. The senior officer is a Chief Superintendent, the two sub-divisions are managed by a Superintendent supported by a Chief Inspector and a Detective Chief Inspector. Oldham Sub-Division covers Oldham, Saddleworth and Lees. Chadderton Sub-Division covers Chadderton, Royton, Shaw and Failsworth,

8.3 Sub-Division staff divide into patrol officers, community beat officers and detective officers, with 35 community beat officers for the whole division with major responsibility for promoting good community relations. Each sub-division has a race crime unit and there is a single community affairs unit for the whole division. This is headed by an Inspector, with a Youth Development and Schools Liaison unit (four constables, two support staff) and a Race Relations Unit (one constable and a community/race relations support staff specialist with long experience in this field).

8.4 Oldham's population is a young one, 25% under 16 years of age (50% in the minority ethnic communities). This trend is projected to develop further over the next ten years, and since this age range has the highest rate of offending, it constitutes and will continue to be a challenge for the Police.

8.5 Relations between the Police and public in Oldham range, as elsewhere, from excellent to poor, depending which part of the community is asked. Mostly relations are good, but problems exist, between young people, particularly Asian young people and the Police and there are some concerns about relationships with the wider Asian community. Perceptions among Asian youth are that the Police are partial and discriminatory, disrespectful, indulge in racist language and are sympathetic to far right extremists. Irrespective of the truth of those views, which we consider later, the perceptions directly affect the relationship between young Asians and the Police.

8.6 We consider in this Chapter changes to Police structure, strategies, consultation and other processes which in our view will help to effect necessary improvements in relationships.

Structures and Strategies

8.7 Oldham Police have two main approaches to tackling crime and disorder. The first is an operational policing strategy, maximising joint working, and ensuring operational policing is community focused, intelligence led, problem oriented and with partnership participation. The second is a local crime and disorder reduction strategy agreed by the Police, Local Authority

The structure needs to be one which develops better relationships, creates greater sensitivity to community problems, identifies and prioritises emerging challenges and establishes greater empathy and understanding with its communities.

and other partners. This has five key objectives:

- a) reducing drug / alcohol crimes;
- b) reducing crime and disorder amongst young people;
- c) reducing racist crime and disorder;
- d) reducing violent crime and disorder; and
- e) reducing levels of burglary and car crimes.
- 8.8 There are other allied objectives aimed at improving trust and confidence in the Police, from the wider community and particularly minority ethnic communities.
- 8.9 These strategies in our view are appropriately identified and targeted, reflecting the strategies of GM Police and its Police Authority, and right for the problems which Oldham faces.
- 8.10 And yet, as noted, whilst there is widespread support for the Police in Oldham there are sections in the community who harbour doubt, suspicion and even fear of the Police. This is particularly the case with young people, and particularly Asian young people and when a sizable number of one group share the same view of the Police, then group loyalties may extend that to an even larger number. No one can excuse the disgraceful and criminal behaviour which occurred in Oldham during the riots, but it has to be recognised that young people may see those events in a different context from the wider community.
- 8.11 Why should these problems arise if the strategies are sound? In our view, a key problem lies with the structure of the Police force in the town. The structure needs to be one which develops better relationships, creates greater sensitivity to community problems, identifies and prioritises emerging challenges and establishes greater empathy and understanding with its communities. Whilst Divisional and Sub-Divisional structures have stood the test of time, there are new approaches, more focused on getting closer to the community. Sector policing or geographic policing are examples. Oldham is a collection of communities which straddle sub-divisional boundaries. In our view, these boundaries get in the way of solving the problems of a whole community and we recommend that the Chief Constable and the Police Authority should, by May 2002, review the policing structure of Oldham Division with a view to basing this upon identified communities and their problems, and with the objective of improving rapport between the Police and those communities.
- 8.12 Such a change in structures would, in our view, help police officers at street level, and their support officers, feel more

ownership of the problems in respect of race, racial tension, racial violence and culture which day-to-day they face. We make this recommendation whilst recognising that Operation Catalyst (the Greater Manchester Police response to the McPherson report) and diversity training within 'Q' Division demonstrate an impressive commitment to improving sensitivity and awareness within the police force; our proposals would enhance, not undermine, this work.

8.13 The above change would necessitate an examination of the role and responsibilities of the Community Affairs Unit.

We recommend that a review of this unit be carried out by May 2002 with a view to focusing its activities on identifying, analysing, evaluating problems and advising operational units.

- 8.14 To improve co-ordination, identification and investigation of race crime we recommend that the two Sub-Divisional Race Crime Units be merged into a single unit.
- 8.15 Whist we approve Oldham's policing strategies and the procedures, policies and working practices to support them, officers when asked could not place what they were doing within a written strategy, linked to the wider strategic aims of the Division. For example, there were no documents to identify best practice on working with young people, how to intervene and the wider context of any intervention.

We recommend that the Division review their policies and ensure they are clarified and documented. This is not a bureaucratic exercise but to improve understanding, consistency and ownership.

8.16 We encountered many good initiatives to deal with race issues in the town, but we felt that local police could have been given more creative and imaginative support. The Community Affairs Department, Greater Manchester Police, have the job of identifying new ideas and best practice, and are working hard on this. Nevertheless, a more pervasive system is needed and we recommend that GM Police Headquarters create a database of best practice, innovation and new ideas to support divisions facing problems like Oldham's. This will require not merely gathering ideas together but also analysing them and evaluating them to support officers on the ground.

Consultation, Liaison and Partnership

8.17 Oldham has a complex structure for liaison between Police and other agencies, including the Public Voices on Policing, Youth Forums, the Racist Incidents Strategy Group,

the Ethnic Minority Women's Group, the Crime and Disorder Executive Group, Oldham Plus Group, Area Committees of the Local Authority, the Forced Marriage Sub-Group and many others including ad-hoc structures. All have made efforts and can point to some success, and indeed all have tried to grapple with the worsening situation in Oldham. However, all of them also exhibit the characteristics of the 'professionals' approach. They are formal, agenda-based, committee style bodies, often timing meetings and adopting working methods for professional convenience, apparently based on a belief that if problems exist, then the answer is to set up a structure and all will be well. The fact that relations with parts of the community are not good suggests the contrary.

8.18 In our view, a fresh approach is needed to these structures, which have evolved piecemeal and are out of touch with the communities in many cases. We do not include the Area Committees in this criticism. Structures should be flexible, peripatetic, informal and user friendly. As a start, we feel that some over-arching strategic direction needs to be brought into the process and so we recommend the establishment of a Race and Diversity Committee, operating under the Local Strategic Partnership, as a multi-agency, multi-racial body to enhance and co-ordinate joint strategies for tackling inter-community issues in Oldham. The Race and Diversity Committee, (see paragraph 11.21 and Appendix 11) should have strong links to Area Committees and should settle what other arrangements may be needed to look at Community Policing and Crime and Disorder within Oldham, recognising that some structures are provided for in legislation. Any new structures must replace and radically simplify existing ones, and must operate on the principles listed above.

Racist Incidents and Statistics

8.19 The scale of racist and, in particular, violently racist incidents in Oldham has reached a deplorable level, with Oldham being the worst division in Greater Manchester for six or seven years now. The statistics are not wholly reliable, because of under-reporting, partly through suspicion of the Police, and ineffective reporting and recording systems may also play a part. Nevertheless, the situation in Oldham is very serious, and wholly unacceptable; perpetrators have been from all communities. A particular dimension is the significant number of serious racist attacks on taxi drivers in the town, which was a source of great concern to many to whom we spoke.

8.20 At the beginning of 2001, there were a number of attacks on lone white men by groups of Asian youths, one of which was almost fatal and led to media interviews with Chief Superintendent Hewitt in which he quoted statistics including that most current attacks were being committed by Asian youths.

8.21 This led to a great deal of public attention, locally and nationally, with allegations that the statistics should not have been released and were adding to tensions, that they were inaccurate, based on flawed reporting systems, and even deliberately misrepresented by the Police. Mr Hewitt maintains that it was his duty to give an accurate account of events, and to reassure the community that the problem was understood and being tackled. The Police clearly believed that not enough attention was being given to this situation by other organisations, and they wanted to give a wake up call.

8.22 We have looked at this carefully. Greater Manchester Police have a system for recording racist incidents and issue annual statistics with observation and commentary. The racial incidents report in our view is good for its openness, transparency and straight-forward approach. It is based closely on McPherson Report recommendations and the appointment by GM Police of a Police Advisory Committee, with significant lay involvement, representing all communities, assists the release of statistics. Ethnic origins of victims and offenders are routinely revealed within the force, which as a whole shows an openness and candour about this subject. The Chief Superintendent was acting consistently with that policy, there had been previous Racial Incidents Reports reflecting the Oldham situation, so similar statistics were already current in the weeks and months before 29 January 2001. We do not criticise the release of figures per se

8.23 However, at a time of heightened tension and widespread rumour and myth in Oldham, many in the Asian Community and outside it saw the release as unnecessary, misleading, in view of the difficulty with all such statistics, and distinctly unhelpful in those circumstances at that time. In our view, very serious consideration should have been given to the impact of releasing such figures before it was done, and we do not believe that this was handled as carefully as it should have been.

8.24 In general we feel that voluntary organisations can play an important part in assisting the police and local authority with issues around racist incidents. We feel the best way to increase the confidence of communities to report incidents and monitor such incidents would be through a multi-agency approach drawing on voluntary organisations such as the Oldham Race Equality Partnership whose future as an effective voluntary organisation depends on long term support by the Crime and Disorder Partnership, CRE and local authority.

We recommend that release of such statistics should always be part of a wider communications strategy and accompanied by extensive prior consultation with

communities through the Racist Incident Panel which we propose.

8.25 Chief Superintendent Hewitt did explain the situation afterwards, particularly to the Asian community and that was clearly the right thing to do.

8.26 We are satisfied that the system of recording racial incidents in Oldham is properly maintained and there is no evidence of manipulation or improper conduct. Furthermore, arrangements for over 100 locations – generally the offices of other agencies at which people can record incidents is a good one, and now adopted elsewhere in Greater Manchester Police. Whilst only minimal use is made of this arrangement, and most incidents are reported direct to the Police, the existence of the system is important and symbolic and should be continued though with thought given to more publicity.

We recommend that the arrangements for reporting and recording racial incidents be continued in their present form. However a sharper and multi-agency focus needs to be given to tackling racist incidents. We therefore recommend the establishment of a Racist Incidents Panel, which should be a multi-agency group reporting to the Crime and Disorder Partnership. The Panel will absorb the Racist Incidents Strategy Group. The existing concerns of RISG for wider race relations issues should become the responsibility of the Race and Diversity Committee. Details of the proposed arrangements are at Appendix 12.

Community Intervention Strategies

8.27 We have earlier called for establishment of a new Diversity Committee, linked to the Local Strategic Partnership. Part of the strategy which the new body needs to follow must be to support stronger links between the Police and local communities. At present, there are informal arrangements for this, based on a traditional notion of community leaders, who in our view lack credibility at street level. A new network of community facilitators is necessary, so as to improve contacts between communities and the Police, overcome doubt and suspicion, scotch rumours and myths and thereby diminish tension.

We recommend that a network of facilitators, with credibility in the local community, to build a bridge between the Police and that community, should be established by July 2002. To achieve this will require careful work by the Police, the Council, the Police Authority, and bodies such as the Racist Incidents Panel

Management of Information and Media Issues

8.28 Amongst the many myths and rumours in Oldham, on which we comment elsewhere, are beliefs within the Asian community that the Police do not challenge the activities of political extremists, and within the white community that the Police are tentative about policing Asian neighbourhoods. Sometimes it is claimed that when the Police attend an incident, only members of one community are arrested, whereas in fact as will be seen from the record of events in this report, where two communities are involved, arrests will match that.

8.29 There is a very widespread view that police response times are inadequate. Neither Oldham nor Greater Manchester is unique in this, and it is a commonly voiced complaint against all forces. One factor is that the number of operational police on duty at any one time is only about one for every 20,000 of Oldham's population. However, there is a clear commitment in Oldham for racial crimes to have immediate attention and any allegation that this has not happened will receive serious investigation.

8.30 To deal with myth and misunderstanding, we recommend urgent establishment of an effective Communications Strategy, involving the Council and the different communities of Oldham. We note that Greater Manchester Police is thinking on these lines and we recommend arrangements for Oldham be put in place by March 2002.

8.31 We were surprised to learn that, on the first night of the riots, there was no communication from the Police to the Council at Chief Executive or Leader levels. Despite the enormous pressures the Police were under, that should have been a top priority and we recommend that a protocol is agreed to ensure that such an omission is never repeated in similar circumstances.

Culture, Training and Attitudes

8.32 As noted above, within the Asian community there is a widespread perception that the Police are racist in their attitudes and whilst some of the concerns cannot be substantiated, there is no doubt that some are based on experience. In particular, this relates to use of offensive, racist language by individual police officers, particularly to young Asians. This allegation was too persistent and detailed to be ignored, and the period shortly after the riots was said to be the worst. In some cases, the complaints relate to non Greater Manchester police officers drafted in to support operations during the riots, but this does not account for all such cases, let alone justify them.

8.33 Even though at the relevant period there were only twenty complaints against police officers, and a small number of those alleging racist behaviour, nevertheless in our view such

behaviour has been exhibited by a number of officers.

There is a widespread perception that the Police are racist in their attitudes and whilst some of the concerns cannot be substantiated, there is no doubt that

some are based on experience.

We recommend that in all appropriate training programmes particular emphasis is given to the issue of offensive and inappropriate language stressing its unacceptability and capacity for undermining good relationships. In saying this we recognise that the Diversity training which arises from Operation Catalyst is substantial and subject to evaluation by the Scarman Institute. Interestingly the training for GMP officers was piloted in Oldham We recognise that leadership and management skills are essential in tackling inappropriate behaviour. Attention is drawn to the courses in "Policing Diverse Communities" and "Hate Crime" at the Police Staff College Bramshill. We recommend attendance of appropriate staff on these courses.

Recruitment and Retention

8.34 Oldham Division woefully under-represents the minority ethnic communities in its workforce. There are 12 ethnic minority officers from a total of 402, with two support officers out of 67. In this respect, our comments about the Local Authority are also relevant, but we note efforts including the Information Desk in Oldham Shopping Centre, to recruit more minority community officers. There has been a small increase in numbers over the last year or two, but much remains to be done, and also on retention.

We recommend that Greater Manchester Police should involve the Black and Asian Police Association to assist with recruitment and retention.

Legislation – Banning Orders

8.35 The activities of the political far right in Oldham have created and still create great fear within the Asian community, and the voting pattern at the General Election enhanced those fears. Asians feel under threat, and young Asians are geared up to 'protect their own community'. Segregation, isolation and feelings of territoriality have exacerbated tensions and racial attacks.

8.36 The visits, or threatened visits, of far right groups to the town were a significant problem before the riots, and since, and the Police were not seen by the Asian community, or some whites, as tackling the issues with resolution. Indeed, they were seen as protecting the far right groups.

8.37 However, marches were banned and in the run up to a General Election, legitimate political activity had to be allowed. It is not always easy to distinguish between what is legitimate and what is illegitimate in such circumstances. The marching ban did not, and could not, prevent assemblies or gatherings by far right groups from taking place which allowed them to frustrate the intent of the banning order. Provocation, on a number of occasions therefore followed, with resultant disorder.

We recommend that a review of the Public Order Act take place, with a view to widening its scope to include inflammatory activity beyond marches and the Government should ensure that all available sanctions should be brought to bear on extremist activity from whatever source.

Legislation - Vilification of Muslims

8.38 The Panel saw a considerable number of leaflets and other material circulated by the British National Party in different parts of Oldham. A characteristic of much of this was assertion, without any substantiation, that "Muslims" were guilty of all sorts of things, for example terrorising white people and taking too much money out of the system. Clearly the BNP have been using the term "Muslims" as code for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, as a means to avoid anti-racism legislation. The Government has recently announced its intention to promote a bill to outlaw incitement to religious hatred. The Panel thinks that in a multi-racial and multi-faith society this is an important step forward. We have found in the context of Oldham for example that there is a strong case for outlawing the use of a religious descriptor, such as Muslim, when it is intended to signify people of a particular racial group and when the allegation made, if applied to a racial group, would fall foul of such legislation as the ban on incitement to racial hatred.

We recommend that the Government should aim to cover this in future legislation.

LEISURE, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY INTERACTION Including the needs of young people and the role of faith communities.

Traditions in Oldham of leisure, recreation, celebration of the local culture and community activity have been well developed for generations, as is to be expected in a historically working class town with a strong sense of its own identity. Wakes Weeks, Whit Walks, good local football, rugby and cricket teams, lively theatre and an extensive network of self-help and voluntary organisations are just a few of the things which have characterised this aspect of Oldham life for many years.

In recent times some of these activities have weakened, for example with a decline in support for the Christian churches, the greater difficulty, given the pressures on teachers, of maintaining out of hours school-based recreation and sport, and a greater tendency towards individualism within society as a whole. However the traditions remain a strong vital part of the town's life, and the Panel has seen numerous examples.

- 9.2 The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities have brought with them a strong sense of community identity, partly focused on Mosques, which retain the allegiance of the great majority of their people, and partly also based on other community organisations and the extended family and clan system. The observance of national celebrations, "Melas" and other celebrations and a variety of sporting and voluntary activities linked to community associations are a few examples. There is much to build on within Oldham, and we have been impressed with the dedication, which many volunteers are showing to provide facilities for local people.
- 9.3 However, the segregated development of communities, in terms of housing, schools and the many other issues dealt with in this report, has meant that a very large part of sporting, cultural and other leisure activity has taken place on an entirely segregated basis. We have seen some examples of football and other sports being organised on a cross-community basis, for example the Unity In The Community project and one or two notable success stories in multi-racial team development such as Friarmere Cricket Club and Werneth Cricket Club. Friarmere is located in Saddleworth, a predominantly white area. The cricket team's membership reflected this with the vast majority being white. An Asian cricket team approached the club as they had no facilities, and asked if they could join. Friarmere welcomed this and as a result they now have a fully integrated membership. Werneth Cricket Club has promoted integration via their youth programme. During the summer they provided coaching sessions for young people from all communities in Oldham. As a consequence their membership is more representative of the communities in the town.
- 9.4 These examples are the exceptions rather than the rule. For the most part, sport and other recreation is not bringing about the contact between communities which it could do, and which is lacking in so many other spheres of Oldham life. Transport, to enable teams to compete across the Borough, is a problem, and so is availability of facilities. If we are to make any impact on the intense territoriality of young people young Pakistanis for example not feeling comfortable going outside Glodwick, young white people similarly feeling unsafe outside Fitton Hill then sport has to be one of the key opportunities.

The segregated development of communities, in terms of housing, schools and the many other issues dealt with in this report, has meant that a very large part of sporting, cultural and other leisure activity has taken place on an entirely segregated basis.

- 9.5 We found some good examples of sporting facilities for young Asian women. The Active Sport programme organised by Oldham Sports Development Department was one of these projects. This programme provides training for young people from all communities in a variety of sports including football, netball, cricket, tennis and rugby. The project includes football-training sessions for young women; these are based at Grange School. A high number of Asian young women have been involved in these coaching sessions. Another success in this area has been the Community and Sports Leader Award. A course is arranged annually by the Sport and Recreation Department for young people to train as sports leaders. The take up rate by young Asian women has been high.
- 9.6 In both cases young Asian women have been involved in sports with the white community and they serve as good examples of successful integration. As a panel we consider these projects to be important but also recognise that far more needs to be achieved in this area. On the whole there is little sporting interaction between young Asian women and white women in the town and this is an area which needs to be addressed.
- 9.7 We recommend that the Council in drawing up its strategy for racially integrated sports (see paragraph 9.17) should pay special attention to the involvement of women in their programmes. In particular there should be a specific time bound action plan for increasing the participation of women in sporting activities which are fully integrated.
- 9.8 The lack of facilities for young people is an issue across the Borough, but especially acute in the Asian areas of Oldham. Any visitor to Glodwick, Westwood or Werneth from the late afternoon onwards will be conscious of large numbers of young men gathered on the streets with no apparent purpose in mind and nowhere indoors to congregate, to let off steam or enjoy themselves. The Asian communities have young populations, so the concentrations of young men from mid teens to early twenties are high. For them, unlike their white counterparts, pubs and other licensed premises are out of bounds and, again unlike their white contemporaries, contact with young women within their own community is almost impossible. Add to that highly overcrowded housing - so, typically, no rooms of their own at home to pass their time – and add to it the high levels of unemployment within this group, and there is a serious issue of under activity and lack of recreational opportunity.
- 9.9 There were strong pressures in the groups whom we met for more facilities, and a great deal of resentment that opportunities such as those presented by the new Pakistani Community

Centre in Glodwick were not really available to young people. This new building, replacing one requisitioned by the Council for new development in the town centre, does provide some excellent facilities in Glodwick but the Association's management committee places a high emphasis on maintaining the building for other functions such as the holding of weddings and despite some availability for youth sports, the general feeling is that it is not used to anything like its full potential. Loss of facilities at the former Greenhill School has compounded this problem, and there is a pressing need for outdoor playing areas.

- 9.10 In Coldhurst/Westwood, the new Millennium Centre should make a big contribution to young people's recreational activities but there are other neighbouring facilities which are regarded as primarily for white people and, in accordance with the segregation all too commonly found in Oldham, not patronised by young Bangladeshis. Even if maximum use was made of all possible facilities in Glodwick, Westwood and Werneth it is inconceivable that the need would be met. Probably, and realistically, it never could be fully met. But a lot more could be done simply to make rooms available for pool tables and places for young people to meet socially, to play table tennis, music and so on.
- 9.11 Within the white parts of Oldham the problem is in part the same - ie lack of facilities and unemployment/under employment - but the youngsters have more opportunities for meeting socially in places like pubs and contacts with young women are of course permitted. The development of a gang culture, territorially based, is as much an issue as it is in the Asian areas and the falling away of traditional youth activities, based on youth clubs, has left a particular gap. There has been a change in emphasis within youth provision over recent times. Once youth clubs/community centres were run as drop-ins where young people could go and meet informally. There were youth workers there to whom they could chat, and if applicable discuss more serious subjects such as relationships, sexual health etc. This was done in a way, which the young people felt comfortable with. Now the emphasis in youth clubs is on social education. The informal element has been reduced and youth workers act more as teachers giving formal lessons on serious subjects. Young people are expected to be organised and become involved in 'projects', an alienating experience for many after a full day at school. Fewer youngsters therefore are involved in clubs, the alternative being, as in the Asian parts of the town, to hang around in the street.
- 9.12 Sad to say, we heard little but criticism of the Youth Service in Oldham. It is overstretched, and has been given a relatively low priority within the Council's budget and strategy compared

with neighbouring boroughs. Spend per head of client group (11 to 24 year olds) worked out at £69.44 in Oldham in 1999-2000 which was about the middle of the range for Greater Manchester but almost half the Oldham figure came from external sources, a uniquely large proportion meaning that the Council's contribution was little more than £35 per capita. The Council's contribution for the current year was reduced by 10%; as a non statutory service it is a relatively easy target.

9.13 It was recognised that the individuals concerned were doing as good a job as they could in very difficult circumstances and we welcome the appointment in July 2001 of a new Head of Youth Service who is strongly committed to improvement and change. In tackling the problems we suggest that the move towards detached youth work provision, without adequate backup facilities, has been a serious mistake. The current youth clubs provided in the town are in a poor physical state with little to attract young people to them. The value of youth work, as measured by the clients who are the young people themselves, is clearly seen in practical terms – what facilities are you bringing, how will they help me - and detached youth workers cannot make that kind of difference unless they have good quality, open access facilities, eg. Community Centres, safe spaces or youth shelters, to which they can guide the young people.

9.14 In looking for solutions, the Panel's guiding principle is that every recommendation, and every development in future for youth provision, must have at its core whether or not it will promote integration. We have made a separate recommendation about that in the Governance section of the report.

9.15 We have described our concern about current youth service provision. In our view there is a strong case for establishing closer links between this work and Sport and Recreation development work within the Council, which is now being linked with libraries and museums. In general we are reluctant to advocate changes in departmental structures because of the frictions and disruption they cause. However a sport and recreation strategy for young people, based on principles of integration, is now so vital in Oldham that we are prepared to break this principle in this instance. Accordingly we recommend that the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Departments be combined in a new unit answerable direct to the Director of Education and Culture. She and the Chief Executive should then review the role of the new unit on a monthly basis. Whilst the work on Sport and Recreation must go wider than young people, their needs should be given top priority for the time being, and the new unit must enjoy the high status within the Council which it merits. In line with this,

we recommend that the new unit should take responsibility for the strategic development and use of all sport and youth facilities. The day to day running of these facilities will remain with the current respective departments. The new unit will however have the final say as to how these facilities will be developed and used.

9.16 Whilst it will be tempting for the Local Authority to look for savings from this merger, we recommend that the priority of the subject means that the total level of resources at present going into the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation needs to be at least maintained. The Council has been creative in attracting new funds to supplement youth work activity. More youth workers are needed, and in our view funding organisations, such as the New Opportunities Fund, should continue to be as supportive as possible to Oldham in view of its current problems. We make further proposals for funding new facilities below.

9.17 We further recommend that the Head of the new Youth Service/Sport and Recreation Unit should prepare a detailed and overarching strategy for racially-integrated Sport and Recreation provision for young people, taking account of all recommendations in this report, and in close consultation with Sport England and other providers. This should be prepared by 31st March 2002. It should contain proposals for implementation over the following year, to March 2003 and progress should be reviewed monthly with the Chief Executive and the Director of Education. In making this recommendation we are aware that it may take time for a new permanent appointment to head the new Unit, and the Council will need to appoint a strong and capable individual, able to bang heads together and make things happen, as a temporary measure. The strategy could be assisted by a bid to Sport England for Sport Action Zone status which, in the circumstances of Oldham and in line with our other recommendations, might be a thematic bid focused on areas of greatest tension throughout Oldham, and on means to bring communities together through sport. Awards for All (lotteryfunded grants of up to £5,000) could also assist development of new, multi-ethnic teams or facilities.

9.18 We also recommend, in line with earlier comment and the extra provision we are proposing for young people, that the principle of linking youth work to physical facilities should be given higher priority by the Council. Recognising that this will take some time to organise, we recommend that the Head of the new Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should prepare a strategy to this effect by 31st March 2002. The strategy should be for implementation by 31st

March 2003. If this strategy is to work, more facilities, up to date, will be needed. We are aware of a proposed PFI bid to build ten new youth and community centres at a cost of £1.5 million each, with estimated running costs of £250,000 each per annum. We have not investigated the case in detail, but given the centrality of youth issues to our report we are sympathetic to its aims. Clearly, if the PFI route is possible it will be the running costs which will be of greatest concern. We suggest that the Head of the new unit should investigate New Opportunities Fund possibilities, and in addition that the DCMS and DTLR should recognise through funding formulae the importance of such facilities in segregated towns like Oldham.

9.19 The location of new facilities is important. They need to be in places which are accessible and welcoming to people of all communities and great care should be taken in planning this, through the Unitary Development Plan process and otherwise.

9.20 We recommend that the Head of the new unit should link the strategy for detached youth work to the work of the Greater Manchester Police, Youth Offending Teams and Crime Reduction Partnership in respect of the same client groups. Regular meetings should be held between the three agencies. The aim will be to tackle the issue of youth provision and the issue of youth crime at a street level. The new Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should be responsible for convening this forum to start in April 2002.

9.21 An issue which has discouraged participation by some members of minority ethnic communities in sporting activities in the town has been the naivety on the part of some Council employees. For example, during a women only swimming hour in a sports centre, it was seen as perfectly acceptable by male staff to remain in the pool area. This clearly would affect the sensibilities of some Asian women participating in the session. A further example was a multi-ethnic sporting activity, which was held on a Friday, the Muslim holy day. There is a need for all sports and recreation staff to receive cultural awareness training to help prevent this type of problem as we recommend in the Employment and Economy Chapter.

9.22 In August 2001 the Youth Service convened voluntary and statutory providers for young people in a new group called 'Oldham Alliance for Working with Young People'. This forum was implemented following a meeting organised by the Police and the Council which took place on 11th July 2001 entitled 'I Believe in Oldham'. It became apparent that summer provision for young people was disjointed with no coordination on the ground. At times there were overlaps with events clashing with each other, at other times there was no provision at all. This

reflected the fact that there are about 170 different organisations across Oldham offering recreational activity to young people. The Alliance aims to provide the necessary coordination for youth provision. Establishing this forum is a positive move and the new Unit needs to work closely with it.

We recommend that it should not only focus on coordination but should also seek to increase the inclusivity of youth provision in Oldham. It is particularly important that those working with young people, in statutory and voluntary agencies, should have a thorough understanding of race issues, and when necessary should undergo appropriate training.

9.23 The Sport and Recreation Department ran a successful programme of events for young people during the summer holidays 2001. We recommend a repetition of this in all future holidays. This would be assisted by better forward planning by the Home Office, DfES and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit; by a commitment to supporting continuation of activity beyond the summer in appropriate ways; and by a commitment to extend activity, as it was in some cases this year, to 9pm, and to link the programme with local sports clubs and teams. The new unit should prepare a plan to this effect by the end of March 2002.

9.24 Whilst some school facilities are made available out of normal hours, we were told that there is a great deal more scope for this. The new unit, in consultation with schools, sports clubs and voluntary groups should review this position by April 2002 and propose a new plan for extension of dual use from September 2002. The New Opportunities Fund should assist with this initiative. The Director of Education and Culture should resolve any disputes or difficulties.

Views of Young People

9.25 It will be important in implementing the above recommendations to take account of the views of young people themselves. The Panel has been greatly helped in this area by the Greater Manchester Police Authority which, with the Police, has been holding a structured series of meetings with young people on issues of crime and disorder. These meetings have covered many other issues including provision of youth facilities and it has not been easy to secure adequate follow-up. So we recommend that the new Unit should forge specific links with the Police Authority's groups, which are based on schools, colleges and community organisations. A senior manager should attend the groups wherever possible, so that the outcome can feed direct into decision making. A protocol on how this should be taken forward should be agreed

between the Unit and the Police Authority by June 2002. It should take into account and link into our proposals for youth sections within the proposed Race and Diversity Committee.

9.26 The Panel has developed proposals for governance, which take this requirement into account, see paragraph 11.21 and Appendix 11. The neighbourhood renewal strategy for the Borough, with estate diversity forums – referred to within the Governance Chapter – provide an opportunity to engage young people to a far greater degree. The proposal for a youth parliament – see Governance Chapter – is also relevant.

9.27 A key gap at present, and a key priority for the future, is the provision of more interchange between young people of different ethnic backgrounds, beyond what we recommend in the education part of this report. Sport and recreation provide good opportunities. It will be important to avoid racial stereotyping such as the comment we have heard "Asians don't play football, just cricket". Club membership, in all the organisations associated with Oldham Athletic, and in particular in the various youth supporters' organisations and in the youth teams, is as yet unrepresentative of the ethnic mix in Oldham and we urge the Club to continue its efforts to redress this. In particular we recommend that Oldham Athletic should work closely with the Pakistani and Bangladeshi Youth Associations on a strategy to bring more youngsters from these communities into contact with the club. This should be completed before the end of the current season, for implementation in Autumn 2002. Given the importance of football as a team game enjoyed by many young men, we further recommend that the Oldham Football Leagues, Oldham Athletic, the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit of the Council and representatives of organisations involved with football across the communities should examine the scope for more competition between teams from different parts of Oldham, across the ethnic boundaries, and in particular should support the establishment of more multi-racial teams. This work should be completed by May 2002.

9.28 Cricket is another sport whose potential for promoting better inter ethnic relations has not yet been fully developed. There are good examples, as noted above, but also less good ones where teams are entirely or almost entirely of one ethnic origin. We recommend that the Cricket Development Group, working with club representatives, the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit of the Council and the various league authorities should draw up a strategy for more inter-ethnic competition, and in particular for development of more multi-ethnic teams, on similar lines to the proposal for

football above. This work should be completed by May 2002.

9.29 Other options for multi-ethnic sports exist and we recommend that sports organisers in all sports should consider the scope for promoting links between communities through the way in which they organise their activities.

9.30 In particular, we feel that there is scope for multi-ethnic sporting activity to enjoy a higher profile in the town.

A prestigious award for the person or organisation that does most to promote ethnic harmony through sport is one way to encourage this, and it should be attractive for a private sector sponsor to be associated with such an award.

We recommend that the Head of the new Unit should secure private sector sponsorship for such an award, with a view to its being launched by 31st May 2002.

9.31 Music is a medium which can unite young people, and popular musical genres often cross racial divides. This has probably been more apparent between black African-Caribbean and white cultures than between Asian and white or Asian and African-Caribbean, but that does not necessarily have to remain the case acknowledging that there are cultural and religious differences. The Panel recognises its own limitations – a report like this is not going to have much effect on popular culture! But we are aware that the Dread Lion Foundation runs music classes for young people in Oldham, covering all types of popular music, teaching recording and studio techniques, music programming, instrumental training and music production. There are social benefits, but the work also helps improve team working and can lead to employment in the music industry. The Panel commends the Foundation's excellent work, whilst noting that hitherto the majority of those involved have been African-Caribbean and white, with few Asians. Recruitment has been largely by word of mouth and the Foundation could perhaps promote its work better across the whole town.

We recommend that it should do so, with the support of the new Unit.

9.32 Oldham's parks are an important resource for supporting youth and adult recreational activity, and are maintained to a very good standard. Budgetary restrictions will limit the contribution of the parks in the future, and we recognise the financial constraints under which the Council are labouring. However, we consider that a strategy for parks is now needed. This should focus in particular on Alexandra and Werneth Parks whose potential for bringing people together from all communities is not fully developed. The possibility for private sector sponsorship

of parks and facilities within them should be considered in this context.

We recommend that the Head of the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should carry out such a review, for completion by Summer 2002, before the Council takes its budgetary decisions for the following year.

9.33 The Panel were very impressed with Unity in the Community, a project promoted by Greater Manchester Police, Oldham Athletic Football Club, the Council's Sports Development Team and marketing company M2M. The project will help young people aged 9-11 over a full academic year to understand the different communities in Oldham. They will work through three themes: sport, which will involve professional coaching in football, team matches and a tournament ending in March 2002; academic achievement using poets working in primary schools, and the aim being production of a children's poetry book; and arts, involving children collaborating to produce large pieces of art work. We are excited by this work, and any project which brings together young people from all cultural groups to learn and have fun together is a positive step for Oldham. There is funding for only one year currently.

We recommend that this project should be evaluated at the end of the year and if successful, the statutory and private sector funders should agree to continue its work into the future.

9.34 We have not discussed their strategies with North West Arts, nor with the major sporting organisations in the area except Oldham Athletic, but we do suggest that they take fully into account the importance of fostering inter-community sport and arts activity.

Adult Recreation

9.35 Whilst it is right for our main focus to be on young people and their needs, it is clear that adult recreation also takes place on largely segregated lines. For example, the bowling greens in Alexandra Park, close to a large Pakistani community, are almost exclusively used by white people. Some provision, eg. writing courses for Asian women, funded publicly, is targeted at just one ethnic group and whilst in such individual cases there may be good reasons we are not convinced that the opportunity of such provision to promote racial harmony has been fully considered.

9.36 The first necessity is to prepare a database of existing provision and then to encourage organisers to work to make their provision more inclusive of different ethnic groups in the town.

We recommend that the Head of the new Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should prepare a strategy to this effect, working closely with relevant organisations, and complete this work by December 2002. However, it should not be necessary to wait until then for progress to be made in specific areas where people can reach early agreement.

Role of the Faith Communities

9.37 The Christian Churches and the Mosques play an important role in the life of Oldham, where there is also a thriving Hindu community as well as representation of other faiths. Faith leaders play a leading role within their own communities, never more important than now when hard things need to be said about the importance of contact across the communal divide and of bringing down barriers, the disavowal of racist attitudes and the rejection of violence as a means to solve society's ills. The media are often more willing to give prominence to the views of faith leaders than the leaders themselves sometimes appreciate.

9.38 There has been a tendency for faith leaders to concentrate on their own communities when making statements and commenting on local, national and world affairs. This is understandable and often necessary but it can lead to (unjustified) suspicion about what is being said and given the wide agreement between them on the key issues facing Oldham the faith leaders should recognise that their views are all the more powerful when they are addressed to the whole town, not just their own faith group. A mechanism is needed to achieve this.

We recommend that faith leaders look urgently at how they can take a stronger profile in Oldham and in particular how through the media they can more effectively communicate their messages. We also recommend that faith leaders, as part of this process, should agree a process by which they can issue collective statements quickly, in response to local, national and international issues which arise and which may call for their comment.

9.39 In this context, we have found it surprising that up until now there has been no regular forum across Oldham for the faith community leaders to meet. Panel members hosted two meetings to bring about such a forum and we were pleased that there was a willingness to continue such gatherings. We commend the establishment of the Council of Mosques recently, and the concordat between Muslim and Christian leaders in Glodwick. For the future, and following discussions at the two meetings, we recommend as follows:

Chapter nine Leisure, culture and community interaction

REGENERATION

- a) The joint forum of religious leaders be maintained by the leaders themselves (ie, this is not the responsibility of the Borough Council).
- b) This needs to meet at different venues in the town, reflecting the town's diversity.
- c) There should be organised exchanges of young people to places of worship of other faiths, particularly at times of festivals.
- d) Similar visits should be arranged for adults.
- e) Religious leaders should play a full part in the development of a programme of cultural education (see below).
- f) Faith leaders should consider having a day in the town to celebrate faith in its many different forms.

Other Recommendations

9.40 We received several representations that designation of community centres, initiatives and programmes by ethnic group, or restriction of particular programmes to people of one ethnicity, is divisive and we share this view. We recommend that the Council and the management committees of the respective community centres should hold discussions to see if there are ways that these concerns can be addressed.

9.41 We further recommend that management structures of Community Centres should not only reflect the racial mix of all people within a particular locality, but people of different ages and genders to ensure that the needs of all with a right to use facilities are taken into account. This should be a requirement if public funding is to be provided.

9.42 Oldham has a number of festivals and celebrations organised by different groups within the town. Until recently there has been the Oldham Carnival, which was in existence for a number of years, but has recently been suspended; there is also the Mela held in the summer, traditionally in Werneth Park but this year in the town centre; and there have been other events. But in our view there has not been anything which has effectively celebrated all the cultures in the town in a big way, with the wholehearted participation of all communities. There is a gap here. To organise such an event will be challenging, but it could be a good litmus test of whether Oldham is truly becoming a town at ease with itself and its different communities. The Notting Hill Carnival has become a major London-wide event, which has increasingly brought people together, and there is no reason why Oldham should not have the Notting Hill Carnival of the North, though one which is planned on a deliberately multi-racial basis. Another example to be looked at is the Wirral show held annually in Wallasey, which attracts over 500,000 visitors over a two-day period, and

celebrates many aspects of the town and area.

We recommend that the Council should establish a small task force drawing in people from different communities to explore the feasibility of this idea. If it is pursued then in our opinion it should have a neutral name not linking it with previous recent initiatives. Perhaps it could be the Oldham Awakes Festival. The task force should report by May 2002.

9.43 The Panel were impressed by an initiative led by two community artists in Werneth. Deeply committed to tackling the problems which Oldham has faced in a practical way, they are proposing that all (or almost all!) children and young people in the town should create the longest picture in the world and they have already acquired the canvas and much of the paint necessary. Whilst the two artists will have overall control, the youngsters will be given a considerable scope for free expression. Help is needed to see this project to fruition, and the panel has tried to support it within our limited means. We commend this initiative to the town and we recommend that the Regional Co-ordinator – Community Facilitation at GONW should continue her enquiries into the feasibility of this project and if possible to find means to support it.

The message of this report, in each of the Chapters, are that a transformation in people's attitudes can only come about if accompanied by transformation of the town's physical, social and economic environment. In this Chapter, we look at the extent of deprivation in the town, previous attempts to tackle this and what we consider is now necessary to make a real change. In particular, we focus on the regeneration vehicle which we consider to be necessary.

10.2 As elsewhere, the fundamental importance of integration between communities lies at the heart of this Chapter. Too many of the initiatives of the past have been piecemeal, bringing some benefit to particular localities, but at the same time creating problems of envy and disjointedness, with no evidence of an overall strategy for the town within which these specific initiatives should have fitted.

Findings

10.3 Our findings relevant to this Chapter are as follows:

- a) Oldham is the 38th most deprived local authority out of 354 authorities in England on the DTLR's indices of deprivation 2000. Three wards in the borough are amongst the 1% of most deprived wards nationally, a further four within the most deprived 10%, and a further four within the most deprived 20%.
- b) Around £211m of special regeneration funding has been allocated to Oldham over an eighteen-year period (1993-2011), with significant, area-based, initiatives also occurring in the fifteen years before that. Altogether, we are aware of over 20 special programmes or initiatives which have been carried out in Oldham, or are about to be carried out, over the last decade.
- c) Between 1993 and 2011 we estimate that main programme public sector resources approaching £18 billion, will have been spent in the borough.
- d) Sections of the community express deep resentment over the allocation of area-based resources, and in particular, many white people feel that only the Asian areas ever benefit. (Given the £53m allocated to New Deal for Communities (NDC) based on Hathershaw and Fitton Hill, this is not an accurate judgement and may reflect the fact that significant expenditure in the NDC area has yet to occur.) Attached at Appendix 5 is an analysis of area-based funding by ward, focusing on the most deprived areas, and indicating also the percentage of minority ethnic inhabitants in each. This shows that rather more than half the funding has gone to areas with low proportions of minority ethnic inhabitants.
- e) A scattergun approach to regeneration, with lots of individual projects within the area based initiatives, has been the pattern. There has been little relationship to what is needed in the long term. Glodwick SRB, for example, where the scheme proceeded with £5.75 million, half the funding bid for, nevertheless consisted of over 40 individual projects.
- f) Another example is SRB 6, the Route to Renaissance, involving a relatively small allocation of funds, spread over a wide area, and many potential projects. This will not transform prospects within the corridor.

- g) There are major problems of housing unfitness and the need for economic regeneration, described elsewhere in this report.
- h) To tackle these issues will require a sustained strategy, over many years, and a specific vehicle, answerable to the Council and other partners, but with a clear remit, and no distraction from its central purpose.

Recent History

10.4 As described, Oldham is a poor town and one which has had to respond to a series of Government initiatives – which indeed it has done successfully – by emphasising how poor it is. This can be damaging to a community already down on its fortunes.

10.5 More emphasis has been placed on winning bids, and bringing resources into the area, than on what the money should be used for. So, for example, it would be impossible to say that the prospects of Glodwick or Westwood have been transformed by the resources granted to them; and whilst that might have been an unreasonable expectation without substantially more money than they received, it is nevertheless true that comparatively little can be seen on the ground for the scale of resources from Government, and match funding, which has gone in. We would exempt the town centre and the Cultural Quarter strategy from these comments. There is evidence there of a more strategic approach to regeneration, and one which has the potential to create jobs of a higher quality than Oldham has been used to, and to transform the physical environment of a run down area. The questions which remain are whether the strategy, on its current schedule, can be effectively completed, and whether sufficient links are made between new job creation and the ability of local people to access them.

10.6 As noted earlier, we feel that too many organisations have been involved in handling penny packets of resources from within current regeneration schemes, and in many cases organisations have been established which are, in effect, power bases for particular individuals within a community, without sufficient regard to the benefits which the whole community ought to receive or, again, the links between the work these organisations are doing and an overall strategy. Too many projects are independently located, often occupying premises better suited to local facilities such as shopping, for example, and seemingly only opening when it suits the professionals who run them, leaving some neighbourhoods with many shuttered premises outside Monday to Friday office hours. This provides an additional depressing feel to places like Glodwick.

10.7 There is an important lesson here for national organisations looking too superficially at Partnerships and concluding that they

are effective and sustainable, on the basis of insufficient evidence. In 1999 for example the Secretary of State awarded his Partnership of the Year award, on the British Urban Regeneration Association's advice, to the Westwood SRB Partnership which was disbanded the year that Government funding ended.

A New Approach

10.8 As we note elsewhere, there is a need for a new vision for where Oldham wishes to be in its local, sub-regional, regional and national contexts. This vision will need to be owned by the Local Strategic Partnership. In our view, it should have integration at its core, and it should take account of the following very positive factors:

- a) the town's immediate access to countryside of outstanding quality;
- b) close proximity to Manchester City Centre, with the dramatic improvements taking place there and the creation of many new jobs:
- c) transportation, in particular, the M60 and the new Metro extension:
- d) Oldham's Multi-Cultural society, and its tradition of being open to newcomers, trades and ideas; and
- e) excellent cultural facilities and leisure opportunities.

10.9 These factors need to be set against the issues picked up in this report, of inadequate leadership, over dependency on the local authority to make change happen, lack of property redevelopment of a kind which could transform the local scene and, in general, a difficulty of getting away from the past.

10.10 In our view, Oldham can only make the most of its opportunities, and tackle its problems with real vigour, if a specially designed, and appropriately structured, agency is brought into play.

10.11 The role of such an agency would be to inspire and then manage a programme of regeneration, to be carried out by others, across a wide part of Oldham. This would include determining which areas, having regard to the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), were priorities for action and ensuring the relevant organisations put in the resources required for land assembly, infrastructure, preparation of sites, marketing to developers and negotiation with them of a disposal strategy. In the housing areas, this would include identifying with the Council priority houses for CPO and clearance, negotiating with owners, negotiating with developers and achieving a long term programme for promoting race and diversity.

10.12 There are models in the Urban Regeneration Companies which have been established in East Manchester and Merseyside. These organisations do not have specific budgets of any significance, nor additional powers, but they do have the strong commitment of major partnerships including the local authorities and the North West Development Agency. Other partners who must be involved in an Oldham context will include Housing Associations and the Housing Corporation, private developers, and the local community. To be successful, all of these partners must strongly support the new Company, and effective arrangements must be made for community representation which will be particularly complex in Oldham's case, given that we envisage the company operating over a wide part of the town. The extensive area of coverage is a distinctive feature of the URC model we are proposing. However, it may be possible and desirable for areas of Oldham to be brought within the remit of the company gradually, provided that initial priority is given to the M60/Metro route corridors, and housing areas in Asian and white parts of the town.

10.13 We looked carefully at whether to propose a single company, or one for housing and one for other forms of development. For reasons given in the Housing Chapter – mainly that some non-housing development opportunities needed to be woven into a housing clearance strategy – we concluded that a single company was the better option.

10.14 Accordingly, we recommend that the Council, North West Development Agency, Oldham Housing Investment Partnership and the Government Office for the North West, drawing in other partners as necessary, should begin immediate discussions on the creation of an Urban Regeneration Company on the above lines. The target date for launching such a company should be June 2002.

10.15 We further recommend that, in line with existing models such as East Manchester, the board for this company should be tightly focused – perhaps 12 or so in all – with the Leader of the Borough Council and very senior representatives from other organisations being amongst the members. Further thought should be given to effective community representation, once the priority areas of operation have been defined.

10.16 We recommend to Government that given the nature of the Company's tasks, some priority should be given to funding the constituent organisations of the board to carry out the programme of action. In making this recommendation, we acknowledge that there are other areas

with similar characteristics to Oldham. What we are seeking is acceptance that new strategies, and in particular new housing strategies as outlined in the Housing Chapter are essential if a more harmonious community is to be established.

10.17 The central resource for the company need not be very large, and much of it in our view can come from existing resources from the organisations which will need to support the URC. This is likely to amount to £0.75 million per annum. In this connection, we recommend to all participant bodies that they look closely at the possibility of secondment into the new company structure, or other support, to enable it to operate effectively. It must, for example, be in a position to bid convincingly for European Structural Funds. For the Council, in due course, we would expect the resources to be negotiated as part of the contract de ville (see the Governance Chapter). The roles of Chair and Chief Executive will be crucial and people of the highest calibre will need to be found.

10.18 Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council has created a number of companies, ad hoc, to manage particular development projects in the past. The rationale for these is not clear to us and we recommend that if possible they be rolled into the new URC.

10.19 Our recommendation in the Governance Section that Oldham should be added to the twenty-four Urban White Paper local authorities is also relevant to the above proposals.

10.20 As will be clear from this Chapter, the Panel have concluded very firmly that the area-based approach of the past, focused on bidding rounds for relatively small areas, has been unhelpful to Oldham. Our recommendation is that the Government should fund regeneration in Oldham on the basis of the compact which we describe in the Governance Chapter, linking this to the programme of the URC and the LSP's overall vision for the town.

GOVERNANCE

Oldham is a town without strategic direction. In our view this results from a major failure of political and corporate governance in the town. 11.2 The key failure has been not facing up to the stark reality of ethnic division within the town, which has been clear, and widely commented upon, since at least the 1970s. There has been no forum within which people could debate the really difficult issues of community relations in a frank, but trusting environment. Even since the riots, this debate has not been taking place within the Council in any meaningful way, though we do recognise that they are waiting for the results of this Review. The notable exception has been the Area Committees, which have debated issues searchingly, and in our experience, well.

11.3 The second area of failure has been lack of a vision for the way in which Oldham needs to develop, partly to foster community integration, but more broadly to re-establish its identity in a period when industry is no longer its be all and end all. Again, there are exceptions such as notably successful retail developments, but it is the broad picture, focusing on regeneration needs across the borough, linkages between Oldham and its neighbouring towns and cities and the role that Oldham sees itself as playing in the 21st Century, which is lacking.

11.4 Thirdly, Oldham has been very good, and notably successful, at bidding to Government for all sorts of special initiatives, projects and programmes. There is a bidding culture in the town, which has come to see special initiatives as the only way to get funding to make a real difference. This has, however, lead to a piecemeal approach to tackling problems, without sufficient regard to how a successful bid will or will not contribute to an overall long term strategy for Oldham.

11.5 The fourth failure has been to devise an effective means of tapping into the business community, key professionals in the town, other statutory agencies, the voluntary sector and the people with innovative experience outside the town. The Council is seen as still needing to control things, not willing to release its grip, though the failure of others effectively to challenge the Council in this respect has contributed. The Council is, however, becoming better at communicating with its own citizens, and at taking decision making into local communities, through the Area Committee structure.

11.6 It would be wrong for this report simply to blame everything on the Council, much as many of our interviewees would want us to do. A characteristic view seemed to be that the Council needed to do all sorts of things which it was not doing but then in almost the same breath people would criticise the Council for whatever it did do. People have got to be realistic and recognise their own responsibilities (eg. to maintain and repair their own

There is no commonly held view of the type of place Oldham wishes to be, its economic, social and environmental priorities over the long term, and the way in which it will achieve good community and race relations.

houses if they are owner occupiers, not just to wait for an improvement grant); and also to recognise the many good things which the Council has done for the town, which we refer to in different parts of this report.

11.7 Nevertheless, in its exercise of the democratic mandate, the Council must give leadership to the town and this, we have concluded, is what it has been failing adequately to do both under Labour and Liberal Democrat control.

Findings

11.8 We have found the following to support our arguments in this Chapter:

- a) Of over 1,000 public submissions to the panel, 52% included governance as an issue of concern. The majority of the community organisations and individuals interviewed also indicated Governance as an issue of concern.
- b) We have identified 101, mainly statutory, plans which the Council is required to produce in any one year, often overlapping, insufficiently co-ordinated with other plans produced by other public agencies.
- c) None of these contain a long-term economic, social or environmental vision for the town. The Community Plan was intended to fill this gap but in the view of the Panel has not fulfilled this remit. The Government now require the Council to produce a Community Strategy through its Local Strategic Partnership. We are not convinced from what we have seen that the current process will result in a radically new approach in Oldham.
- d) The Oldham Partnership Board, for all that it is popular with some participant organisations and some Council officers, is not an effective means of involving partners and debating in a fundamental way strategic issues affecting the town. It is over large, representation is not always sufficiently senior, and it is over dominated by the Council. So it is not a good model for the new Local Strategic Partnership.
- e) There is insufficient evidence of effective corporate governance within the town. We were refused a request to see minutes of the Leadership Team Meeting, by which we could have tested allegations that the Council had not, in a whole series of meetings, faced up to the need to take effective decisions. The Cabinet system is in its infancy but may offer improvements here over time.
- f) Oldham has regularly received a clean bill of health from auditors, and generally complies well with Government requirements, whether for bidding or any other purpose. Its reputation has been good with Government.
- g) 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.
- h) We do not believe that problems have stemmed from decisions taken in bad faith, though we were disappointed to receive a submission from the Oldham Labour Party which stated that if we were to suggest that we would be strongly challenged. Rather, we think that decisions were taken without any realistic consideration of the long term consequences of segregation within the town. In addition, as we comment below, some decisions were taken to reinforce relations with community leaders for electoral reasons and little real understanding of the way that process excluded a large part of the people from benefiting.
- i) 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.

Vision

11.9 Our concern here is that there is no commonly held view of the type of place Oldham wishes to be, its economic, social and environmental priorities over the long term, and the way in which it will achieve good community and race relations. This review is intended to help with part of that agenda. It needs, however, as does all major public, private, voluntary and community sector decision making, to be set within a broader framework.

11.10 This must include a recognition that Oldham is not an island, but that it exists within a broader sub-regional economy, and is subject to many pressures and opportunities arising in adjacent areas. At one end of the scale, Oldham might wish to develop more strongly its role as a high quality residential area close to Manchester; at the other end, it may see itself as in the past as the industrial powerhouse of the area; and there are lots of intermediate possibilities. More thought needs to be given to such issues, linked to identity, community pride, the celebration of racial diversity and future developments, and the sort of approach followed in cities, such as Manchester, which have adopted the City Pride model, is a useful example of what can be done. The overarching strategy needs to build on the major strengths of Oldham, including its access to areas of outstanding countryside (never far away from wherever you are in Oldham), its location in proximity to Manchester and neighbouring development opportunities such as Kingsway in Rochdale, and the excellence of Oldham's communications, particularly the recently opened M60 extension, access to

Manchester airport and the anticipated Manchester Metro extension to Oldham in 2004.

11.11 Accordingly, we recommend production of an Oldham Community Plan, which should take a twenty year forward look at where Oldham wishes to be, and devise a strategy for getting there.

11.12 We recommend that the Community Plan should be the responsibility of the new Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) (see below), with contribution from all key players within the town, including the Council, the new Urban Regeneration Company (see below and the Regeneration Chapter), and the LSP must consult widely on the plan. Integration must be at the heart of the plan.

11.13 The new Urban Regeneration Company will have implementation of the plan as a core function. Delivery will also be the responsibility of all organisations participating in the LSP.

Compact with Government

11.14 The bidding culture in Oldham, and the resultant patchwork of different area-based initiatives, have led to a culture of envy, between one poor part of the town and another, often racially defined in people's minds, and has not contributed effectively towards overall solutions for the town. Nor has the plethora of individual statutory plans which Oldham is required to produce annually. Instead, we are proposing a new and more strategic relationship between Oldham and Central Government and its agencies.

11.15 There have been numerous attempts to make Government more 'joined up' in recent years, in recognition of precisely the issues we have identified in this report. There have also been proposals, originally from the Local Government Association, for a new form of a broad-based compact between Central and Local Government, the New Commitment to Regeneration. The problem for Central Government is, and for the foreseeable future will remain, the requirements of different departments, with their separate agendas, budgets and so on, but the need in a town like Oldham to have strong Government buy-in to the new strategies for overcoming ethnic divisions, and giving a new bright future for the town, means that we must return to this issue.

11.16 A new compact between Government and Oldham would involve agreement on core elements of the community plan and commitment to sustained main programme finance, proportionate to the needs of the community, in accordance with the direction and timescale agreed within the plan. In return, no

further special, short term initiatives would take place. It would be possible for the Government to develop thinking further on these lines if Oldham were added to the twenty-four local authorities with which the Government proposed to work more closely in relation to urban renaissance, following the Urban White Paper.

11.17 Accordingly, we recommend that Central Government departments, co-ordinated by the Home Office and DTLR, and operating through the Government Office for the North West, should consider urgently the scope for entering into a radically new form of Compact on the above lines with Oldham MBC. A report on feasibility should be agreed with Ministers within four months, so that, if accepted, this proposal can be implemented with effect from 1st April 2004. In order to overcome the pressures of departmentalism, we further recommend that the Cabinet Office and the No 10 Policy Unit be closely involved in progress on this proposal within Government. In addition, we recommend that Oldham should be added to the twenty-four Urban Renaissance Local Authorities.

Citizenship

11.18 Good citizenship, understanding the role of the individual in society, what we owe one another as citizens, and the importance of the democratic process are all vital to stable society. One measure of disengagement from the democratic process are the voting figures, for example, with less than 35% of people voting in the local elections in 1998, as low as 22% in Failsworth; even though these are not untypical figures for similar areas, they indicate a clear lack of engagement in the governance of the town. Large numbers of alienated young people, and low participation by youngsters in the electoral process, suggest that civic values are not shared as widely as they should be.

11.19 Citizenship education is now part of the Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship Framework in primary schools and will be a compulsory subject from September 2002 in secondary schools. Oldham Local Learning Partnership have been developing work as part of a national pilot for 16–19 year olds on citizenship, but we are concerned that this pilot is limited in its funding and short term. In the context of Oldham, it is important that the concept of citizenship should include better understanding of other race and faith communities.

11.20 We recommend that the Council and the LSP, working with the Citizenship Foundation and the Local Learning Partnership, develop a programme for citizenship for use with young people, both in schools, colleges and outside formal

education, and make firm proposals by July 2002. A Youth Parliament might form part of this strategy. We recommend also that the Government, as it develops, its own thinking on citizenship, should use Oldham as a test bed for any ideas.

11.21 A particular aspect of citizenship is the importance of recognising the challenges which go with being a culturally diverse town. As we have previously recorded, there is no forum within which people can openly discuss the really hard issues of race relations, including the stereotypes and myths about other communities, in an unthreatening environment. In addition, people need to be consulted about and involved in decision-making on issues connected with race and diversity.

11.22 At present, there are several organisations, largely established ad hoc, which deal with some of the issues of concern, but in our view a new structure is needed to rationalise these and to provide a high profile, multi-agency forum for the town, at which frank discussion can be had, good practice learned and decisions taken by key individuals on how better understanding can be promoted and communities brought closer together. In our view, the ultimate responsibility here lies with the Local Strategic Partnership. We propose a new committee answerable to the LSP, and to be known as the Race and Diversity Strategy Committee. This should be chaired by the leader of the Council, with the 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 full diagram of the proposed structure is at Appendix 11.

11.23 A crucial element is a series of local Race and Diversity fora, focused on three or four areas of greatest community tension. Each of these should include local community organisations, local councillors and individuals from the relevant estates, elected by local residents. Each of the local race and diversity fora should have specific arrangements (we have called these sub-fora, but other arrangements may be more appropriate), to bring together young people and women, and make sure that their voice is heard.

11.24 The Chair and Vice-Chair of each local Race and Diversity forum should be members of the main Race and Diversity Strategy Committee. The local fora will need to have very close links to the Council's Area Committees, and to the Police Authority work with young people.

11.25 To support this work, the Council should 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. We calculate that the overall cost of this will be in the region of £80,000. The importance of the work is such that the Council will need to find this sum, if necessary by making savings elsewhere.

A particular aspect of citizenship is recognising the challenges which go with being a culturally diverse town.

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an unthreatening environment.

11.26 We recommend establishment of a Borough wide Race and Diversity Strategy Committee, with estate-based diverse Race and Diversity fora in key areas of community tension, and with appropriate arrangements for involving women and young people in each area. The committee's role is to provide a forum for frank exchange on race and diversity issues, to spread good practice and facilitate decisions by key personnel. A new Policy Officer, with seconded officers in support, should be appointed.

Council Leadership

11.27 Our concerns here are recorded above. To some degree, as the new system of cabinet government settles down, some of our concerns may resolve themselves, and the scrutiny role of elected members could play a crucial part in keeping leadership up to the mark. Council members need to recognise the extraordinarily important nature of that role.

11.28 However, we do not think that in the current circumstances this will be enough. To drive forward the agenda of this report will require not only strong commitment to its principles but also great single-mindedness of purpose, if possible not distracted by the day to day demands of a partisan political process. Oldham's needs are too pressing for that.

11.29 We have two alternative proposals. The first is that the town should take a fresh look at the question of an elected mayor. In the public consultation, there was a marginal majority for the two elected mayor options combined, even though the Council Leader's qualitative judgement of organisational responses told him that there was a balance of opinion the other way. The issue was not conclusive, and given the need for strong, directive leadership, there is a case for reopening the question.

We recommend to the citizens of Oldham that they consider securing a referendum on the question of an elected mayor, by petitioning to that effect. This will require just short of 8,000 electors' signatures. If the petition is successful and a referendum subsequently held, it is extremely important that whoever might be considering nominating themselves for the position should declare their hand, so that the electorate could know the possible eventual consequence of their decision, in terms of who might end up being elected.

11.30 As an alternative, and in any case we would suggest this for the immediate future, we recommend that the Council Leadership and Chief Executive should hold discussions with the Government Office for the North West, IdeA (the Improvement and Development Agency, which is the service improvement consultancy to local authorities), and the Audit Commission on provision of mentors, political and officer, to support the Leader, Cabinet, Chief Executive and Chief Officers, in the development of new and more effective working together and tackling issues raised in this report. This should involve the Labour Leadership also, with a view to a more co-operative style of governance in the town at this critical time.

Use of Councillors

11.31 We have heard complaints that the Council Officers tend, in wards where there are both Asian and white Councillors, to use the Asian Councillors for dealing with problems in the Asian areas, and vice versa. This is resented by Councillors and we recommend that this practice should cease forthwith. All councillors should be deemed equally available to deal with issues in their wards, wherever they arise.

Civic Leadership

11.32 The Government's proposal for Local Strategic Partnerships provides a fresh opportunity for Oldham, and one to which we have made repeated reference already. The LSP for Oldham should be the key strategic body linking all agencies with a major contribution to the future success of the town. To be more effective than the existing Partnership Board, we recommend that the main LSP board be tightly drawn, no more than 12 to 15, but with each member of a very senior status, if representing an organisation, and each member having a responsibility to network intensively with their respective constituencies. A tightly drawn board on these lines will enable real debate and dialogue, and not just lip service to the idea of partnership. In our view, this is consistent with the spirit of what the Government is looking for, if not the letter, and it is essential if local government dominance is to be avoided. Members must accept responsibility for hard work in the LSP and not just rely on the Council to do everything and they must hold one another to account.

11.33 In addition, we recommend that the Chairman of the LSP and the Leader of the Council (if not the same person), should address an annual open forum for the citizens of Oldham, with the opportunity for all members of the LSP to be questioned by the public. The work of other organisations such as the Area Committees could be woven into this event.

Common Purpose

11.34 Developing the leaders of tomorrow is important in every town and city, and as a process in Oldham may itself help to draw communities together. Common Purpose is an organisation dedicated to facilitating programmes of leadership development, focused on talented people at second and third tiers within local organisations. The programme has an excellent track record, and we recommend that the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership work with Common Purpose to develop an ongoing Leadership Programme, to be in place by 1st April 2002

Corporate Governance

11.35 We were somewhat surprised that issues of segregation and other problems between communities in Oldham did not, on the face of it, feature more prominently in discussions by the Chief Executive and his Corporate Management Team. In our view, there was a clear role for Chief Officers of the Council. as well as politicians, to give a lead and make it obvious that healing the wounds, and bringing about lasting change, were top priorities for management. A number of front-line staff and middle management from the Council commented similarly, as did some people from other organisations. From the record of meetings of the Corporate Management Team which we have seen, there is a tendency for single service issues to be reported by one Chief Officer to his or her colleagues and less evidence than what we would have expected of discussion about crosscutting policies, and particularly those with a bearing on community relations. We feel that the use of mentors would be useful and in addition that it would help the local authority if the Audit Commission were to undertake a Corporate Governance Inspection of the Council, to be completed by the 1st April 2002.

We recommend accordingly. In saying this, we record our regret that the Audit Commission were unable to help us by describing current precedence or best practice in corporate governance, despite many attempts, until it was too late for the writing of this report.

Townships

11.36 As noted already, the panel has been impressed with the Area Committees of the Council and their important role in the development of the Council's emerging neighbourhood renewal strategy. In our view, though we have not had sufficient time to explore this, and it is not so directly related to community relations within the town, there may be a case for stronger devolvement of Council functions to neighbourhood managers, based on the Area Committees, or some related local units of management, not least having regard to the historic townships within the Borough. We have avoided making many proposals

for departmental changes within the Council, in view of all the frictional consequences of that, but we do recommend that the LSP and the Council, within eighteen months of establishing the LSP, should review the scope for greater area delegation

Developing the leaders of tomorrow is important in every town and city, and as a process in Oldham may itself help

to draw communities together.

Integration Proofing

of Council functions.

11.37 In addition we make an important proposal for all future significant policy and strategic decisions made by the Council. We recommend that in every submission/paper/document which comes to the Council for decision, there should be a specific section entitled "Effects on Integration within Oldham", and those preparing the papers, and those receiving them, must address the question whether what is proposed will improve the understanding of diversity and improve community relations within the town, or be neutral, or be harmful. For our definition of integration see paragraph 2.8. There is always a danger that such paragraphs in reports become routine. It should be the responsibility of the Leader and Chief Executive to take stock from time-to-time of how all the submissions within the Council have balanced out as between positive, neutral and negative effects. There should be a strongly positive overall outcome, and if not, some very challenging auestions.

Electoral Irregularities

11.38 One issue which surprised the Panel was the discovery that in recent years there had been a number of irregularities in the electoral process in Oldham, focused on certain inner city wards. The worst example appears to have been the May 2000 local elections which resulted in a Police investigation and a number of prosecutions. The issue has been raised with us as a source of tension and concern within the Borough and we therefore felt it necessary to look into it as potentially within our terms of reference.

11.39 We have seen the letter sent by the Chief Superintendent of Police to the Council's Chief Executive following the Police investigation and in this he dealt with a number of issues on which there was insufficient evidence for prosecution but which nevertheless had compromised the holding of a fair election. From this letter, from the successful prosecutions which did take place, and from other comments made to us the key issues seem to be as follows:

Registration Process

 a) Virtually no checks are made on the validity of information submitted on electoral registration forms – Form As. Indeed, the Council's performance target set by the government is to achieve 95% coverage of eligible residents on the register,

- so there is a disincentive to challenge suspect entries. In any event, the Council claims that its funding from Government for managing the electoral process is not enough to cover any real checking.
- b) There do appear to be a number of suspect entries, eg. multiple registrations at particular addresses owned by private landlords which have later been found to be empty properties. The Police say that they have been unable to get to the root of this partly because the Council do not retain the Form As once they have been processed.
- c) Some registrations have been made in the name of dead people. Although the Council delete from the register the names of people who die in year, following notification by the Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, they do not have the resources to check that people already dead may have been included on the register in the first place.

Voting

- d) There has been considerable abuse of the proxy voting system with a number of people finding, on arrival at the Polling Station, that their votes had already been cast by people who had fraudulently obtained proxy votes in their name.
- e) Some people have been registered to vote at more than one place and voted in respect of each address. This evidence comes from detailed analysis of votes by a Labour Party member who gave evidence to us.
- f) Personation of voters has also been a serious problem. In one case the Clerk at a Polling Station saw the same man vote three times but did not challenge him. Other cases were observed and reported to the Police. A number of cases were discovered in which men had voted in the names "Bibi" and "Begum" which are always female.
- g) Polling clerks have found it difficult to prevent men from entering the voting booths when their wives were voting.

11.40 Some of these irregularities could be sorted out by more rigorous application of current rules or (in the case of f) above), greater cultural awareness. In the Council's view, the job of polling station clerk can be lonely and intimidating on occasions, and is not well paid, but some of the abuses recorded above nevertheless should have been prevented, and in our view there would be merit in discussions between the Council's Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) and her equivalents in one or two comparable authorities to see where best practice can be learned. Accordingly, we recommend that the Home Office facilitate such discussions, in view of the crucial importance to democracy of maintaining a fair electoral process. We recommend additionally a detailed discussion between the Council and the Police on how future

allegations of electoral fraud are to be pursued since there is an issue between them as to the importance of retaining Form As as an aid to pursuing subsequent claims of fraudulent registration.

11.41 We recommend that the Home Office review with the Local Government Association whether the current Standards Spending Assessment regime for local authorities creates a perverse incentive for local authorities not to carry out checks on Form As, for example, on a sample basis in view of the link between coverage on the register and Council funding. We recommend that the issue of proof of identity when voting be re-examined. For all the obvious problems, and the wish not to make voting a more difficult experience, there remains a considerable doubt about the integrity of the process in parts of Oldham and it is hard to see how else it will be dispelled other than by requiring such proof.

Political Parties

11.42 The political parties play a vital role in the functioning of democracy in Oldham as elsewhere, and Labour and the Liberal Democrats are currently the most important in terms of Council representation. The way in which these two parties interact with the different communities of Oldham is, therefore, of considerable importance to our Review.

11.43 The Panel received quite a number of representations, including from well placed sources in the Labour Party, that the relationship of the Party to the Pakistani community, in particular, had for some time been over dependent on links to one particular clan. The suggestion was that, in return for delivering a sizable vote for Labour, candidates for Council seats would be chosen from the clan, and the community leaders would be the principal source of Council influence within the Pakistani parts of the town. One consequence, it was alleged, was that candidates of poorer quality had been preferred to others whose qualifications were better, and another that the influence of the clan over the Pakistani parts of town, had been to the exclusion of others' interests and unhealthy.

11.44 Similar allegations have been made in respect of the Bangladeshi Community, though more focused on networks of influence around particular community leaders.

11.45 This is a difficult area. Political parties have always done deals with voters or groups of voters and a decision that a particular candidate is poorer than another is essentially subjective; a democratic system will inevitably throw up quirks when it comes to who gets elected. What is harder to accept in Oldham, however, is that the process of candidate selection has

always been fair. We were told, for example, that large numbers of new members have been registered shortly before some ward selection meetings and although they apparently comply with Labour Party rules on eligibility to vote, our informants had good grounds to question their allegiance to the Party. One of them when challenged professed that he normally voted Liberal Democrat. Some meetings to choose candidates have been disfigured by threats of violence and other disorderly behaviour, and in one case a selection meeting needed heavy police presence.

11.46 There appears to be a clan or client based approach to politics and public life within the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities which does not fit easily with traditional British processes and which has been exploited by white party leaders, to get votes, and Asian community leaders, to secure influence. It has not been helped by the area-based nature of many recent regeneration initiatives, which have encouraged people to think that there is a block of funding which, if they have the right placemen in the right positions, they can ultimately control.

11.47 To some extent the growing importance of the Liberal Democrat party has undermined some of the traditional relationships, and there has been some interesting switching of political allegiances by white and Asian councillors. However, we do not believe that this is a problem which will just go away. The Liberal Democrats do not allow block registrations of members, and have a tough vetting procedure for potential candidates, but this may not be enough to avoid problems in the long term.

11.48 It will not be easy to tackle such issues given different expectations of the political process, and party leaders would be less than human if they were not influenced by the prospect of sizable votes. However, they need to be clear that the price they pay is not too high.

11.49 We had a helpful submission by the North West Regional Labour Party which refuted a number of the points which had been put to us, made the valid point that some of the issues were more founded on rumour and gossip than hard fact, and showed clearly that the Party was aware of problems – indeed, they referred to 'the tension surrounding these selection meetings' – and were taking steps to improve the situation. Nevertheless, as the Party acknowledges, in certain respects more still needs to be done.

11.50 Accordingly, we recommend to the Labour Party that they consider, for a defined period, some more intensive and centrally driven direction of membership registration and

candidate selection procedures within Oldham, particularly the wards where there have been difficulties, to ensure there is not over-dominance by any clan or group. More generally we recommend that all political parties keep their selection procedures under close review to make sure that they are not biased in favour of any particular clan or network.

Corruption

11.51 In the course of our review we received a considerable number of reports, and some evidence, that a particular employee of the Council was guilty of corruption and job fixing. These reports and this evidence came from a wide variety of sources from inside and outside the Council, and in some cases it had obviously been very difficult for the individuals concerned to decide to talk to us for fear of possible repercussions. Our informants were of white, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin.

11.52 Since we were not a judicial inquiry we were unable to cross-examine the individual under suspicion, nor those making the allegations. In view of the extensive concerns however we have referred relevant papers to the Police and we have informed the Council's Assistant Chief Executive, Legal and Democratic Services, of some of the information received so that a decision can be made on whether there are now sufficient grounds for severing the individual's employment with the Council.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

From the very start of our work, it was clear that we would need to look at the part played by the media in the run up to the riots, during them and in the aftermath. This was because of the widespread concern we heard expressed, mainly on two grounds:

The first was that some sections of the media had presented events over a long period in a biased way, taking little account of the views of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Oldhamers, giving graphic and prominent accounts of attacks by Asians on whites and ignoring cases the other way round. The second concern was that the media by the stance they adopted during the disturbances, the style of their reporting and some actual distortions, aggravated what was already a tense and difficult situation and encouraged some of the rioters.

12.2 On the first charge, it is the Oldham Evening Chronicle which has been most under attack. A long established paper in the town, the Chronicle's readership is largely white and the criticisms we heard of it were largely, though not entirely, from Asian people. The Chronicle's offices were targeted during the riots. There was less criticism of the Manchester Evening News or the weekly Oldham Advertiser, and some of our informants contrasted what they considered to be fairer coverage in those papers with that of the Chronicle.

12.3 The second criticism was levelled more at the broadcast media. It included concern about a Today programme broadcast on Radio 4 on 19th April in which some young men from Glodwick said that there were no-go zones for whites in Oldham. During the riots themselves, the allegations were that the cameras and reporters had encouraged further excesses by playing up to the rioters or over dramatising events. In writing this report, we have seen a vast amount of press coverage, gathered from the whole of the year 2001. There is no doubt at all that a great deal of it has been dramatic, but then so has the news itself and it would be entirely wrong to blame the media for reporting what has happened. Indeed, in drawing attention to the situation which was little known and understood outside Oldham, in focusing minds on problems not confined to Oldham but certainly outside the experience of metropolitan England, the media has on the whole played an effective role and a valuable one.

12.4 Looking more closely at the first charge, during the period before the riots there was a good deal of coverage, especially in the Chronicle, of attacks on white people and significantly less prominence given to attacks on Asians. In large part this reflects the statistics, and information on specific cases, issued by the Police which we deal with elsewhere in this report. We cannot blame a newspaper for reporting news. Questions remain however about how far the Chronicle reporters made real efforts to get alongside the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities to learn about their experience of crime and violence, and to give this fair coverage. With no black or minority ethnic reporters that is certainly a bigger challenge for the newspaper than it would otherwise be. The letters page of the paper, with a high proportion of white correspondents, many of them anonymous and many of them expressing forthright concerns about Asian attacks on whites, and about the Asian community more generally, has added to the impression of a paper representing just one part of Oldham's society.

12.5 To his credit, the Chronicle editor recognises these issues and we have seen the paper in the past few months present

balanced editorials and coverage of race relations issues. This has been commented on by some readers in the Asian communities who have approved the recent tone of the Chronicle. The newspaper has also been notably welcoming to our review and very open-minded about possible outcomes.

12.6 On the second issue, we clearly recognise the duty of the media to present different points of view, and the limitations of what can be included in very short broadcast news items. However, in the sensitive situation of a town like Oldham, it is particularly important to make sure that people interviewed reflect a cross-section of opinion which is truly representative. In the case of no-go areas, for example, it will always be possible to find a few young hot-heads who will make such claims but they are certainly not speaking for majority opinion in their own communities, and without minimising the tensions and fears which young people in particular might feel "outside their own territory", the claims of no-go areas are not borne out by experience on the ground. For example, white members of the panel made repeated visits to areas like Glodwick and Westwood, parking their cars there, walking around the streets, and never felt under threat in any way.

12.7 We have a number of recommendations intended to improve the situation for the future.

12.8 We understand that in Moss Side, Manchester, where there was concern within the local community that the Manchester Evening News did not accurately reflect the situation in that area, the editor has from time to time been prepared to meet people in Moss Side to discuss those concerns and explain/justify the newspaper's coverage. We think this is a useful model and so we recommend that the editors of the Chronicle and the Advertiser, and a senior representative of the Manchester Evening News, should from time to time (say every six months) be prepared to meet in Oldham for a similar discussion. This could be a meeting with the Diversity Committee (see separate references). We are aware that some meetings on these lines have already taken place for example between the editor of the Chronicle and community representatives in Glodwick. We welcome this.

12.9 Clearly, it will help the local media if they do more to reflect the diversity of Oldham's population within their own workforce. They start from different positions on this, with the Chronicle, as noted above, at one end of the scale, having no minority ethnic employees in their editorial staff. We recommend that all the media examine the make up of their workforce and put in place whatever measures they reasonably can to ensure that

it fairly reflects the ethnic diversity of the local population. We recognise that the smaller the workforce the harder this may be but we consider this to be a priority recommendation.

12.10 There are some more general responsibilities which we feel the media could take on to help Oldham. One is to understand the importance of promoting diversity and good race relations through the role models which the media project. For the broadcast media, this involves using more Asian-origin presenters, guests on shows and the like; for the print media more features about the experience of Asian people in Oldham, or issues relevant to their concerns. The national media have made big progress in these areas over the past 10 or 20 years, and provide some useful examples. We recommend that editors, producers and other with influence in the media should adopt as a high priority the projection of positive images of multi-cultural Oldham and good role models for people of different ethnic backgrounds.

12.11 The media also has a distinctive role to play in respect of education about cultural diversity and good citizenship (see separate references to this in the report). As we note elsewhere, this is partly something for the youngsters of Oldham, partly for adults, and in both respects the panel thinks it would be helpful if the media could play a supporting role in the programme of citizenship which we are proposing.

We recommend that editors, producers and others in position of influence in the media should commit themselves to supporting this programme as it is rolled out.

12.12 The Kids in Communication Project in the West Midlands is a good example of what can be achieved in this area. It comprises a mobile radio station called "KIC FM" operated by young people for young people. This project, operating in the Black Country, supports the school curriculum and provides real work experience for youngsters in areas of radio broadcasting, journalism, marketing and promotions, as well as being a very entertaining music based community station. The project is classed as a 'primary project' for the DfEE initiative 'Millennium Volunteers' and provides young people with the opportunity to promote general awareness and an effective debating platform to a mass audience of young people on social issues. Set up costs were £98,000 and annual revenue costs £120,000, with funding coming from the Home Office, the local authority, Lottery and the Single Regeneration Budget.

We recommend that the Council and Greater Manchester Police explore with KIC FM in the West Midlands the

Chapter twelve The role of the media

THE WAY FORWARD

potential for establishing a similar radio station run by and for young people in Oldham.

12.13 Finally, we make one further specific recommendation. Oldham needs to celebrate what it is good at, and growing out of this report there should be lots of opportunity for individuals and organisations to show how they have taken steps, whether it be through a new football competition, an innovative housing scheme, a particularly successful example of school partnership, or the like, to bring the different communities of Oldham together.

We recommend that the local media of Oldham collectively should sponsor an annual award for the best example of progress in this area which media recognition and the resulting high profile would do a great deal to promote. It would help the town see that it was on the way to a better future.

In handing this report over to the Council, the Police and the Police Authority, and sending it to the Government at the same time, we make the following recommendations as to how the report should now be taken forward:

- a) The Council, the Police, the Police Authority and the Government should respond to this report by the end of February 2002.
- b) Preparing a response should be an open process, incorporating a Community Summit in Oldham to which all the organisations referred to in this report, and any others of relevance, are invited.
- c) The Summit, which should be hosted by the Council, Police and Police Authority, with Government co-operation, should facilitate open debate on the report's findings.
- d) It should be in the form of an open public meeting, and well publicised. A Government Minister and the Panel should be invited to attend.
- e) Young people must be involved in a major way in the Summit, which needs to be a stimulating, innovative and inclusive event.
- f) The Summit outcome should be production of a framework for taking the recommendations forward, with an action plan, clearly identifying tasks, target dates, milestones, resources required and named individuals responsible.
- g) The new Local Strategic Partnership should, if possible, be established before the Summit. The timetable must not however compromise ensuring that the Partnership meets the exacting requirements laid down for it as to structure and inclusivity.
- h) The Ministerial group (POCC) will be producing its report at about the same time as this one. Subject to its recommendations, the Cabinet Office should establish at a senior level a focal point for pulling together the Government response to recommendations in this and similar reports, and ensuring implementation.

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HISTORY

Events leading up to, during and immediately after the May riots

This annex to the report reviews the events from January to June 2001 in the lead up to the course of and the immediate aftermath of the Oldham riots in May. It derived from evidence supplied to us by the Police, from press reports, from interviews we have carried out and other material which has been sent to us. It is not necessarily the last word on any of these events, but it represents our best endeavours as a panel to get to the truth of what actually happened during a fraught six month period for community relations in Oldham.

Saturday 27th January 2001 – A 23 year old white man, Mark Clayton, was stabbed and assaulted by a group of Asian teenagers in a subway near Manchester Street, Oldham, in what remains the worst racist attack of the current troubled period. Mr Clayton lost between four and five pints of blood, and very nearly lost his life.

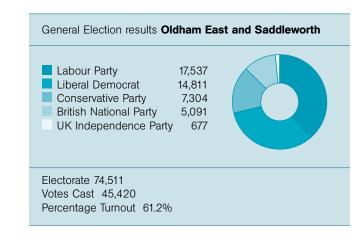
2nd February – In commenting on what he perceived as a trend of attacks by gangs of Asian youths on lone white men, Chief Superintendent Eric Hewitt described them as "predatory", and he referred to figures under which there had been 572 racist crimes recorded in Oldham in the last year, 62% of which were by Asians against whites. The statistics were challenged. At a subsequent meeting, involving the Police, Oldham Council and other representatives, it was agreed to set up a special task force to look at race attacks.

February/March – Some continuing racist violence, eg. an attack on an Asian man outside a pub by four white men on 23rd February, and first meeting of the task force. The Police established a new mobile anti-racist crime unit, focused on the areas of greatest tension. Much of the debate at this time was about a proposed National Front march scheduled for 31st March. After widespread calls to ban this march, in the event the National Front did not submit their application to hold it. A counter march organised by various anti-racism organisations did, however, go ahead peacefully on the 31st.

April – A series of racist attacks, mainly by groups of Asian youths on lone white men, continues to make the headlines in Oldham. Sometimes these involve robbery, sometimes not. In some incidents words such as "Get out of our area" were used. The Chief Superintendent of the Police said that things had not reached the point of "no-go areas for whites", but that this could happen. This issue was picked up on The Today Programme on Radio 4, which quoted some youngsters from Glodwick saying that there were no-go zones. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some graffiti declaring no-go areas for whites had been painted in the past but little attention had been paid to them.

Saturday, 21st April – A serious level of racial violence occurred this weekend. The most notorious incident was that of Walter Chamberlain, an old aged pensioner who was attacked in Westwood by a young Asian man, assisted by two others. Mr Chamberlain needed extensive treatment for his injuries, which included broken cheekbones. This case, with graphic photographs of Mr Chamberlain, was picked up by the national media. In a separate incident, less widely reported, Asad Zulfiqar was attacked in Chadderton by a group of eleven white youths

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and needed hospital treatment for injuries to his face and body. A 24 year old white man was attacked by two Asians near Werneth Park, suffering injury to his hands after a machete attack. A number of cases of verbal racist abuse were reported.

Monday, 23rd April – A number of St. George's flags were flown from lamp posts in Oldham, but were removed by the Council on the grounds that they were illegally erected, a distraction to road users and could endanger safety. The St George's flag was flown on the Civic Centre and other buildings.

Tuesday, 24th April – A £13,650 reward to help find the attackers of Mr Chamberlain is offered by the Police and two local Asian men. No police rewards are offered in respect of other crimes during this period. (FOOTNOTE: On 1st October, Fokrul Islam was convicted of the assault on Mr Chamberlain, and sentenced to four years, but acquitted on the Judge's direction of racially aggravated grievous bodily harm. The Police, however, under the wider McPherson definition of racist crime continue to treat the Chamberlain case as racist.)

26th April – The National Front apply to march through Oldham on 5th May. This proposal is condemned by community and political leaders, and the following day the Chief Constable applies to the Council for a prohibition order under the Public Order Act 1986 to prevent all public processions in the town for three months.

Saturday, 28th April – Before and after the Oldham Athletic v Stoke City football match there are a number of racist incidents, including racist verbal abuse by Stoke fans walking towards the ground and retaliatory attacks by young Bangladeshis involving two petrol bombs and an attack on a pub, the Trap Inn. The Bangladeshi Youth Association claim that the Police showed bias in protecting white racists on their way to the match and in failing to recognise that the Bangladeshis were protecting their property. Sixteen people are arrested, the majority from Stoke. There were allegations that the route chosen by the Police to direct Stoke fans from Mumps station to the football ground was insensitive, but in fact it would be difficult if not impossible to find a route which would not have brought the fans into contact with minority ethnic communities.

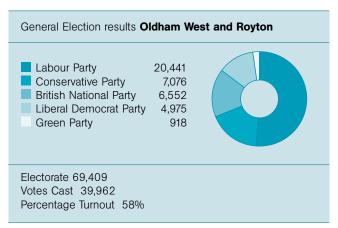
2nd May – Following a request from the Council, the Home Secretary grants a three month ban on political marches in Oldham, with immediate effect. The National Front maintain that they will defy this ban.

4th May – Launch of Oldham Athletic's Unity in the Community Initiative to build links between the club and the different communities of Oldham. This initiative is described more fully in the Leisure Chapter of this report.

Saturday, 5th May – After a day of mounting tension and run-ins between racists and anti-racists in Central Oldham, which the Police contain, about 50 National Front supporters arrive in Oldham in the late afternoon, mainly from Birmingham and London. The Police keep them separate from the Anti-Nazi League and groups of young Asian men. Five hundred police are deployed in all, and sixteen arrests made. The NF supporters are escorted back to the M6. These events receive extensive publicity.

Saturday, 19th May – Following the threat of a visit by the National Front, 500 police are deployed in Oldham. The Anti-Nazi League carry out leafleting, and complain that they are impeded by the Police. A small National Front contingent delivers leaflets on the Holts and Fitton Hills Estates, and is then escorted by police out of Oldham. One arrest is made.

21st-25th May – A series of incidents occurred during this week at Breeze Hill School, where about three-quarters of the pupils are Asian, one-quarter white. On 21st May, a group of white ex-pupils attacked some Asian pupils, and there was stone throwing and verbal abuse. Further clashes took place later in the day and the perception of staff seems to have been that white youths were to blame. Police were informed and officers deployed; the effectiveness of this operation was perceived differently by the Police and the school authorities. No arrests were made on this day. Police were deployed on 22nd and a small group of white youths threw stones and other missiles onto the Astroturf pitch. As a mounted policeman approached, they ran away. At different times in the afternoon white youths shouted abuse and in one case damaged a car windscreen. On 23rd May police were again deployed, but no incidents were reported. On 24th May, Police again attended the school. An incident occurred inside the school involving seven white youths and the mother of one of them; after some had left on police instruction, they were involved in an incident of verbal abuse, stone throwing and other violence with a group of about thirty Asian pupils. Police attempted to keep the groups apart, but in a series of subsequent incidents, four Asian youths and one white youth were arrested. The following day police were again deployed and there were further incidents of racist verbal abuse and threatening behaviour by white youths. One white youth was arrested. The following week, three more white youths were arrested. There are significantly differing accounts of this week's events between the Police and the school authorities.



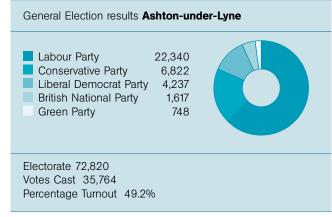
Saturday, 26th May – This day was the first, and most serious day, of the Oldham riots. A group of twenty football supporters were observed during the day drinking in local pubs, and one was arrested for racist chanting. At 8.00 p.m., an Asian youth and a white youth began an argument off the Roundthorn Road, which led to fighting. Family and friends joined in, some summoned by mobile phone, including some of the football supporters, who attacked Asian houses in the street with bricks through windows, doors kicked and cars damaged. Seven white men were arrested, others removed from the scene, but subsequently challenged by a group of Asian men, two of whom were then arrested.

By this time the disorder was becoming serious. Some of the Asian men attacked the Live and Let Live pub as they returned to Glodwick, where a large group assembled in Waterloo Street and marched towards the town centre. Significant numbers of police were deployed, with a mobile command vehicle and firearms officers in view of reports of shootings. Serious disturbances continued for several hours and were clearly directed against the Police and against public houses, a number of which in different parts of the town suffered serious damage. In these incidents, as in the initial attacks in Roundthorn, many residents, customers, publicans and their families escaped only with difficulty and damage was very extensive. Cars were overturned and destroyed and damage caused to CCTV cameras and other property as barricades were erected and dismantled. Ninety police officers experienced injury.

Sunday, 27th May – Further bouts of disorder occurred in different parts of Oldham, though on a lesser scale than the night before. Asian youths threw petrol bombs in Westwood, there were more attacks on pubs, and the offices of the Oldham Evening Chronicle were firebombed.

28th-29th May – Further incidents, on a smaller scale, occurred in different parts of Oldham, involving damage to cars, and other property. Over the weekend, which was a bank holiday, a significant number of arrests of white and Asian men were made.

1st June – The house of the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Riaz Ahmad, was firebombed in the early hours. Councillor Ahmad and his family narrowly escaped and the house was extensively damaged. A £10,000 reward for information was subsequently offered by the Police.



Sunday, 3rd June – A serious attack on Mohammed Asif Kayani took place in Chadderton as he returned from work. He was knocked unconscious and suffered other injuries from three or four white men.

7th June – lin the General Election, the voting figures were as illustrated in the charts above.

Mr Griffin's share of the vote was 16% of the total in Oldham West and the results received widespread national media coverage.

Sunday, 10th June – A proposed National Front visit to Oldham was called off, but 300 Anti-Nazi League supporters gathered in Oldham and three arrests were made for possession of offensive weapons and a public disorder offence.

12th June – There was an arson attack on an Asian off-licence in Hathershaw from which three men were rescued; the incident was treated by the Police as racist.

14th June – A delegation of senior politicians, police officers and Council officials met Home Secretary David Blunkett.

There was widespread criticism that the delegation was all white. The Council leadership attribute this to restrictions on numbers imposed by the Home Office, and the need for the delegation to include particular post holders and to be politically balanced. The Home Secretary promised a visit by Home Office Minister Angela Eagle (which took place on Monday, 25th June), and urged the delegation to set up an Independent Review. In due course, this led to the appointment of the Panel.

Appendix 2

PANEL MEMBERS

David Ritchie CB, Chair of the Oldham Independent Review, was born in Manchester and spent most of his career in the Department of the Environment, Including seven years in their North West Regional Office. Until February 2001 he was Regional Director of the Government office for the West Midlands and responsible for a wide variety of economic, social and environmental programmes in the region.

Maqsood Ahmad lives in Rochdale and is a former Director of Kirklees Racial Equality Council. He is a member of the Stephen Lawrence Steering Group and an Assistant Inspector with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

Jan Atkinson OBE, the former headteacher of Stretford High School which was established in 1990 by the amalgamation of two multicultural single sex schools. The amalgamated schools saw a significant improvement in achievement levels and recognition by OFSTED.

Waqar Azmi works as a national director of equality and diversity at TMP worldwide, he is also the national convenor of the British Federation of Racial Equality Councils. He was formerly Chief Executive of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Racial Equality Council and Race Equality West Midlands.

Clive Dutton OBE has directed and implemented large-scale community-based urban regeneration initiatives to achieve social inclusion in deprived multi-cultural areas for the last 13 years. He is Director of Regeneration for Gallagher Estates and formerly Head of Regeneration with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. He was seconded to the DETR team which produced the Government's Urban White Paper and is also a member of a Social Exclusion Unit policy action team.

Dr Zubaida Haque, previously studied at Manchester University, as well as Oxford and Cambridge University where she carried out research into the educational achievements of the Bangladeshi community. She contributed chapters on education and social policy issues for the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, and has worked in Bangladesh for both the World Bank and the UN.

Sir James Sharples was Chief Constable of Merseyside for almost 10 years until 1998 and is a former President of the Association of Chief Police Officers. A police officer for 35 years, he has experience of providing a policing service in sensitive situations, and of a command role during serious public order situations.

PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE
Oldham MBC and Greater Manchester Police

Recent events in Oldham have generated considerable cause for concern. Increased levels of racial tension, inter-community conflict, racially motivated attacks and major public disturbances have created a situation demanding a response from the statutory agencies, the community and voluntary sectors and the wider community within the Borough. It is a situation which political extremists have manipulated to their own advantage, heightening levels of fear and tension, particularly within vulnerable communities.

Proposal

The circumstances prevailing in Oldham need to be analysed and understood. That understanding must lead to a programme of action owned and supported by those with responsibility within the Borough for promoting good community relations and by all the communities within the Borough. At the heart of any proposals must be a continuing commitment to programmes of regeneration designed to tackle levels of poverty and an improvement in the delivery of mainstream services across the Borough. What is particularly important is that the process of review must take the Borough forward and not simply provide an analysis of recent events. It will be important to understand the causes and implications of particular incidents and events in the recent past but the main emphasis must be on charting a future direction with clear roles and responsibilities for the key stakeholders within the town.

The following terms of reference are proposed:

- a) 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;
- b) 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; and
- c) to identify and recommend courses and programmes of action designed to tackle problems at source and rebuild community confidence.

Methodology

The review should be conducted in the following manner:

- a) it should be open, transparent and accountable;
- b) the review should be local in nature but the panel should include individuals of national standing capable of drawing lessons for others facing similar problems;
- any members of the public who live and work in the Borough should be provided with an opportunity to submit their views to the review panel;
- d) the review panel should report to Oldham MBC and Greater Manchester Police, who will discuss its conclusion with the Government:
- e) the review should place an emphasis on proposals to take the Borough forward; and
- f) there should be an emphasis on speed of response with initial views and findings available as soon as possible and a final report not more than four months after the process has commenced.

ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF POPULATION AND POPULATION ESTIMATES BY WARD

Oldham's population is 219,000 people (2001 est.), and at 11% has, next to Manchester the second largest proportion of people from minority ethnic communities. Projected estimates for the growth of minority ethnic communities in Oldham over the next ten years have strategic implications for the town and are produced for comparison.

Source: OMBC's Ethnic Population and Household Projections, 1997.

Age	All Groups	White	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Black	Indian	Other
0-4	15,960	11,400	2,380	1,850	130	100	90
5-15	34,920	27,510	3,810	2,630	390	290	270
16-24	24,640	19,100	2,930	1,850	310	300	150
25-44	62,880	55,410	3,790	2,230	680	510	260
45-retired	45,670	42,940	1,320	700	260	270	180
Retired-74	21,330	20,270	400	320	180	110	50
75+	13,610	13,460	60	30	30	20	20
Total	219,000	190,100	14,680	9,600	1,980	1,620	1,020

Age	All Groups	White	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Black	Indian	Other
0-4	15,460	9,610	3,090	2,400	180	140	40
5-15	34,040	23,020	5,780	4,580	320	230	110
16-24	25,850	19,610	3,320	2,300	310	200	110
25-44	57,920	45,440	6,680	4,480	660	510	140
45-retired	49,450	45,030	2,330	990	480	430	190
Retired-74	25,310	23,990	520	440	160	130	70
75+	12,460	11,940	210	150	90	50	30
Total	220,490	178,630	21,940	15,340	2,200	1,690	690

/ard	Index ranking	% aged under 16	% those 16-59 economically active
Coldhurst	75	31.7	66.9
Verneth	80	27.8	67.0
Alexandra	83	27.9	69.5
St. Mary's	103	30.5	69.2
Hollinwood	307	26.6	71.9
St. James'	338	28.1	74.3
_ees	816	21.9	77.0
St. Paul's	890	21.9	79.2
Chadderton South	1,134	21.7	80.7
Waterhead	1,359	21.9	81.7
ailsworth West	1,642	19.7	79.5
ailsworth East	2,405	20.5	80.9
Chadderton Central	2,468	19.2	83.3
Chadderton North	2,725	19.3	80.9
Shaw	3,076	21.3	81.7
Royton South	3,398	19.2	83.1
Royton North	3,683	18.5	81.4
Crompton	3,852	17.0	82.2
Saddleworth West	5,077	18.0	81.6
Saddleworth East	7,041	17.6	80.5
Oldham		27.8	67.0

Ward	All minority origins	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Black	Indian
Coldhurst	36.7	1.7	31.3	1.7	1.2
Werneth	38.0	27.0	4.3	1.1	3.4
Alexandra	20.7	14.1	3.4	1.8	0.7
St. Mary's	31.2	23.9	2.5	3.1	0.6
Hollinwood	1.9	0.6	0	0.5	0.3
St. James'	2.1	0.1	0	1.4	0.1
Lees	1.8	0.3	0	0.8	0.2
St. Paul's	13.0	6.5	0.5	0.6	4.5
Chadderton South	1.8	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.3
Waterhead	2.3	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.2
Failsworth West	1.4	0.1	0	0.6	0.1
Failsworth East	0.9	0	0	0.3	0.1
Chadderton Central	2.3	0.3	0	0.7	0.4
Chadderton North	2.2	0.5	0	0.6	0.5
Shaw	2.6	0.4	1.3	0.3	0.2
Royton South	2.1	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.5
Royton North	1.0	0.2	0	0.3	0.1
Crompton	0.8	0.1	0	0.2	0.1
Saddleworth West	0.9	0.1	0	0.3	0.2
Saddleworth East	0.8	0.2	0	0.1	0.2
Oldham	8.7	4.1	2.4	0.8	0.7

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*Out of 8,414 wards in England

Scheme

MYTH BUSTING

REGENERATION PROGRAMME SPEND BY WARD

Period Cm Wards

	Scheme	Period £m \		Wards	Population	Estimate	Expenditure by community ¹ I £m EM £m	
						population ratio I/EM		
	Rochdale Canal	01-2002	13.5	Chadderton N, C and S/		14410 17 2111	1 3111	
	Trooridato Cariai	01 2002	10.0	Hollinwood/Failsworth W				
	Huddersfield Canal	98-2001	6.0	Saddleworth E and W				
	NRF*	01-2004	5.25	St James'/St Mary's (part) Waterhead	N	N	N	١
	NRF*	01-2004	5.25	Alexandra/Coldhurst/Lees/Werneth	78,000	80/20	4.20	1.0
				Hollinwood/St James'/St Mary's				
_	Holts	01-2002	0.075	Lees				
CCTV Initiative	Glodwick	01-2002	0.093	St Mary's/Alexandra				
<u>.</u>	Mobile unit	00-2001	0.067	-				
<u>=</u>	Fitton Hill	00-2001	0.075	St Paul's				
≥	Limeside	01-2002	0.085	Hollinwood				
ပ္ပ	Neighbourhood	01 -	0.3	St James'				
J	Wardens	2003/04						
	Excellence in Cities	00-2003	7.7	N/A				
	Breezehill - Mini EAZ							
	Technology School -	00-2002	0.6	N/A				
<u>s</u>	Hathershaw							
8	Sports College -	00-2003	0.6	N/A				
Schools	Failsworth							
•	Language School -	N/S**	N/S**	N/A				
	Failsworth							
	Art College - Grange	N/S**	N/S**	N/A				
				External Funding				
	Westwood SRB	95-2000	11.08	Coldhurst/Chadderton N	8,000	38/62	4.10	6.90
	Glodwick SRB	97-2003	5.75	Alexandra/St Mary's	6,000	10/90	0.57	5.:
	Welfare to work plus	99-2004	4.50	Borough-wide	0,000	10700	0.07	0
	Route to	01-2008	20.00	Werneth/Hollinwood/Chadderton S	28,000	60/40	12.00	8.0
	renaissance	01 2000	20.00	Weirietti i Tellin Weed, eriadaerten e	20,000	00/10	12.00	0.0
	New deal for	01/02-	53.53	Alexandra/St Paul's	8,000	95/5	50.80	2.6
	communities	2011/12	00.00	/ HOXAITATA/OCT AUTO	0,000	00/0	00.00	2.0
	Business support	97-2001	5.00	Borough-wide	220,000			
	Community economic	97-2001	4.00	Alexandra/Coldhurst/Hollinwood/	78,000	80/20	3.20	0.80
*	development			Lees/St James'/St Mary's/Werneth	·			
*** 100	Town Centre	97-2001	3.00	St Mary's/St Paul's/Werneth/	Borough-wide	N/A		
8	Action Plan			Coldhurst/Alexandra	benefits			
EAPs 97-2	Broadway Strategic	97-2001	1.20	Chadderton Central	Borough-wide	N/A		
တ လ	Development Site				benefits			
Ā	Children's Fund	01-2004	2.50	Alexandra/Coldhurst/Hollinwood/	Borough-wide			
Ш		(first 3 of		Lees/St James'/St Mary's/Werneth	but focus on			
		6 years)			Children in Need			
	On Track	01-2007	1.50	Lees/St Mary's	N/A			
	Healthy living centres	01-2008	1.0	Borough-wide	N/A			
	Out of schools	99-2004	1.0	Borough-wide	N/A			
2	hours learning							
te	Summer Schools	01-2004	0.175		Borough-wide	N/A		
ţ		99-2009	3.42	Hollinwood	N/A			
Lottery	Surestart 1	33 2003	0.72					
Lotte	Surestart 1 Surestart 2	01-2011	2.5	Coldhurst	N/A			

In the course of our work, we came across a number of strongly held beliefs which have affected community relations in the town. Few were accurate and most are unhelpful in the context of community cohesion and interaction. A number are set out below, with the true position explained.

Owls

Population Estimate Evpenditure

Allegation: The traditional owl emblem of Oldham failed to appear on recently installed street furniture, because the owl is offensive to Muslims.

Truth: No such policy decision was made and there was an administrative error in the ordering process. Owls are to be found on new street furniture.

St George's Flags

Allegation: St George's flags were removed from lamp posts because white people are unable to celebrate their national day, whilst Asians can celebrate national days of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Truth: St George's flags were removed from lamp posts because the appropriate permission had not been sought, and considered a distraction to road users and a safety hazard. The St George's flag was flown on the Civic Centre and other buildings.

Marriage

Allegation: All Asian women are forced to marry.

Truth: Forced marriages are very rare, and illegal in Britain.

There is a strong tradition of arranged marriages amongst people from Pakistan and Bangladesh, as there used to be in parts of white society in this country. The two practices should not be confused.

Allegation: Asians are taking over.

Truth: This is untrue. Oldhamers with Asian antecedents are only 13% of the population, estimated to raise to 19% in 10 years. All past experience shows that higher birth rates amongst new migrant communities decline the longer they are established.

No-go Areas

Allegation: There are no-go areas in Oldham, for white and Asian people.

Truth: There are areas where people, especially young people, of different communities feel uncomfortable, in part because they have experienced or more commonly heard about racist attitudes in those areas. These might be considered "won't-go areas"; there are no "no-go areas" in Oldham.

Fundamentalism

Allegation: All Muslims are fundamentalists.

Truth: This is not true. As other faiths, Islam has many traditions of belief and practice, including some which might be considered fundamentalist by analogy (say) with Christian fundamentalism. These are the views of a small minority of Muslims. Ignorance of the religion has contributed to the myth here, coupled with the prominence given to Islamic fundamentalism following 11th September.

Demands on the National Health Service

Allegation: Asians make excessive demands on the NHS. *Truth:* This is not the case. We deal with this in detail in the Health chapter.

Mosques

Allegation: Mosques have been paid for with public money. Truth: There is no substance to this allegation. In general, Government funding regimes eg. the Single Regeneration Budgets specifically exclude religious projects. Mosques are paid for by the local community.

Positive Discrimination

Allegation: Asians get jobs because of their colour.

Truth: This is not true. We comment on discrimination on Asians in the workplace in the Employment and Economy chapter.

Workforce statistics show that the workforce of many employers, including the large public sector employers, has a far lower percentage of Asians than the town's population would suggest.

Government Funding

Allegation: All Government monies go to Asian areas. *Truth:* This is not true. Funding has been awarded in the past, through competitive bidding rounds, with the successful areas satisfying strictly laid down criteria which had mainly been about need. Fitton Hill and Hathershaw, a largely white area, has now gained a commitment to £53 million; other examples benefiting white areas are the borough wide Business Support Programme, Healthy Living Centres and Out of Schools Learning Lottery initiatives, as well as projects such as recent work to the Huddersfield Canal in Saddleworth.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC VIEWS

In total 915 people registered their views by either visiting the shop, sending E-mail, letter or fax or by phoning the shop. A break down of the ethnicity and gender of those who registered their views is shown overleaf. In some cases the ethnic origin was unknown as some individuals registered their views confidentially and declined to disclose their ethnic status.

The panel are pleased that these statistics reasonably replicate those in the town as a whole.

They do not include the many individuals interviewed by panel members during their enquiries.

Housing

Both white and minority communities expressed concern with regard to the fairness of housing improvement schemes in the town. It was felt that the money was spent in a manner, which favoured one community to the detriment of the other. A common perception was that if you belonged to a certain racial group you would be far more likely to obtain home improvements from public funds.

There are perceptions in the white community that 'Asians' do not maintain their homes and as a result the areas where they live become 'run down'. Amongst the locations mentioned were Coppice. Westwood and Glodwick.

It is felt that when people from minority communities purchase houses in an area where mainly white people live this results in house prices falling. As the prices fall, people increasingly purchase houses from minority communities, often for cash. The effect is that house prices spiral down so that by the time the last white people on a road sell their home it is at a fraction of the original value.

There was a view expressed that as Asians tend to live almost exclusively in certain areas in Oldham this reduced the opportunity for them to interact with the white community. This lack of 'interaction' was a factor in the decline of relations between the two communities.

Asian and white people living in areas where the majority of people were from a different ethnic background expressed feelings of social isolation and fear of crime. There were also positive comments made from individuals who are in the 'minority' in the area that they live. They stated that they had a good relationship with their Asian or white neighbours.

Education

There is a feeling of great unease as to the segregation of white people from minority ethnic communities within the education system. This segregation was compared by some to segregation of Protestant and Catholics in schools in Northern Ireland. It is felt that this segregation could only result in increased levels of ignorance between the communities. The problem of segregation would only get worse with the increase of single faith schools.

There is a perception amongst some white people that the minority communities have the newest and best quality schools. Some members of the minority ethnic community also feel that the white communities had access to the best schools. There is a perception from both communities that the other received more funding for education.





Ethnic Origin Statistics

Ethnic origin	%	Ethnic origin	%
White	77.38	Pakistani	6.89
Black-Caribbean	0.33	Bangladeshi	2.40
Black-African	0	Chinese	0
Kashmiri	2.73	Unknown	8.09
Irish	0.33	Other	1.64
Indian	0.22		

Issues of racism need to be tackled in all schools, in particular at the primary level. One comment from a young person, which is worth repeating, was as follows, "people have already made up their minds by the time they go to college. It is too late to change some opinions."

Young people in Oldham felt that there should be more teachers from minority ethnic communities.

Young people felt that knowledge of other faiths and cultures would help to build an understanding of each other's needs and expectations and to break down barriers of ignorance. This is particularly felt by white young people who said they wanted to engage with Asian people but had fears of saying the wrong thing in case it caused offence. These issues they felt could be addressed via schools.

Policing In Oldham

There were views expressed by white people and by people from the minority ethnic communities that the Police did not have sufficient legal powers to deal with those responsible for the riots.

Members of the white community felt that the Police were targeting them for attention while ignoring members of minority communities, as the Police feared being labelled as 'racist'.

Some members of the minority ethnic communities believed that the Police were targeting them unfairly. In particular the stop and checking of vehicles and stop and search was mentioned.

Various views were expressed concerning the racist crime statistics released by the Police. Members from all communities considered the statistics to be inaccurate in the sense that members of ethnic minorities under-reported incidents. This under-reporting was the result of either a lack of faith that the Police would take action or the result a lack of understanding on how to report an incident.

Aside from the accuracy of the figures concerns were also expressed concerning the way the statistics were released and reported in the media.

It was felt that the Police were not consulting the right people in the communities. They were not speaking to the community groups to find out their concerns/fears. When the Police did consult it was too late, the riots had already occurred.

Views were also expressed about the over reliance of the Police on their consultation links with community 'elders'. It was felt by some that the elders consulted were not representative of their own community.

Police response times were felt to be too slow; on occasions it took 24 hours or longer for the Police to respond to an incident. White and Asian residents made this comment and both felt that the Police were slower at attending incidents involving them. Some Asian residents suggested this was the result of racism in the Police. White residents suggested that Asians had a quicker response, as the Police were scared of upsetting them.

More black and minority officers should be recruited.

Fear of crime was a major issue of concern for many Oldham residents. There was a fear of racial attacks by both Asian and white residents.

Numerous comments were made regarding public safety in Oldham's parks. Alexandra Park was singled out for comment. Many white residents felt unsafe in the park in particular after 4pm. Several stated that they or their friends/relatives had been asked to leave the park by Asian youths who had told them that it was 'their' park. An elderly Asian gentleman in the park who informed her that she was welcome to walk through 'their' park had approached one white resident.

Many comments made were supportive of the Police – stating that they had a difficult job to do in difficult circumstances. Many supportive comments were made particularly by white people toward senior police officers in Oldham. Residents stated that they admired the honesty and integrity of Chief Superintendent Fric Hewitt

Some people felt that Police had given in to the right wing and other extremist groups in the town, by allowing them to march and in so doing have a platform for their views. This in turn resulted in increasing tension in the community causing young Asian men to go out into the streets in the belief that they were defending their community.

From some young Asians there was a feeling expressed that the riots were payback time for past actions of police officers to young people.

Some white people felt there was widespread fraud within the Asian community. Many are claiming unemployment and housing benefits, whilst working full time. The authorities are afraid to tackle this issue, as they would be labelled as racist.

Some Asian residents stated that the Police hold racist views with a 'them and us' culture of Policing. The Police do not protect them from racist attacks and stereotype Asians as criminals and troublemakers. Some Asian youths felt that Asian areas were policed differently from white areas. The Police go into Asian areas 'fully kitted up' in their 'riot gear' and 'riot vans'.

There was a perception that the Police had little understanding of the impact of racism and extreme right wing organisations within Oldham on visible minority communities. There was also a misunderstanding as to the legal powers available to the Police to tackle extreme political groups.

There was a feeling amongst some that the police management structure was old fashioned, and lacked the vision to tackle complex issues around race and policing a diverse community.

Some Asian youths stated that they would consider joining the Police to help tackle racism from within and some felt they would not join because of the fear of racial abuse from racist police officers.

White young people were mixed in their opinions of the Police and the way they handled the disturbances. It was felt by some that the Police were not on top of issues such as drug abuse and general crime in the areas where the riots occurred.

Some young white people interviewed felt that there needed to be additional police presence on the street and that the Police need to be better prepared to deal with riot situations.

Health

There is a perception that large numbers of immigrants have stretched the already scarce NHS resources to breaking point.

Some people expressed the view that Asians use A&E instead of visiting their GPs, as medication would be given freely at A&E departments.

There was a perception that Oldham Royal Hospital operates an unequal policy with regard to relatives visiting patients. If you were white then you would be allowed two or three relatives to attend a visit, but if Asian then as many as 12 would be allowed to visit.

Employment and Economy

There was a feeling amongst Asians that some employers discriminated against them when they apply for a job.

Since the cotton industry closed down, there has been no significant number of new manufacturing jobs created. This has led to increased levels of unemployment and therefore an increased level of discontent within the communities.

White collar jobs have increased as manufacturing jobs have declined. The majority of white collar jobs require qualifications, which can disadvantage some Asians who may not have sufficient English language skills to enable them to apply.

As a result of the riots Oldham has developed a bad name. Therefore companies do not wish to invest in the area. Also if you apply for a job outside the Oldham area, people won't employ you, as they believe that you may have been involved in the riots.

The riots had had a detrimental effect on the economy of the area, as people increasingly preferred to shop elsewhere.

Community, Culture and Faith

'English' or 'British' culture has been increasingly marginalised – while Asian culture and religion is vibrant and well supported.

On St George's Day the Council removed flags in the town centre. There was a lack of understanding as to why this was done. There was no official encouragement for the celebration of this day.

On Pakistan Independence Day there were organised celebrations and the flag of Pakistan was flown.

There is a widespread perception that the Oldham Owl has been removed – in order to avoid insulting Asians. Yet the symbol of Bangladesh, a flower – was placed in a public place.

There is a widespread perception that Mosques have been built in the Borough at public expense.

There is a lack of integration in the town between communities, caused by an ignorance of each other's cultures.

Historically there have been many communities which have settled in Oldham from other countries. These have included people from Eastern Europe and African-Caribbeans. They have adopted local customs, speak the English language and have fully integrated.

The Asian community has not integrated, but has remained completely distinct from the indigenous population; second and third generation residents do not speak English and retain Asian customs. This can be seen particularly with Asian women, whose clothing marks them out as distinct from the indigenous population.

There is a perception that Community Centres have become divisive in Oldham. They are often called the Bangladeshi Community Centre or Pakistani Community Centre. This results in many residents feeling excluded from these publicly funded buildings.

There was a perception expressed by some, that 'Asian' men treat women, both white and Asian as inferior members of society.

White women are verbally insulted in the street by some Asian men. Asian men also restrict the movement of Asian women, by keeping them in the home environment.

There was criticism of the practice of arranged marriages within the Asian community. This was seen as a further barrier to integration between the communities.

Governance

There is widespread distrust by people of all communities that the Council has misspent its resources in the town. The Council has either favoured the white community or unfairly favoured the Asian community in its spending policy.

There is a perception that individuals within the Council are corrupt and that positions and grants are handed out as political favours

The Council has attempted to appease the minority ethnic communities by removing the flags on St George's Day and by removing the Oldham Owl, thus upsetting many white residents.

It is widely believed that Oldham Council's street cleaning policy is unfair. It favours Asian areas to the detriment of other districts.

There is a strong perception by both Asian and White residents that elements within the council are racist. This can be seen in their employment record, which does not represent the demographics of the Borough.

There is a strong view expressed by both Asian and white residents that the Council were to blame for the riots in May.

Many members of the Asian community were unable to identify proactive initiatives or projects designed to promote better understanding between Asian and white communities before the disturbances.

Some Asian residents identified lack of leadership within the Crime and Disorder Partnership initiative. Community involvement from grass roots and hard to reach groups seems to be non-existent.

Media

Local papers were criticised for catering to white readers only. Stories concentrated on white victims of crime, ignoring Asian victims

There is a perception that the length and breadth of coverage of crimes given by the media, reflects the level of effort that the Police make to investigate the reported crimes. Therefore if a newspaper places a story on the front page, the Police have treated this more seriously than an equivalent crime that has little or no coverage. As the media concentrated on white victims so the Police worked hardest to solve these crimes.

There is a perception among some white residents that the local press favour the Asian community, watering down or ignoring stories of Asian attacks on whites.

There is also a perception that the way the local and national press covered Asian attacks on whites caused widespread resentment and unrest in Oldham. Some Asians who saw it at best as wholly inaccurate and at worst racist resented this coverage. Extremist groups also used it to justify demonstrations and marches in the town.

Both Asian and white young people felt misled and confused by the reports contained in the local press.

The Channel 4 programme Love In Oldham was the cause of much comment, all negative. It was widely felt that this programme reinforced stereotypes and prejudice within and outside the town.

The local media were praised by some for their accurate and balanced reports about racist attacks in Oldham.

MAPS

Young People

It is a common perception by members from all the communities that some young people are involved in drug dealing, within the communities.

Young people become involved in crime, as there is little or nothing for them to do, as there is a lack of youth provision in the Borough.

There is a gulf growing between the 'elders' and the young people in the town. This is reflected in an increasing lack of respect between the young and the elders. Groups of young people congregating in the town centre cause fear amongst many residents.

There was a general feeling amongst white and Asian young people that there is nowhere for them to go. Young people feel there is a need for the old style youth centres that gave young people a safe warm place to go and mix with their friends. There was a feeling that detached youth workers and specific target group based provision had no relevance to them, as they do not provide what they ask for. In many cases the specific youth provision on offer was felt not to be relevant to them as individuals.

Women

There is a view held in the white community that Asian men treat women, both Asian and white, as second-class citizens.

White women receive verbal abuse from Asian men in the street.

Arranged marriages were highlighted as an issue of concern, in particular when they take place between women from Pakistan/Bangladesh and Oldham residents.

Many Asian women are isolated from society, unable to speak English and confined to the home. This has a detrimental effect on their children whom by the time they go to school have only a limited grasp of the English language.

Elderly People

There is a perception that the community elders are out of touch with the young.

The elders do not represent the whole Asian community, just a narrow clique. Yet they are repeatedly consulted regarding the views of the community.

The elderly feel vulnerable to crime in the borough. They feel threatened by the gangs of youths in the city centre and in local parks.

Language

Many white residents in Oldham see language as an important issue.

There is resentment that many Asians have only a poor understanding of English. This results in a lack of interaction between the white and Asian communities. This lack of interaction leads to suspicion and fear.

Poor language skills amongst the Asian community restrict their ability to gain well-paid employment.

Language is a major social, economic and cultural barrier between the white and Asian communities.

Some residents, white and Asian, stated that the indigenous population should make more of an effort to speak Asian languages. It was suggested that these languages should be learnt at school.

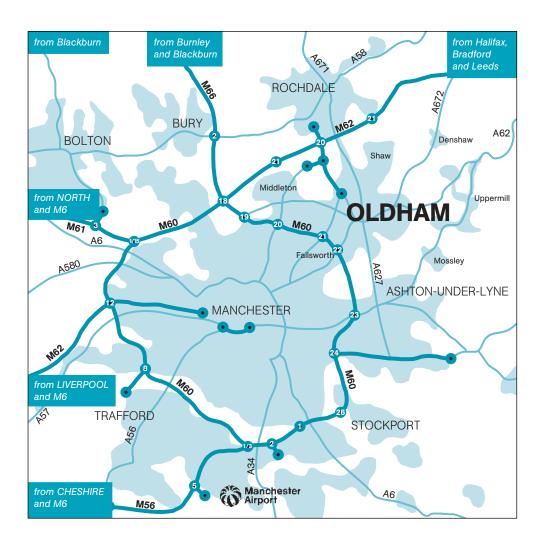
Others felt resentment that Asian languages were being promoted in schools and by the local authority which printed literature in various languages. The high cost of this was a cause of concern.

English should be spoken by all to unify the community. Immigrants should learn English as a condition of residency as per the American model.

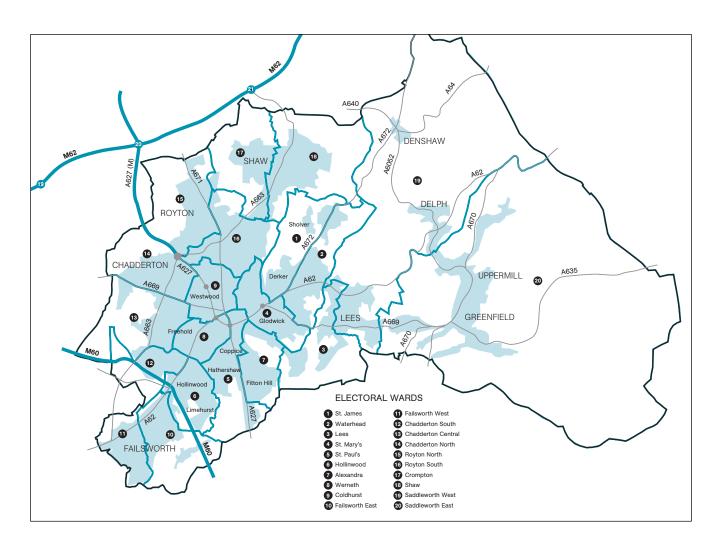
Regional context



Greater Manchester context



Oldham Electoral Wards



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METHODOLOGY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the contributions made to our research by numerous local agencies and communities in Oldham. We are grateful to the organisations concerned for confidential access to staff at all levels.

Agencies and groups consulted or providing submission to the panel included:

Anti Nazi League

Ashiana Housing Association

Asian Community Economic Development Forum

Asian Elderly Cultural Society

AKSA Housing Association

Association Of Black Probation Officers

Bangladeshi Healthy Heart Project

Bangladeshi Women's Association

Bury Racial Equality Council

Channel 4

Clarksfield Tenants Associations

Commission For Racial Equality

Dream (Multi-Racial Youth Group)

Dread Lion Foundation

ODACA - Oldham Development Agency For Community Action

Early Years and Childcare Project

Edge Hill College

Employment Service

Ethnic Minority Support Service

Galaxy FM

Glodwick And Clarksfield Inter-Community Forum

Glodwick Community Outreach Project

Glodwick Health Centre

Glodwick Outreach Women

Government Office For The North West/Home Office

Granada TV

Greater Manchester Police -

(HQ Departments and Oldham Division)

Greater Manchester Police Authority

Greater Manchester Police Black And Asian Police Association

Greater Manchester Police Federation

Headteachers of Primary, Secondary and Special Schools

Labour Party

Lees And Saddleworth Labour Party

Manchester Evening News

Muslim Welfare Association

Northern Housing Association

Oldham Advertiser

Oldham African-Caribbean Project

Oldham Athletic Football Club

Oldham Bangladeshi Youth Association

Oldham Borough Tenants

Oldham Borough Tenants Association Panel

Oldham Business Forum

Oldham Chamber Of Commerce

Oldham Chronicle

Oldham College (Staff And Student)

Oldham Community Health Council

Oldham Connexions Service

Oldham Crime And Disorder Partnership

Oldham LEA

Oldham Learning Partnership

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council -

elected members and officers

Oldham NHS Trust

Oldham Pakistani Youth Association

Oldham Partnership

Oldham Primary Care Group

Oldham Race Equality Partnership

Oldham Schools Linking Project

Oldham Sixth Form College (Staff And Young People)

Oldham Team Centre Partnership

Oldham Tenant Contact

Oldham United Against Racism

Oxford Compact 96

Pakistani Community Centre

Royal Mail (Oldham)

SELHAL - Housing Association

Shiloh PLC

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Teachers of Primary, Secondary and Special Schools

The British National Party

The Guardian

The Housing Corporation Unity in the Community

Werneth and Freehold Community Development Project

West Pennine Health Authority

West Pennine Housing Association

Faith Leaders of all denominations and faith groups.

915 members of the Oldham community gave evidence at our drop-in shop, by e-mail, letter or through our website.

More than two hundred young people participated in consultation with panel members and a community facilitator.

We apologise for any inadvertent omissions.

The panel met for the first time in early August and agreed that individual members should take the lead on specific subjects and meet every two weeks to discuss progress and agree

next steps.

The panel took a short term lease on a shop in the Spindles Shopping Centre, located in the town centre and used it as both an office base and a highly visible "Drop In Centre" which people were encouraged to visit and register their views.

A number of methods were employed to assemble information

and receive opinion from the people of Oldham.

It is worth noting that many of the visitors to the Drop In Centre felt that it was the first time they had had the chance to express their views.

Whilst it was open, the Drop In Centre interviewed 915 people (see Appendix 7).

Most submissions were made orally and recorded, in writing, by OIR staff. Translation services were arranged, when necessary and confidentiality guaranteed through private meetings if people wished.

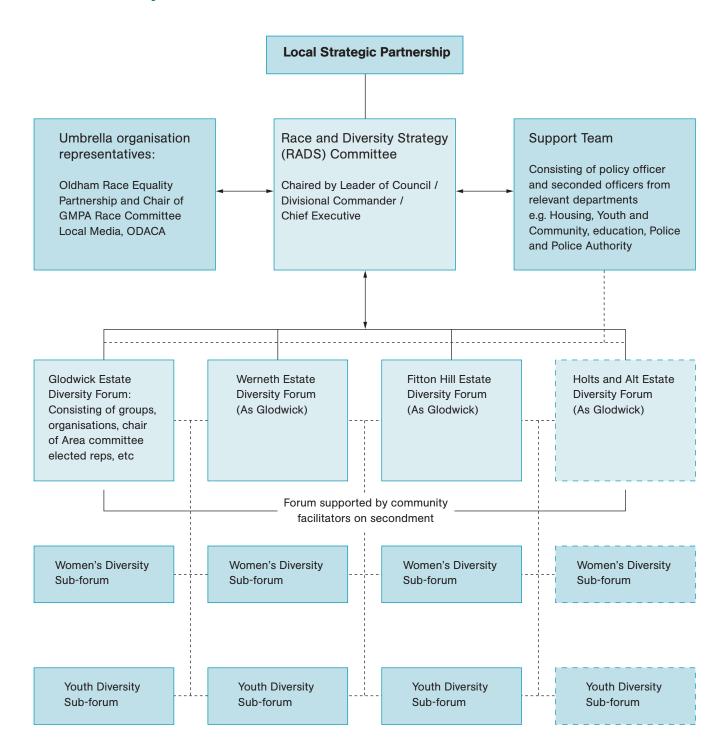
To gain an impression of the range of respondents the OIR asked people to provide information about their age, gender, ethnic background and place of residence. However, it was emphasised that if given this information would remain confidential as would all comments made, and was not a requirement before views could be recorded.

The panel members conducted many meetings with individuals, organisations and agencies, most of which are listed at Appendix 9. The panel also received written submissions which were taken into account and reflected in the final report and recommendations.

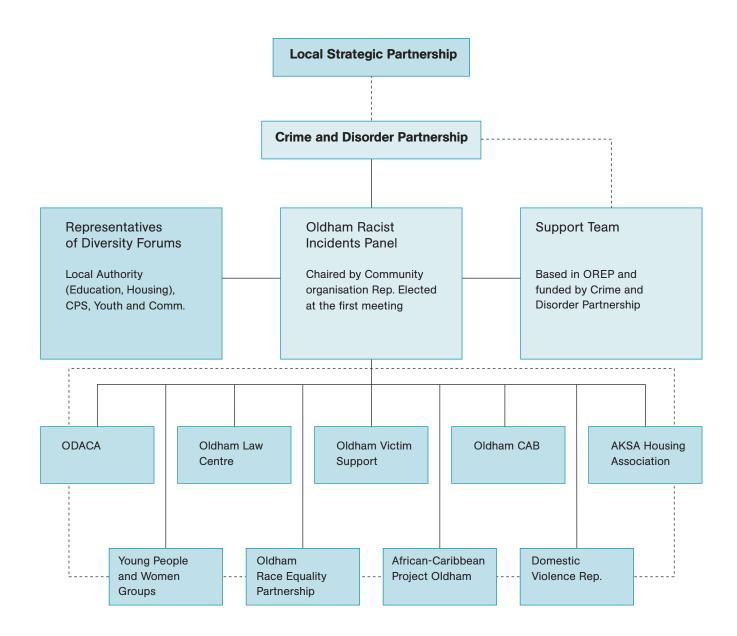
The panel met on ten occasions to discuss and compare their findings and discuss the recommendations that would form the basis of an Action Plan for the future.

RACE AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Race and Diversity Communities Consultation and Involvement Structure



RACIST INCIDENTS PANEL



Work of the panel could include:

- Collective monitoring of racist incidents and "hot-spots" and contribution towards Crime and Disorder Strategies.
- Training for voluntary organisations, local authority et al and input to police training programme.
- Joint initiatives to gain the confidence of communities who do not report racial incidents.
- Advice to the Crime and Disorder Partnership on racist incident issues.
- Assistance to Crime and Disorder Partnership on anti-racist initiatives and support mechanisms for victims of racial harassment and violence.
- Mediation work.

SUMMARY OF REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

Housing

There should be a targeted programme of housing clearance and replacement. This should be the responsibility of the URC which we recommend, but it will need strong commitment from the Government, the Housing Corporation and the private sector. In our view the Government should commit to a level of funding to support a clearance programme of 300 homes a year. It may however be possible to accelerate this programme if private sector resources can be attracted on an appropriate scale.

The Council should make the application of funds from the Single Capital Pot to a housing clearance and renewal programme a top corporate priority.

The replacement programme should be based on a clear strategy that will result in a variety of tenures, including social rented housing, low cost home ownership, and varying shared ownership models.

The strategy should ensure that rented houses are allocated to people from different ethnic backgrounds, with appropriate housing management to support this, and also that the marketing of homes for sale should be targeted at people from different ethnic groups. The proposed Urban Regeneration Company will be able to influence the low cost home ownership marketing strategy, as will housing associations.

DTLR and the Housing Corporation should look at the necessary models. Two which in particular we recommend be tested are as follows. In one, for younger households with an income which would sustain a mortgage, the householder would invest his or her compensation for the cleared property, add to it a mortgage, with any uncovered balance of cost to be met by an interest free loan from a housing association, the subsidy coming from public funds. This model would not work for older people who have retired or who have no significant income. In their case, the compensation would be invested and the balance would need to be by way of an interest free loan. In both models, when the property was sold, the owner would retain his or her share of the proceeds, based on the amount of the original investment, and the proportion represented by the interest free loan would be returned to the housing association. Where negative equity exists, the Salford Homeswap Scheme, under which a mortgage can be transferred to a newer property, may also have merit, and should be considered as an option.

There should be a new definition of the word 'obsolete' housing as the basis for compulsory purchase, having regard to inadequate size and other basic inability to meet modern requirements. Other improvements to the CPO process have been proposed to the Government and we recommend that these be investigated urgently and, if appropriate, implemented.

A much more proactive policy is necessary in respect of the Tenancy Support Scheme that has been set up to encourage the movement of BME households into different areas

The Council and registered social landlords should consider group lettings, housing several BME or white families together in non-traditional estates to counter some of the fears of isolation or threat from harassment. Marketing strategies by the social housing sector should be targeted to the specific needs of young Asian people, who are more likely to be receptive to the idea of social housing, as well as to the more traditional, mainly white clients

Owing to the present deficit in the supply of larger houses, meeting this urgent and current need should be a priority for the Council and RSLs.

The Council should make the need to achieve a more representative ethnic mix an integral part of the planning process for the ALMO and that appropriate measures are incorporated into the contracts for the transfer of management responsibility. In addition Registered Social Landlords with experience of managing mixed and BME housing schemes should be actively involved in the process.

Devising and implementing a housing regeneration strategy should be a crucial role for the Urban Regeneration Company proposed in this report. We are aware that this type of approach is currently being piloted in a number of areas including East Manchester, with some early success evident and we recommend that the potential of these models are investigated by OHIP, who could take the lead role in developing a model for the housing functions of the Urban Regeneration Company before being absorbed into it.

The Council in consultation with local communities should review the current necessity and broader benefit of existing traffic management arrangements, particularly in Glodwick, by June 2002, and where actions are identified, such as removal of road humps in some areas, these should be undertaken before December 2002. The council review its strategy in relation to future traffic calming in the borough, given the issues described above.

Education

Greater emphasis is needed on raising the levels of achievement of the ethnic minority pupils, and that ALL pupils are set clear targets by which to measure progress and achievement. This can be achieved in individual schools through the Ethnic Minorities and Travellers Achievement Grant. Individual schools and teachers should focus on this vital area of support for pupils, in the effective use of in-class support, and in the innovation of fresh approaches and encouragement to ensure all pupils achieve their full potential.

Better use should be made of the "Areas of Good Practice Register" that is part of the LEA's strategy to share good practice. This is a valuable way of ensuring that successful initiatives benefit all schools across the Borough.

'Truancy sweeps' in conjunction with the Police should be a regular feature of the strategies adopted by the LEA to tackle this problem. Oldham LEA should target their support and efforts to improving attendance, particularly in the primary sector.

All parents should be made aware of the official regulations and legislation regarding pupils' attendance at school and the regulations about extended holidays in order to reaffirm the existing policy. Further guidance should be given to parents about the negative impact that these absences have on the child's level of attainment and the legislation should be implemented rigorously. Central Government needs to be made aware of the negative impact that this situation has on a school's attendance performance. The rigorous way that school attendance figures are calculated should continue, together with the facility for recording the number/percentage of absences due to extended holidays/visits abroad. This would highlight the issue and help ensure better implementation of the regulations and consistency between schools.

The LEA should link the Learning in a Vocational Environment (LIVE) Project with the new Vocational GCSE initiative by DfES, to be launched in September 2002.

The identification through the Excellence in Cities agenda of the top 10% of gifted and talented pupils in participating schools should be used to set up "Master Classes" at Key Stage 4, or a "Gifted and Talented Academy". This would not remove the more able from their existing schools, but would enhance the provision for the talented pupils, and bring together pupils from different schools and cultures, thus furthering the social inclusion agenda.

The 'Grow Our Own' initiative should be pursued with vigour, and progress against targets reviewed regularly by the Director and Oldham Cabinet Member for Education.

The Director of Education and Culture, working closely with relevant voluntary organisations, should prepare by March 2002 a major publicity campaign reminding parents of the importance of involvement in the development of their offspring, with regular attendance at such facilities. Sure Start should be extended to other areas of the Borough. The costing of this would be approximately £3 million per year for the next 10 years.

The Department for Education and Skills should recognise the necessity to include in all rebuild of schools, primary and secondary, Family Learning Facilities. The present Education Building Regulations, Bulletin 82, based on 'surface area per pupil' can work against this much needed facility if parents are to be involved in the education of their children, or personally involved in an Adult Learning/Skills programme. The DfES with some urgency needs to update the present building regulations to ensure that they offer far more flexibility and that they reflect the new agenda for inclusive education and today's curriculum. This joined-up policy approach would thus reflect today's needs in educational facilities.

More consideration should be given to 'catchment areas' of schools, particularly where they are near the boundary between white and Asian areas, to try to encourage the integration of all groups into schools.

Wherever possible the rebuild of schools should create the opportunity for further integration of pupils, giving them and the school a new start. Far more encouragement needs to be given to parents to visit schools close to them that appear to serve only the needs of another ethnic group to their own. There are too many misconceptions concerning the education of other ethnic groups from both Asian and white parents. An 'Open Door' policy needs to be adopted by all. All schools should celebrate their success so that this success is heard of in the public domain, and thus enhances people's perceptions of the quality of education offered.

The Governors of Blue Coat, Crompton House and Our Lady's, with the relevant diocesan authorities, should review admissions policies and take whatever steps may be necessary to amend foundation deeds so as to offer between 15 and 20% of places to pupils from other faiths. This, in turn, may mean a reduction in the high percentage of pupils (50%) attending some of these schools from outside Oldham. It is not widely known that these schools already offer open admission at Sixth Form level, so that

Muslim children are able to attend at that stage in their careers. This open admission policy should be widely publicised.

Immediate steps should be taken to ensure that £6.4 million of school balances, money designated for the benefit of today's children, should be spent on facilities, resources and initiatives that will benefit them. Schools and governing bodies should look at the possibility of using such funds to develop links with schools with a different ethnic mix, and should ensure that the money is designated for a specific purpose and not just as contingency monies.

The Director of Education and Culture and a group of secondary heads who are working towards Specialist School status should meet with DfES before March 2002 to draw up a strategy for using the new status to achieve integration. American and Northern Ireland examples should be studied as part of this approach.

The 'Oldham Schools Linking Project' should be pursued with vigour. It enhances social inclusion and is a positive move towards integration of children. Central Government should ensure that an annual funding sum of £30,000 be secured to ensure its future. This funding should be specific to the needs of Oldham – though no doubt it would have to be part of a wider programme covering similar areas – and be granted on a guaranteed basis for five years to provide the possibility of forward thinking and continuity. In addition the DfES should continue to develop models for partnerships between schools.

The development of a programme of citizenship should be carried out by the LEA in liaison with schools, for introduction into the curriculum in September 2002.

The LEA should monitor the effectiveness of both its Equal Opportunity Policy and Racial Harmony Policy in schools across the Borough, with immediate effect and annually thereafter.

Where young parents arrive from the sub-continent with no knowledge of English this prevents them from ensuring that their children when they start school speak enough English for lessons to be conducted in English. This is an issue which the Government has been considering with regard to future immigrants in similar circumstances. In our view it needs an effective answer if children's education is not to suffer, if employment prospects are to be improved and if in the longer term (since it will take a generation or two) language barriers in Oldham are to be removed.

For current residents who lack fluency in English an intensive programme of English teaching is needed, linked to neighbourhood schools, and focused in particular on young parents. This will require amongst other solutions, outreach teachers, working in the communities, to ensure maximum impact. Sure Start could be a mechanism to achieve this. The aim should be to help young mothers, and fathers, both for their benefit and more importantly that of their children. This programme should make a decisive and definitive impact on this problem and will need to last for 5 years. This should be underpinned by a high profile publicity programme which highlights the benefits of fluency in the English language.

All parents should be mindful of their responsibility to equip their children in the most positive ways to develop the skills and attitudes needed to live in a multi-cultural society.

To improve transition there need to be better partnerships between Year 11 and Year 12 course organisers and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Connexions, schools and colleges should work together to provide study programmes and materials to assist this process. Connexions, working with the LSC and OLLP, should develop stronger links with employers and that they should bear in mind as they develop their service the comments about the need for better outreach to local communities.

DfES's Excellence Challenge Initiative, designed to increase achievement and aspirations among young people to improve uptake of HE places, should be extended to Oldham.

The Employment Service should investigate better marketing of New Deal and carry out more work with employers to ensure that they have effective equal opportunities policies. With the LSC and Connexions, the Employment Service should consider how good and successful experiences of training are more widely publicised to overcome young people's negative experiences.

The Employment Service should incorporate the learning of English from scratch into the New Deal so that where a client needs it, it is a requirement of claiming benefit.

The Council, Connexions, the OLLP and the LSC need to carry out more detailed analysis to identify the needs and concerns of post-16 years olds, and ensure that this evidence is published.

Employment and Economy

The Government in its review of the law on religious discrimination should specifically tackle discrimination against people in the labour market.

Working with the Commission for Racial Equality, drawing on best practice models from around the country, and having regard to their obligations under the race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Council should draw up a strategy by May 2002 for achieving a representative workforce in the shortest practicable time. We recognise that the Council is downsizing which makes this harder but there is still a significant turnover of staff. Other major public sector employers should follow a similar strategy, linked to the policies of their parent organisations.

The Council, Police, and Health Service employers should collaborate on devising a strategy to carry out a programme of positive action, including training, to attract employees into jobs from the black and minority ethnic communities.

All the major employers in the town, public and private sector, should take into specific consideration the development needs of black and minority ethnic employees, as part of their wider training and development strategy. The CRE and OREP have said that they will be happy to assist.

The Council should make Cultural Awareness training compulsory for all Council employees, both existing and new staff. This will have benefits internally as staff become more sensitive to the needs of other cultures. It will also help to ensure that racial discrimination, deliberate or unintentional is eradicated from the Council. This will assist in the recruitment and the retention of minority ethnic employees in the Council. The Council should ensure that all staff are trained by April 2003. The training provided must also be open to scrutiny and independent evaluation as to its effectiveness. Other employers in the town should consider their training provision in this area and implement a similar policy.

All organisations, particularly those receiving a substantial amount of public funding, should review their contracting policies urgently to ensure that there is no unfairness.

All public sector employers should discuss with the CRE the potential for helping local people benefit from contracts.

The North Manchester Business Link working with the Chamber of Commerce, North West Regional Development Agency and the Oldham Asian Business Association should develop a strategy to help entrepreneurs across the communities, based on the best examples of practice elsewhere.

The Oldham Town Centre Partnership should take advice from the new Race and Diversity Committee on how to develop further initiatives to celebrate local diversity.

The appropriate funding bodies, including North West Arts, North West Tourist Board, North West Development Agency and appropriate lottery funds should recognise the special needs of Oldham as a multi-cultural town and support the continued effective development of initiatives to promote leisure, culture and tourism in Oldham.

Health

The NHS should produce a plan to give Oldham the extra £9 million it deserves under the funding formula, by June 2002 to be implemented fully by April 2004.

The Government should provide a period of at least 5 years' stability, organisationally and managerially, within the Health Service to enable a regeneration and linked health care strategy to be followed. The Health and Social Care Modernisation Group's strategy should be reviewed by the Group itself, the NHS, the new Oldham Primary Care Trust, the new Mental Health Care Trust, and the new Local Strategic Partnership. The Review should look at progress against targets and whether any refinements or adjustments to the strategy need to be made. The Strategy should have at its core, targets for reducing health inequalities between different communities in Oldham.

All staff employed by the Council's Social Services Department, West Pennine Health Authority, and the various Trusts, should receive thorough exposure to the requirements of a socially inclusive strategy, and the implementation of anti-discriminatory practice. This will require a team of trainers over a period, with continuing top-up provision for new staff and refresher courses with a pilot to be based on CRE Standards. Specialists should be appointed within the organisations to act as advocates and champions of different minority groups. In addition ethnic monitoring should be dramatically improved and made mandatory for a wide range of services, which should include regular reporting of performance against targets, to the Chief Officers of each organisation. Work on these recommendations should begin immediately and be co-ordinated between the different organisations, with a view to full implementation by September 2002.

A similar approach to the Council's Social Services Department racial equality policy should be followed across all health service organisations, where this is not already in place, and there should be adoption by all organisations of the NHS guidance on Managing Diversity.

Health and Social Service employers should require all contractors and sub-contractors to comply with appropriate equal opportunity requirements. Draft conditions of contract should be agreed jointly by June 2002, for immediate implementation in respect of each contract as it comes up for renewal. All existing contractors and sub-contractors should be asked to comply voluntarily with these requirements, prior to contract renewal, with immediate effect.

There should be development, possibly under PFI, of One-Stop Shops within neighbourhoods where health problems are worst, based on facilities developed elsewhere such as the Neptune Health Park Tipton and Peckham Pulse. These provide centrally co-ordinated facilities including GPs, dentists, opticians, pharmacists, health education, food co-operatives, mobile community health care teams, outreach ethnic minority teams, learning disability teams, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Social Security/Benefits and Housing advice teams. Such a centre is already planned for Fitton Hill under the New Deal for Communities; our proposal is to extend this to other priority neighbourhoods. This will supplement the current Cottoning On initiative, to provide a virtual healthy living centre in Oldham.

The West Pennine Health Authority, with the Council, other health providers, and relevant area initiative managers (New Deal for Communities, SRB), should draw up a programme for provision of one stop shop facilities, drawing on area based funding opportunities where they exist, and examining PFI possibilities, by December 2002. This should be agreed with the Local Strategic Partnership. This will be for implementation over the medium term and should be a priority for NHS Capital and Revenue budgets, within the expanded budget for Oldham which we recommend above.

The NHS Executive should be proactive in the recruitment of GP's for areas like Oldham and that they should consider whether, in towns such as Oldham, there is a case for higher pay to attract GPs.

Too many health programmes are short term and piecemeal. The NHS, West Pennine Health Authority, Primary Care Trust, Health Care Trust, the Council, the Government Office for the North West and the Local Strategic Partnership should review existing targeted programmes in Oldham, prepare a strategy to

meet additional priority needs, and determine a short, medium and long-term programme, by March 2003. Implementation of the programme will depend on negotiation of resources within the overall expanded Oldham Healthcare budget and access, where possible, to special programmes such as New Deal for Communities. The Government should recognise the danger of penny piece, short-term initiatives of the kind seen in Oldham hitherto. A more strategic approach to funding targeted programmes to meet the special health requirements of the poorest sections of the community should be adopted.

Policing

The Chief Constable and the Police Authority should, by May 2002, review the policing structure of Oldham Division with a view to basing this upon identified communities and their problems, and with the objective of improving rapport between the Police and those communities.

A review of the Community Affairs Unit should be carried out by May 2002 with a view to focussing its activities and identifying, analysing, evaluating problems and advising operational units.

The two Sub-Divisional Race Crime Units should be merged into a single unit.

The Division should review their policies and ensure they are clarified and documented. This is not a bureaucratic exercise but to improve understanding, consistency and ownership.

GM Police Headquarters should create a database of best practice, innovation and new ideas to support divisions facing problems like Oldham's. This will require not merely gathering ideas together but also analysing them and evaluating them to support officers on the ground.

A Diversity Committee should be established operating under the Local Strategic Partnership, as a multi-agency, multi-racial body to enhance and co-ordinate joint strategies for tackling inter-community issues in Oldham.

Release of statistics should always be part of a wider communications strategy and accompanied by extensive prior consultation with communities through the Racist Incident Panel which we propose.

Arrangements for reporting and recording racial incidents should be continued in their present form. However a sharper and multiagency focus needs to be given to tackling racist incidents. For this purpose there should be established a Racist Incidents Panel, which should be a multi-agency group reporting to the Crime and Disorder Partnership. The Panel will absorb the Racist Incidents Strategy Group. The existing concerns of RISG for wider race relations issues should become the responsibility of the Race and Diversity Committee.

A network of facilitators, with credibility in the local community, is needed to build a bridge between the Police and that community, and should be established by July 2002.

An effective Communications Strategy is urgently needed, involving the Council and the different communities of Oldham. We note that Greater Manchester Police is thinking on these lines and arrangements for Oldham should be put in place by March 2002.

A protocol should be agreed to ensure that the Council leader and Chief Executive should be notified urgently in the event of such incidents as the riots.

In all appropriate training programmes particular emphasis should be given to the issue of offensive and inappropriate language stressing its unacceptability and capacity for undermining good relationships.

Appropriate staff should attend the "Policing Diverse Communities" and "Hate Crime" courses at the Police Staff College Bramshill.

Greater Manchester Police should involve the Black and Asian Police Association to assist with recruitment and retention of BME officers.

A review of the Public Order Act should take place, with a view to widening its scope to include inflammatory activity beyond marches and the Government should ensure that all available sanctions should be brought to bear on extremist activity from whatever source.

The Government should aim to outlaw incitement to religious hatred in future legislation.

Leisure, Culture and Community Interaction

The Council in drawing up its strategy for racially integrated sports (see Chapter 9) should pay special attention to the involvement of women in their programmes. In particular there should be a specific time bound action plan for increasing the participation of women in sporting activities which are fully integrated.

The Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Departments should be combined in a new Unit answerable direct to the Director of Education and Culture.

The new Unit should take responsibility for the strategic development and use of all sport and youth facilities. The day to day running of these facilities will remain with the current respective departments. The new Unit will however have the final say as to how these facilities will be developed and used.

The priority of the subject means that the total level of resources at present going into the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation needs to be at least maintained.

The Head of the new Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should prepare a detailed and overarching strategy for racially-integrated Sport and Recreation provision for young people, taking account of all recommendations in this report, and in close consultation with the Sports Council and other providers. This should be prepared by 31st March 2002. It should contain proposals for implementation over the following year, to March 2003 and progress should be reviewed monthly with the Chief Executive and the Director of Education.

The principle of linking youth work to physical facilities should be given higher priority by the Council. Recognising that this will take some time to organise, the Head of the new Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should prepare a strategy to this effect by 31st March 2002. The strategy should be for implementation by 31st March 2003.

The Head of the new Unit should link the strategy for detached youth work to the work of the Greater Manchester Police, Youth Offending Teams and Crime Reduction Partnership in respect of the same client groups. Regular meetings should be held between the three agencies. The aim will be to tackle the issue of youth provision and the issue of youth crime at a street level. The new Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should be responsible for convening this forum to start in April 2002.

'Oldham Alliance for Working with Young People' should not only focus on co-ordination but should also seek to increase the inclusivity of youth provision in Oldham. It is particularly important that those working with young people, in statutory and voluntary agencies, should have a thorough understanding of race issues, and when necessary should undergo appropriate training.

The programme of events for young people run during the summer holidays 2001 should be repeated in all future holidays. This would be assisted by better forward planning by the Home Office, DfES and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit; it would also be helped by a commitment to extend activity, as it was in some cases this year, to 9pm, and to link the programme with local sports clubs and teams. The new unit should prepare a plan to this effect by the end of March 2002.

The new Unit should forge specific links with Police Authority groups, which are based on schools, colleges and community organisations. A senior manager should attend the groups wherever possible, so that the outcome can feed direct into decision making. A protocol on how this should be taken forward should be agreed between the unit and the Police Authority by June 2002. It should take into account and link into our proposals for youth sections within the proposed Race and Diversity Committee.

Oldham Athletic should work closely with the Pakistani and Bangladeshi Youth Associations on a strategy to bring more youngsters from these communities into contact with the club. This should be completed before the end of the current season, for implementation in Autumn 2002. Given the importance of football as a team game enjoyed by many young men, the Oldham Football Leagues, Oldham Athletic, the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit of the Council and representatives of organisations involved with football across the communities should examine the scope for more competition between teams from different parts of Oldham, across the ethnic boundaries, and in particular should support the establishment of more multi-racial team.

The Cricket Development Group, working with club representatives, the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit of the Council and the various league authorities should draw up a strategy for more inter-ethnic competition, and in particular for development of more multi-ethnic teams, on similar lines to the proposal for football above. This work should be completed by May 2002.

Sports organisers in all sports should consider the scope for promoting links between communities through the way in which they organise their activities.

The Dread Lion Foundation should promote its work across all communities in Oldham, with the support of the new Unit.

The Head of the Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should carry out a review of strategy for parks, for completion by Summer 2002, before the Council takes its budgetary decisions for the following year.

The Unity in the Community project should be evaluated at the end of the year and if successful, the strategy and private sector funders should agree to continue its work into the future.

The Head of the new Youth Service and Sport and Recreation Unit should prepare a strategy to make adult recreation more inclusive, working closely with relevant organisations, and complete this work by December 2002.

Faith leaders should look urgently at how they can take a stronger profile in Oldham and in particular how through the media they can more effectively communicate their messages. Faith leaders, as part of this process, should agree a process by which they can issue collective statements quickly, in response to local, national and international issues which arise and which may call for their comment.

Now that a forum of religious leaders is in the making, in our view:

- a) This should be maintained by the leaders themselves (i.e., this is not the responsibility of the Borough Council).
- b) It needs to meet at different venues in the town, reflecting the town's diversity
- c) There should be organised exchanges of young people to places of worship of other faiths, particularly at times of festivals.
- d) Similar visits should be arranged for adults.
- e) Religious leaders should play a full part in the development of a programme of cultural education (see below).
- f) Faith leaders should consider having a day in the town to celebrate faith in its many different forms.

Designation of community centres by ethnic group, or restriction of programmes to people of one ethnicity, is divisive. The Council and the management committees of the respective community centres should hold discussions to see if there are ways that these concerns can be addressed.

Management structures of Community Centres should not only reflect the racial mix of all people within a particular locality, but people of different ages and genders to ensure that the needs of all with a right to use facilities are taken into account. This should be a requirement if public funding is to be provided.

The Council should establish a small task force drawing in people from different communities to explore the feasibility of this idea. If it is pursued then in our opinion it should have a neutral name not linking it with previous recent initiatives. Perhaps it could be the Oldham Awakes Festival. The task force should report by May 2002.

The Regional Co-ordinator – Community Facilitation at GONW should continue her enquiries into the feasibility of an innovative community arts project in Werneth, and if possible find means to support it.

Regeneration

The Council, North West Development Agency, Oldham Housing Investment Partnership and the Government Office for the North West, drawing in other partners as necessary, should begin immediate discussions on the creation of an Urban Regeneration Company on the above lines. The target date for launching such a company should be June 2002.

In line with existing models such as East Manchester, the board for this company should be tightly focused – perhaps 12 or so in all – with the Leader of the Borough Council and very senior representatives from other organisations being amongst the members. Further thought should be given to the effective community representation, once the priority areas of operation have been defined.

Given the nature of the company's tasks, the Government should give some priority to funding the constituent organisations of the board to carry out the programme of action. In making this recommendation, we acknowledge that there are other areas with similar characteristics to Oldham. What we are seeking is acceptance that new strategies, and in particular new housing strategies as outlined in the Housing Chapter are essential if a more harmonious community can be established.

All participant bodies should look closely at the possibility of secondment into the new company structure, or other support, to enable it to operate effectively. It must, for example, be in a position to bid convincingly for European Structural Funds. For the Council, in due course, we would expect the resources to be negotiated as part of the contract de ville (see the Governance Chapter). The roles of Chair and Chief Executive will be crucial and people of the highest calibre will need to be found.

If possible the companies created by Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council to manage particular development projects in the past should be rolled into the new URC.

Governance

An Oldham Community Plan is needed, which should take a twenty year forward look at where Oldham wishes to be, and devise a strategy for getting there.

The Community Plan should be the responsibility of the new Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) (see below), with contribution from all key players within the town, including the Council, the new Urban Regeneration Company (see below and the Regeneration Chapter), and the LSP must consult widely on the plan. Integration must be at the heart of the plan.

Central Government departments, co-ordinated by the Home Office and DTLR, and operating through the Government Office for the North West, should consider urgently the scope for entering into a radically new form of Compact with Oldham MBC. A report on feasibility should be agreed with Ministers within four months, so that, if accepted, this proposal can be implemented with effect from 1st April 2004. In order to overcome the pressures of departmentalism, the Cabinet Office and the No. 10 Policy Unit need to be closely involved in progress on this proposal within Government. Oldham should be added to the twenty-four Urban Renaissance Local Authorities.

The Council and the LSP, working with the Citizenship Foundation and the Local Learning Partnership, should develop a programme for citizenship for use with young people, both in schools, colleges and outside formal education, and make firm proposals by July 2002. A Youth Parliament might form part of this strategy. The Government, as it develops, its own thinking on citizenship, should use Oldham as a test bed for any ideas.

A Borough wide Race and Diversity Strategy Committee should be established, with estate-based diverse Race and Diversity fora in key areas of community tension, and with appropriate arrangements for involving women and young people in each area. The committee's role is to provide a forum for frank exchange on race and diversity issues, to spread good practice and facilitate decisions by key personnel. A new Policy Officer, with seconded officers in support, should be appointed.

The citizens of Oldham should consider securing a referendum on the question of an elected mayor, by petitioning to that effect. This will require just short of 8,000 electors' signatures. If the petition is successful, and a referendum subsequently held, then it is extremely important that whoever might be considering nominating themselves for the position should declare their hand, so that the electorate could know the possible eventual consequence of their decision, in terms of who might end up being elected.

The Council Leadership and Chief Executive should hold discussions with the Government Office for the North West, IdeA (the Improvement and development Agency, which is the service improvement consultancy to local authorities and the Local Government Association), and the Audit Commission on provision of mentors, political and officer, to support the Leader, Cabinet, Chief Executive and Chief Officers, in the development of new and more effective working together and tackling issues raised in this report. This should involve the Labour Leadership also, with a view to a more co-operative style of governance in the town at this critical time.

The use of Asian Councillors for dealing with problems in the Asian areas, and vice versa, should cease forthwith. All councillors should be deemed equally capable of dealing with issues in their wards, wherever they arise.

The main LSP board should be tightly drawn, – no more than 12 to 15 – but with each member of a very senior status, if representing an organisation, and each member having a responsibility to network intensively with their respective constituencies. A tightly drawn board on these lines will enable real debate and dialogue, and not just lip service to the idea of partnership. In our view, this is consistent with the spirit of what the Government is looking for, if not the letter, and it is essential if local government dominance is to be avoided. Members must accept responsibility for hard work in the LSP and not just rely on the Council to do everything and they must hold one another to account.

The Chairman of the LSP and the Leader of the Council (if not the same person), should address an annual open forum for the citizens of Oldham, with the opportunity for all members of the LSP to be questioned by the public. The work of other organisations such as the Area Committees could be woven into this event.

The Council and the Local Strategic Partnership should work with Common Purpose to develop an ongoing Leadership Programme, to be in place by 1st April 2002.

The Audit Commission should carry out a Corporate Governance Inspection of the Council.

The LSP and the Council, within eighteen months of establishing the LSP, should review the scope for greater area delegation of Council functions.

In every submission/paper/document which comes to the Council for decision, there should be a specific section entitled

"Effects on Integration within Oldham", and those preparing the papers, and those receiving them, must address the question whether what is proposed will improve the understanding of diversity and improve community relations within the town, or be neutral, or be harmful.

The Home Office should facilitate discussions to see where best practice can be learned on electoral registration and conduct of elections in view of the crucial importance to democracy of maintaining a fair electoral process. A detailed discussion should take place between the Council and the Police on how future allegations of electoral fraud are to be pursued since there is an issue between them as to the importance of retaining Form As as an aid to pursuing subsequent claims of fraudulent registration.

The Home Office should review with the Local Government Association whether the current Standards Spending Assessment regime for local authorities creates a perverse incentive for local authorities not to carry out checks on Form As, for example, on a sample basis in view of the link between coverage on the register and Council funding. The issue of proof of identity when voting should be re-examined. For all the obvious problems, and the wish not to make voting a more difficult experience, there remains a considerable doubt about the integrity of the process in parts of Oldham and it is hard to see how else it will be dispelled.

The Labour Party should consider, for a defined period, some more intensive and centrally driven direction of membership registration and candidate selection procedures within Oldham, particularly the wards where there have been difficulties, to ensure there is not over-dominance by any clan or group.

All political parties should keep their selection procedures under close review to make sure that they are not biased in favour of any particular clan or network.

Media

The editors of the Chronicle and the Advertiser, and a senior representative of the Manchester Evening News, should from time to time (say every six months) be prepared to meet in Oldham with the local community. This could be a meeting with the Diversity Committee (see separate references).

All the media should examine the make up of their workforce and put in place whatever measures they reasonably can to ensure that it fairly reflects the ethnic diversity of the local population.

Editors, producers and other with influence in the media should adopt as a high priority the projection of positive images of multi-cultural Oldham and good role models for people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Editors, producers and others in position of influence in the media should commit themselves to supporting the proposed programme of citizenship as it is rolled out.

The Council and Greater Manchester Police should explore with KIC FM in the West Midlands the potential for establishing a similar radio station run by and for young people in Oldham.

The local media of Oldham collectively should sponsor an annual award for the best example of progress in bringing communities together which media recognition and the resulting high profile would do a great deal to promote.

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