A REPORT OF THE POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Social Inclusion Action Plan 2002

JANUARY 2004

County Council of The City and County of Cardiff
CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD

This report is the culmination of a major investigation by the Committee.

Councillor Harry Ernest
Chairperson, Policy
SUMMARY

Background

This report represents the findings and recommendations of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee, also agreed by all 4 other Scrutiny Committees, following its year long examination of the Council’s Social Inclusion Action Plan 2002.

The scrutiny exercise was set up as a result of the Committee’s concern over the content of the 2002 Action Plan, which it felt did not adequately address the issue of social exclusion in Cardiff.

The Committee, together with a specially instigated Task & Finish Group, have received a considerable amount of evidence to aid in their scrutiny of this important issue. This included, statements from the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, other Scrutiny Committee’s views, evidence from relevant Council Officers, best practice from similar Local Authorities, comments from representatives of minority groups and organisations, and reports of external organisations into Social Inclusion. The Committee and Task & Finish Group were pleased to be advised that the format and content of future strategic plans for Social Inclusion would be significantly different from that published in 2002. The Committee wished to ensure that although the future strategic document would be different, the following key findings and recommendations must be taken into account before the Executive’s review of the strategy was completed.

Key Findings & Recommendations

The detailed findings are set out in the body of this report. Summarised below are the Key Findings of the Committee and the Recommendations that flow from the findings:

Key Findings

1. Cardiff’s history both as a Capital City and major port, has created a multi ethnic society, with areas of great affluence as well as areas of poverty and deprivation. This social and ethnic mix resulting in many minority groups, whose needs have to be taken into consideration by the Council when planning and delivering services;

2. to ensure that an organisation’s social inclusion objectives, aims and
aspirations are clearly set out in simple terms, it is normal practice to have an overarching social inclusion strategy or statement, that clearly identifies the Organisation's role in social inclusion. Cardiff County Council does not have such a strategy;

3. the Council’s policies, as set out in the 2002 Plan, do not provide the necessary “Council Ethos” to ensure that good intentions filter down into real benefits at ground level;

4. the 2002 Action plan does not identify the resources presently being utilised to address social exclusion, poverty and equal opportunities;

5. The Local Government Equality standard is the recognised benchmark for Social Inclusion, however the 2002 Plan fails to set out any actions that will ensure that the Council fully achieves the Local Government Equality standard, as a matter of priority;

6. the plan fails to identify within each theme a coherent and coordinated approach to tackling inequality throughout the Council, and its partnering organisations;

7. the plan does not identify the necessary commitment to ensure that Service Areas provide a coordinated data gathering and monitoring procedure for social exclusion, poverty or equality;

8. the plan does not contain the procedures necessary to organise appropriate consultation with external organisations and minority groups, to ensure that all aspects of social exclusion are identified and addressed; and

9. the plan fails to address the need for the establishment of consultative forums, for identifiable minority groups within the City, in particular those dealing with gender, gypsies, and sexual issues.

Recommendations

1. The Council, as a matter of urgency, must adopt an overarching social inclusion strategy, that set out, in simple terms, the Council’s objectives, aims and aspirations;

2. The Council should implement, a coordinated Council wide data gathering and monitoring procedure for Social Exclusion, poverty and
equality, in addition to the present ethnic monitoring;

3. the Executive should ensure that future action plans fully identify the resources presently being utilised in addressing social exclusion, poverty and equal opportunities;

4. the Executive should ensure that each theme within the action plan, identifies a coherent and coordinated approach to tackling inequality throughout all service areas, and its partnering organisations; and

5. the executive should establish the necessary procedures to undertake regular consultation and or consultative forums with external organisations and minority groups, to ensure all aspects of social exclusion are identified and addressed.
BACKGROUND

Introduction
This report presents the findings of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee’s investigation into the Council’s Social Inclusion Action Plan 2002.

The report summarises the evidence gathered, which is set out in full in the separate Record of Evidence, available for inspection upon request to the Chief Scrutiny Officer. The report will be referred to the Cabinet/Council for its consideration early in 2004.

The Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee would like to express its appreciation to all those who have assisted in this scrutiny.

Scrutiny Terms of Reference
The Committee at its meeting on 4th July 2002, established a Task & Finish Group to undertake a detailed scrutiny of the Social Inclusion Action Plan 2002. This Group subsequently agreed the following Terms of Reference:

To undertake a strategic and corporate view of the Social Inclusion Action Plan 2002, to ascertain whether it fully combats all elements of exclusion, poverty, inequality and deprivation; contains appropriate actions and resources to promote inclusion and equality; and identifies clear targets to ensure continuous improvement in all areas;

To identify key components of a successful Social Inclusion Strategy, including a definition of Social Inclusion that could be accepted by all Political Parties.

Scrutiny Format
The scrutiny of this important issue consisted of three main elements:

- To determine whether the 2002 Action Plan provides the Council with an overarching and coherent Social Inclusion Strategy;
- To determine the effectiveness of the 2002 Action Plan in attempting to combat, promoting and pro-actively Challenge social exclusion, poverty and equality; and
- To determine whether the Council inadvertently contribute to Social Exclusion.
Contributions from Other Organisations and members of the public

The Committee’s Task & Finish Group considered that to ensure that the Council was not inadvertently excluding minority groups, it would request the development of an innovative consultation exercise, in the form of a detailed questionnaire, to be sent to local organisations that supported or provided advice to minority groups. This questionnaire was specifically designed to obtain their views on whether any of the Council’s actions were actually causing social exclusion. The response to this questionnaire was adequate, those that responded were:

- Riverside Advice Centre
- Age Concern
- Cardiff’s Gypsy & Traveller Project
- Disabled People
- Wales Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras

These organisation highlighted a number of issues and incidences where the Council had inadvertently excluded a certain section of society from services or advice provided by the Council’s service areas.
KEY EVIDENCE & FINDINGS

Cardiff’s Social Profile

Cardiff’s history as both a capital city and a port on the Severn estuary shapes its geography and society. The urban core of the city comprises the compact City Centre of mainly nineteenth century buildings and the port area a kilometer to the south. Northwards, increasingly rural suburbs fan out beyond the M4 motorway towards the hills.

The redevelopment of Cardiff has both led and contributed to the economic advantages that Cardiff’s status as capital already gives it. Unemployment is low at 2.6% and the present population of a third of a million is growing at the rate of 1% per year.

Cardiff’s economic health does not mean that there is no deprivation. The county is eligible for funding under the EU’s “Objective II” programme and some areas qualify for ‘Communities First’ funding (the 100 most deprived wards in Wales). The three most deprived divisions of Ely, Caerau and Butetown, in particular, suffer multiple types of deprivation, notably in income, employment, child poverty and education. Almost three quarters of the child population of Butetown live in households receiving means-tested benefits, while Ely and Caerau are close behind. The highest levels of housing deprivation occur in Adamsdown and Splott. However, in health and access to services, Cardiff is better off than other deprived areas of Wales.

Cardiff has a diverse population, more so than other areas of Wales. The 2001 census figures for Cardiff indicates that 8.43% of residents are from non white ethnic groups (by far the highest proportion in Wales), with sizeable Somali, Pakistani and Yemeni communities. Other identifiable groups include:

- a significant permanent gipsy traveller population;
- a settled refugee population of over 6,000 people from more than 50 countries;
- 1,000 asylum seekers - part of the Government's dispersal programme;
- 2,330 people registered as disabled;
- 1,033 people registered as having a learning disability; and
- 15,257 blue badge holders (vehicle badges for disabled people).
Various studies over many years have estimated that between 3% and 10% of the population is exclusively homosexually oriented. Taking the lower figure, this would suggest that there are at least 9,000 lesbians and gay men in Cardiff. Estimates for bisexual people are generally considerably higher. There is also a significant community of transgender people in Cardiff.

KEY FINDING

1. Cardiff’s history both as a Capital City and major port, has created a multi ethnic society, with areas of great affluence as well as areas of poverty and deprivation. This social and ethnic mix provides the Council with many minority groups, who's needs have to be taken into consideration by the Council when planning and delivering services.
SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2002

The Council’s Social Inclusion Action Plan 2002 was produced to provide a framework to combat issues such as poverty, discrimination and access to education and training. Its aim is to provide a coordinated package of measures to improve quality of life.

The Plan builds on existing work undertaken by the Council, increasingly in partnership with other organisations. The identified actions were grouped under ten relevant themes as identified in previous plans.

The Plan includes appropriate actions which allow the Council to continue to build on and extend partnership working through the Community Strategy. This is a prime example of how organisations with a range of interests, responsibilities, resources and expertise are coming together to tackle quality of life issues. The priorities within the Community Strategy complement the themes within the Social Inclusion Action Plan and strengthen the framework for action.

The Group considered that it should undertake a strategic and corporate review of the Plan 2002, including:

- to ascertain whether it fully combats all elements of exclusion, poverty, inequality and deprivation;
- that it contains appropriate actions and resources to promote inclusion and equality; and
- that it identifies clear targets to ensure continuous improvements in all areas.

The finding are organised into a three distinct sections:

- Does the Council have an overarching and coherent Social Inclusion Strategy;
- An analysis of the effectiveness of the 2002 Action Plan attempt to combat, promoting and pro-actively Challenge social exclusion, poverty and equality; and
- How does the Council inadvertently contribute to Social Exclusion.
Does the Council have an overarching and coherent Social Inclusion Strategy

The Task & Finish Group initially requested information on best practice, baseline data, and background information, on how other Local Authorities and Organisations mainstreamed Social Inclusion. The Group considered a number of documents, including:

- The Audit Commission Report on Equality and Diversity;
- Baseline social inclusion data from the National Performance indicators; and
- Other organisations definitions of Social Inclusion.

The Group considered that the Audit Commission report provided considerable information on best practice together with an indication of how Cardiff compared with the various benchmarks within the report.

The Group identified from a number of academic documents’ that a strategy is defined as “a long-term plan that identifies the priorities and objectives for future services”. It is not static, and does not prescribe all the detailed actions required for its implementation. It sets out the overall ‘direction of travel’ that the organisation expect services to take, over the next few years. It leaves much of the implementation to local plans, produced by individual service areas or local multi-agency groups. The strategy also needs to be produced for a variety of audiences. The document itself needs to target and serve stakeholders who are well informed about their aims, goals, objectives and programmes for their fit in the strategy.

The Committee also considered that as Social Inclusion was a cross functional issue impacting on all areas of the Council, the views of all Scrutiny Committee’s should be sort, to ensure that the Groups comments and concern were acceptable across all services.

The Group also reviewed the findings of Audit Commission’s Best Value review of Equalities in Cardiff published in March 2003.

Promoting equal opportunities in Cardiff

The National Assembly for Wales in agreement with the WLGA, Welsh Language Board, Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), and the Disabilities Rights Commission (DRC), has developed the Equality Standard, as a tool to enable Local Authorities to mainstream, race, the Welsh language, gender, and disability, into council policy.
and practice. The Task & Finish Group requested at an early stage in its investigation confirmation of which stage of the five levels the Council was presently complying with. Officers confirmed that **at present Cardiff Council is at level 2** of the 5 levels.

The Council is also in the process of incorporating new European Directives into its working practices, including the recent legislation on religion and sexual orientation.

**Council policies, strategies and new initiatives**

The Council recently approved the Council’s new Equal Opportunities Statement, which will operate in conjunction with the Council’s Race Equality Scheme.

In addition the Council has developed a comprehensive approach to ethnic monitoring that will be extended to incorporate disability and age in the future.

The Council has also recently implemented a programme of training on equality issues, together with training for service areas management teams enabling them to identify issues within their service areas and identify further actions to promote race equality.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) places a number of duties upon the Council and from October 2004 service providers have to make reasonable adjustments to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access.

In evidence to the Committee the Executive acknowledged that the Social Inclusion Action Plan 2002, in its present format, is not a Social Inclusion Strategy, and is presently redrafting the Plan.

These documents provided the Group with an indication of how this Council’s Plans compared with other organisations. Following the Groups consideration of the information, Members agreed a number of key findings, namely:

**Key Findings**

2 The Council did not have an overarching social inclusion strategy or statement, that sets out in simple terms the Council’s objectives, aims and aspirations, thereby identifying the Council’s role in social inclusion;
3 The Council did not have a coordinated Council wide data gathering and monitoring procedure for Social Exclusion, poverty and equality;

4 that the Plan fails to ensure that the Council fully adopts the Local Government Equality standard, as a matter of priority;

5 the Council’s policies do not provide the necessary “Council Ethos” to ensure that good intentions filter down into real benefits at ground level.
An analysis of the effectiveness of the 2002 Action Plan attempt to combat, promoting and pro-actively Challenging social exclusion, poverty and equality.

The Plan was designed to address the issue of social exclusion within 10 specific community strategy priorities, namely:

- Access to Education and Personal Development;
- Access to Employment and Training;
- Access to Information and Advice;
- Transport and Physical Access to Buildings;
- Minority Groups;
- Money Poverty;
- Health Inequalities;
- Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour; and
- Access to Leisure Facilities and Healthy Lifestyles;
- Access to suitable/affordable Housing.

The Committee’s Task & Finish Group requested an analysis of the 2002 Action Plan, identifying different types of actions, in particular:

- Actions which attempted to combat social exclusion, poverty and equality;
- Actions that promoted inclusion and equality; and
- Actions that pro-actively challenged discrimination.

The Group received a considerable amount of evidence, advice and comments over a series of meetings on the ability of the Plan to address the three primary issues as identified above.

Each action listed in the plan was analysed to determine which Service Area was responsible for its implementation, and how that action impacted on social inclusion. The Group reviewed the list of actions and identified a number which it felt required further analysis and clarification. Officers of the Council reported back to the Group providing detailed explanations and assessments, of how its implementation improved social inclusion, within the agreed target date.

The Group were concerned that the 2002 Action Plan did not contain any summary or analysis of the financial resources available, either Council wide, or for each service area, utilised in addressing social exclusion, poverty and equal opportunity.
The main concerns raised by the Group, as a result of receiving evidence from this element of the scrutiny were:

- **Access to Education and Personal Development** – This section of the plan contains a number of good actions that proactively challenge social exclusion, but does not address the issues of, or best practice in, schools;

- **Access to Employment and Training** – This section requires more strategic actions to adequately promote social inclusion, and proactively challenge social exclusion;

- **Access to Information and Advice** – This section does address the promotion of social inclusion very well, the plan does not adequately proactively challenge social exclusion, with many outcomes merely reiterating the action points. In addition, reference to the Council’s Grants Strategy, in this section, is considered inappropriate;

- **Transport and Physical Access to Buildings** – These actions only concentrate on one area of service delivery and therefore do not promote social inclusion across all areas of the Council’s services. It does, however, contain some good examples of actions that proactively challenge social exclusion;

- **Minority Groups** – There is no co-ordinated approach to promoting social inclusion, and the section concentrates mainly on asylum seekers and the disabled. In respect of action that proactively challenge social exclusion, the plan contains some very good actions;

- **Money Poverty** – The Action Plan contains good examples of its promotion of social equality, as well as proactively challenging social exclusion, but could benefit from more specific outcomes;

- **Health Inequalities** - There is no co-ordinated approach to promoting social inclusion, or proactively challenging social exclusion;

- **Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour** – The Action Plan contains a number of positive attempts at promoting social inclusion, as well as proactively challenging social exclusion;

- **Access to Leisure Facilities and Healthy Lifestyles** - There is no co-ordinated approach to promoting social inclusion and proactively challenging social exclusion, just some noble aspirations; and
• **Access to Suitable / Affordable Housing** – The Plan contains a number of good actions to promote social inclusion, and proactively challenge social exclusion, but should include reference to neighbourhood renewal, and more target dates.

**Key Findings**

6. that the Plan does not identify the resources presently being utilised in addressing social exclusion, poverty and equal opportunities;

7. that the Plan fails to identify within each theme a coherent and coordinated approach to tackling inequality throughout the Council, and its partnering organisations;

8. the Council needs to address the failure to establish the necessary consultative forums, for gender, gypsies and sexual issues; and

9. that the Plan fails to identify any cross cutting actions, designed to tackle social exclusion across all areas of the Council’s services.
How does the Council inadvertently contribute to Social Exclusion.

The Committee’s Task & Finish Group considered that although the Council was fully committed to promoting social inclusion and equality, Members were concerned that they had been made aware of instances where service areas were inadvertently excluding certain sections of society, or disadvantaging certain minority groups.

The Group agreed to try and identify if there were any sections or groups of society who felt that they were being excluded by the Council in its planning or delivery of its services. An innovative consultation exercise was designed to obtain the views from external voluntary organisation, which act as support and provide advice for identifiable minority groups, to help them explain to the Group whether they perceive any instance where the Council has inadvertently excluded either individuals or minority groups.

The questionnaire was sent to 11 organisations, providing them with the following questions:

- In your experience does the Council sometimes excluded people when providing its services?
- In your experience does the Council do enough to ensure people can access services?
- Which services present most problems to you, your client base and the Council?
- Do any services provided by the Council exclude your members or customers?
- When you are acting as intermediate or advocate do any Council Services appear to have difficulties fully understanding the needs of your members or customers?
- Do you feel you have encountered discrimination against your client base?

The Group subsequently reviewed all the information and evidence provided by these organisations which replied, and agreed that the responses did indicate that the Council does inadvertently contribute to some social exclusion. The main concerns raised by the consultation exercise and noted by the Group were:

- that some policies excluded older people;
• that a number of standard letters contained intimidating / bureaucratic language;

• officers occasionally failed to fully explain peoples’ entitlements to particular services relevant to their needs;

• that the council is perceived as having a lack of commitment to the lesbian & gay community;

• that the Gypsies & Travellers did not have an outreach youth provision, adequate accommodation provision, and clean and safe sites.

Key Findings

10. That the plan does not contain the procedures necessary to organise appropriate consultation with external organisations and minority groups, to ensure that all aspects of social exclusion are identified and addressed; and

11. That the plan fails to address the need for the establishment of consultative forums, for gender, gypsies, and sexual issues.
CONCLUSIONS

Cardiff’s history as both a Capital City and a port has had a major impact on the ethnic and social mix of the City. The redevelopment of the City has led and contributed to the economic prosperity of the City. Unemployment is low at about the same as the National Average at 2.6%, and the present population of a third of a million is growing at a rate of 1% per year. Cardiff economic health does not however mean that there is no deprivation. The Council area is eligible for funding under the EU’s objective II programme, and some wards qualify for ‘community first’ funding which is targeted at the 100 most deprived wards in Wales. Cardiff also has a diverse population, showing about 10% of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds, with sizable Somali, Pakistani and Yemeni communities.

The Council is fully committed to ensuring social inclusion in all its services and is presently developing a comprehensive approach to ethnic monitoring that will be extended to incorporate disability and age in the future. The Council has recently approved the Equal Opportunities Statement, which will operate in conjunction with the Council’s Race Equality Scheme. The Council has undertaken a review of its equality training strategy and has implemented a programme of training on equality issues, together with training for service area’s management teams to enable them to identify issues within their service areas and identify further actions to promote equality.

The scrutiny identified that the Council lacked a coordinated Social Inclusion Strategy and that the Social Inclusion Action Plan 2002 failed to provide a coherent and coordinated approach to inequality throughout all service areas and ensure that the plan provides the necessary actions to enable the Council to attain Level 5 of the Local Government Equality Standard.
The scrutiny has included an innovative consultation exercise to obtain the views from external voluntary organisation, which act as support and provide advice for particular groups, on whether they perceive any instance where the Council has inadvertently excluded either individuals or most importantly any minority groups.

The Committee and in particular the Task & Finish Group found undertaking the scrutiny exercise, to be an interesting and worthwhile process, and hopes that their findings and recommendations will be useful and positive.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without modification. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations.

All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal power of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. standing orders and financial regulations; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications at this stage.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Council and/or Cabinet, as appropriate, give consideration to the comments, observations set out in this report, and in particular recommends that:

1. The Council, as a matter of urgency, must approve an overarching social inclusion strategy, that set out the Council’s objectives, aims and aspirations;

2. The Council should implement, a coordinated Council wide data gathering and monitoring procedure for Social Exclusion, poverty and equality, in addition to the present ethnic monitoring;

3. The Executive should ensure that future action plans fully identify the resources presently being utilised in addressing social exclusion, poverty and equal opportunities;

4. The Executive should ensure that each theme within the action plan, identifies a coherent and coordinated approach to tackling inequality throughout all service areas, and its partnering organisations; and

5. The executive should establish the necessary procedures to undertake regular consultation with external organisations and minority groups, to ensure all aspects of social exclusion are identified and addressed.