



HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLS COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROGRAMME

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Any errors of fact contained in this report are the responsibility of the authors.

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HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLS COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The neighbourhoods of Handsworth and Lozells lie approximately two kilometres to the north-west of Birmingham City Centre. The area has experienced significant social and economic decline and Lozells witnessed disturbances in 2005. The Black Radley report on the Lozells Disturbances¹ highlighted a number of 'fault lines' and the presence of community tensions within the area. The report also outlined that persistent disadvantage, high levels of worklessness and the poor image of the area needed to be addressed by the City's key agencies.

However, whilst a considerable amount of work had been undertaken by Birmingham City Council and its partners (since 2005) in assessing the challenges facing Handsworth and Lozells, a comprehensive long-term vision for area had not been developed. The City Council also recognised that, although a good deal of resources, time and effort have been invested in the area over a number of years, no significant social and economic changes have taken place. There was clearly a need for a vision that would inform future action.

Following a commitment from Birmingham's key stakeholder agencies, the Handsworth and Lozells Community Dialogue Programme was established in September 2008, as an ambitious and innovative community engagement process, aimed at developing a transformational and long-term vision for the area.

As part of the Dialogue Programme, Birmingham City Council commissioned the Governance Foundation and the Birmingham City University in February 2009 to undertake the 'Academic Process' component of programme, as part of a Community Dialogue Consortium including Birmingham Settlement and Carol Coombes (an independent consultant).

The key Academic Process tasks undertaken by the Governance Foundation and Birmingham City University were:

¹ Black Radley (2007) Lozells Disturbances Summary Report

- Undertaking a literature review of a wide range of policy and strategy reports and data related to the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- Overseeing the work undertaken by Birmingham Settlement (the Informal Dialogue strand) and Carol Coombes (the Semi-Formal Dialogue strand), organising and analysing the data captured from these two processes, and translating this information into a coherent final report.
- Working alongside the Dialogue Director and the Interim Head of the CommUNITY Team to produce a Handsworth and Lozells 'vision' and a 'community call for action' setting out aspirations of the area's communities in a final report.

The work of the Community Dialogue Consortium was supported and challenged by a 'Community Champion', Ted Cantle of the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA).

1.2 Handsworth & Lozells Community Dialogue Programme:

Following on from the publication of the Black Radley Report in 2007, Birmingham City Council and its partners undertook a major community consultative process, targeting residents and traders in the Handsworth and Lozells area. The overarching aim of the Handsworth and Lozells Community Dialogue Programme is:

“to create a transformational long-term vision for Handsworth and Lozells, one which is owned by local people and which truly transforms the area into one where communities feel safe, where they want to make their homes on a long term basis and where they are proud to live” (our emphasis).

In order to develop this new long-term vision for Handsworth and Lozells, a CommUNITY Team was established (involving local voluntary sector groups, Birmingham City Council and the Government Office for the West Midlands) to commission and project manage a programme of community conversations with the aim of working directly with communities to own and shape the long term vision for the area. A key aspect of this programme of work was the commissioning of 'dialogues' (conversations) with local residents and people who work in the area.

The key objectives of the Community Dialogue Programme are as follows:

- Informing understanding of the key issues and challenges in Handsworth and Lozells building on the knowledge-base developed to date and expanding and verifying this with new evidence from the dialogue programme.

- Informing an aspirational and practical vision for today and tomorrow from within the communities of Handsworth and Lozells.
- Informing a community inspired call for action for delivery by key partners and stakeholders, including communities.
- Enabling and empowering citizens, stakeholders and communities participating in the dialogue programme contributing to building cohesion, capacity and willingness to engage and be active.

The delivery of the Community Dialogue programme was undertaken by a consortium comprised of Birmingham City Council's CommUNITY Team, Birmingham Settlement, an independent consultant / facilitator (Carol Coombes), the Governance Foundation and Birmingham City University.

Three strands of work formed the core of the Community Dialogue community engagement and research process:

- A process of grass roots engagement (the Informal Dialogue strand).
- A series of semi-formal community events (the Semi-Informal Dialogue strand).
- A literature review of previous information on the area, which they brought together with the information from the informal and semi-formal strands to produce this final report (the Academic Process Dialogue strand).

In addition to this work, a Community Advisory Group was set up. This group, acting as a 'grass roots critical friend' and composed of a small number of local residents who gave up their time to participate, made a valuable contribution to the work of the CommUNITY Team. As an expression of the commitment to change, a group of strategic senior officers from a range of agencies came together to form the Handsworth and Lozells Action Steering Group. The purpose of this group, which is chaired by Birmingham City Council's Chief Executive, is to help create a transformational long-term vision for the area which is owned by local people. In support of this ideal, a Community Dialogue Website was also set up.

1.3 Summary of the Community Dialogue Methodology

Consistent with the above strands of work, there were three components in the methodology for the Community Dialogue Programme:

- The Informal Dialogue with local residents and traders;
- The Semi-Formal Dialogue with local residents, local public and voluntary sector workers and members of local Neighbourhood Management Boards; and
- The literature review.

The informal component of the Dialogue programme was carried out by Birmingham Settlement, the semi-formal component by Carol Coombes, and the literature review by the Governance Foundation, with the assistance of Birmingham City University (BCU). The Governance Foundation undertook an analysis of the three Dialogue research outcomes and pulled them together in order to produce the overall findings from the Community Dialogue, which are outlined in this final report.

From the outset of the Community Dialogue project, it was not intended that the selection of local community participants involved in the Informal and Semi-Formal strands, would be based on a scientifically rigorous research methodology: using, for example, random sampling techniques. On the contrary, a key aspect of the methodology was to carry out a dialogue with local people whose voices are not normally heard. The key groups of local people that were targeted for engagement through the Community Dialogue process were:

- Older people;
- Women and families;
- Young people;
- Newly arrived communities,
- Unemployed people;
- People from other 'Hard-to-Reach' groups (such young people involved / at risk of involvement in local gangs); and
- Local Traders.

In total, around 360 local people and traders participated in the community dialogue process. In addition, 72 local public and voluntary sector workers, and neighbourhood management board members also took part.

Trying to reach local people whose views and voices are generally not heard by key city decision and policy-makers, and / or are considered to be members of 'hard-to-reach' groups, is challenging and, by definition, it is not possible to develop robust survey / consultation sampling frames for them. People from such groups are more likely to absent from information and statistics gathered and held by Central Government and City agencies such as the City Council. They are hidden in the community, under-represented and underground. As people from such groups are not identified in official or formal lists of individuals or households, securing their active participation in consultation processes, such as the Community Dialogue programme, is a challenging and delicate matter. This means that scientific sampling is not possible.

The methodological approach used throughout the Community Dialogue process was therefore not based on a statistically representative sample of Handsworth and Lozells residents, which produces risks for generalising the Dialogue outcomes and findings to the wider Handsworth and Lozells community.

The local people that took part in the Informal and Semi-Formal Dialogue engagement activities were selected through working in close collaboration with a range of public, voluntary and community sector organisations, which provided support in identifying and contacting potential interviewees. The process was reliant on the goodwill of members of many local organisations. This use of targeted and snowball sampling², rather than using a random technique, means that the findings are not representative in a scientific sense. Nevertheless, the Semi-Formal and Informal dialogues gave a voice to a broad range of local residents.

The validity of community voices accessed through the Community Dialogue process was confirmed by what emerged from the literature review (based on information gathered from a range locally relevant of surveys, statistics, official documents and other consultancy reports). The participants' views and understanding of the issues and challenges facing the Handsworth and Lozells area, was not dramatically different from what has emerged from reviews of data and research work relating to the area. But the Dialogue process gave many local people a unique opportunity to express their views on potential solutions to local problems and their vision for a better Handsworth and Lozells.

In producing this report, members of the Community Dialogue consortium (Governance Foundation, Birmingham Settlement, Carol Coombes and

² Snowball sampling is a special non-probability method used when the desired sample characteristic is rare. It may be extremely difficult or cost prohibitive to locate respondents in these situations. Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects.

Birmingham City University), met together to agree the accuracy of the key findings that emerged from the process.

A fuller statement of the research methods and approach used in the Community Dialogue process can be found in the companion Technical Report (Appendix 1). The Technical Report also contains the findings from the literature review carried out by Birmingham City University (Appendix 2); the methodology and detailed findings from the Semi-Formal Dialogue process (Appendix 3); and a summary of the methodology and main outcomes from the Informal Dialogue (Appendix 4).

2. POSITIVE FEATURES OF LIVING IN HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLS

Local people, through the Community Dialogue process, identified a number of positive features of living in Handsworth and Lozells. The main positive aspects of living in the area included:

- The diversity of the area's communities – multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-faith. The local residents felt that the area has a rich social mix (culture, faith, ethnicity, class, family status, etc).
- The friendliness of the local people – who are generally welcoming and will make time to 'say hello' to others.
- The range of community-based organisations operating in the area.
- The area's location and access to facilities such as leisure facilities, places of worship, schools, shops and parks.
- The place is well connected and the convenience of the buses was an important aspect of living in Handsworth and Lozells.
- The park is seen as a valuable asset that could be exploited more. People wanted more public toilets, to bring back Handsworth Flower Show, and for boats to be put back into the park.
- The area's community gardens and allotments.
- Many of the elderly felt that other areas have worse problems and they felt they had good opportunities for socialising. They praised the new Council policy of free access to leisure facilities for over-60s and were pleased with the fact that they had good access to these facilities.

These positive views and feelings about Handsworth and Lozells are reinforced by some of the information emerging from the analysis of data about education, crime and the cultural industries within the area.

- Historically, pupils living in Handsworth and Lozells have performed much worse than children from across the city and there is still some evidence that in early years of education this is still the case. However, the gap between the ward and the city narrows as children progress through school and there have been remarkable improvements in performance at secondary level.
- Crime rates in Handsworth and Lozells have been falling faster than in other areas across the City.

- There is a vibrant cultural scene in the fields of photography, art, music and dance, which can be the basis of the future development of cultural industries.

All of these positive aspects of living in the Handsworth and Lozells area are under-reported and they tend to be overshadowed by the area's challenges and problems. These local challenges cannot be underestimated and the residents were quite clear that they need to be addressed in order for Handsworth and Lozells to move forward.

The following section provides a review of the key challenges and problems currently facing the Handsworth and Lozells area, as identified by local people that participated in the Informal and Semi-Formal strands of the Community Dialogue programme.

3. HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLS: LOCAL CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS

In this section of the report, there are references to other reports, surveys and statistics. Readers who wish to obtain more details, or further information about the sources that have been used, should refer to the literature review contained in Appendix 2 of the Community Dialogue Technical Appendices Report.

3.1 Overarching Community Issues and Challenges

The local people that participated in the programme of Semi-Formal and Informal Community Dialogue activities identified a wide range of problems and challenges which are deemed to negatively affect the quality of life of people living in Handsworth and Lozells. The issues and problems that arose through Dialogue process are not unique to Handsworth and Lozells. They reflect the concerns of people in urban areas all across the country and many of them appear in previous reports and surveys in the local area, across Birmingham and beyond.

The literature review confirmed the key problems that local people were concerned with, and it reinforced the fact that these were not new. Many of the issues have been identified over a considerable period of time as urgent and important matters needing to be addressed by the City Council and other service providers. In various surveys, official documents and consultancy reports, the issues relating to rubbish, rats, crime, unemployment, education, health, the needs of young people, community cohesion, and access to services, have been emphasised and discussed. Some of these issues have at least partially been addressed in various City policy documents and projects, but the Dialogue process suggests that many local people believe that insufficient effort has been made by local agencies to address them.

The recurring issues identified by local people, particularly through the Informal Dialogue process, are presented below using the following theme headings:

- Image of the Area
- Crime & Fear of Crime: Gangs, Drugs, Anti-Social Behaviour & Policing
- Young People: Lack of Activities
- Opportunities for Employment
- Education & Training
- The Local Environment
- Housing
- Local Businesses
- Traffic & Parking
- Local Services & Facilities
- Community Cohesion
- Community Involvement & Access to Information

Annex 1 of this report provides a more detailed insight into the views of the key groups (communities of interest) who participated in the Dialogue process, regarding the key local issues and problems presented in this section. Drawing mainly on the work of the Informal Dialogue strand (undertaken by Birmingham Settlement) Annex 1 provides information on the problems of Handsworth and Lozells from the perspectives of women, the elderly, the young, the unemployed, the hard-to-reach groups, newly arrived communities and local traders. This Annex should be essential reading for anyone who is working with these specific groups in the community.

Detailed information relating to the key issues identified by local people through the Semi-Formal and Informal Community Dialogue process can be found in Appendices 3 and 4 of the Community Dialogue Technical Report. In the following sections, we will deal with each of these headings in turn.

3.1.1 Image of the Area

It was widely recognised by local people that the Handsworth and Lozells area has a negative reputation and image (held by both local people and non-residents), which is reinforced by a number of social and physical factors including:

- Handsworth and Lozells suffers from negative press and media coverage, which largely focuses on the area's 'problems' and crime-related incidents. Relatively few positive stories about the area are reported by the media.
- The area is generally perceived to be directly linked to problems associated with violence, crime, drug dealing and gang activity. Local people do not feel that the area is a safe place to live and bring up children.
- Litter and rubbish problems across Handsworth and Lozells convey the image of a rundown and neglected area – where no one cares.
- The poor state of repair / physical conditions of housing in the area and the presence of a large number of empty and boarded-up residential properties.
- The neglected state of many frontages to houses in the area (un-kept gardens and broken down boundary fences).
- The poor quality of housing deters many people from moving to or wanting to stay in the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- The condition of the main shopping areas (Lozells Road, Villa Road, Soho Road, and Birchfield Road) is generally poor and unattractive, compared with other parts of the City.

- The presence of a large number of empty retail units across the area.
- The area is not seen as a stable and cohesive one – where people from different backgrounds interact and cooperate. Whilst the friendliness of the people was seen by some as a positive aspect of the area (see Section 2), for others there is a need to promote a more cohesive and stable community that shares a long-term commitment to living in Handsworth and Lozells.

Underlying these broad issues that contribute to negative perceptions of the area, there are specific issues and problems that become clearer through a review of the other key local problems and challenges identified by local people. The fundamental problems of the image can only be dealt with if the details relating to these other problems are addressed.

3.1.2 Crime & Fear of Crime: Gangs, Drugs, Anti-Social Behaviour & Policing

Recent surveys have shown that, for the residents of Handsworth and Lozells, the level of crime is seen as the most important aspect of a place when judging whether it is a good area to live in or not. Crime in Handsworth has been historically higher than in the rest of the City, particularly violent crime and robbery. Crime rates have been falling all across the country in recent years and in Handsworth and Lozells the rates of decline for most crimes are much higher than average. Violent crime remains an issue, but the gap in crime rates between the ward and Birmingham as a whole, has been closing. Nevertheless, local community concerns about crime remain high and many people leave the area because of concerns about criminal and anti-social behaviour.

The key issues expressed by the residents during the Dialogue programme were:

- Gang activity and drug dealers represent a major problem within the area.
- Problems in accessing open spaces and parks due to people causing trouble or participating in anti-social behaviour.
- Some local people (especially older residents, women and families) feel intimidated by groups of young people hanging around the area with nothing to do, and behaving in a disrespectful manner. Some residents also feel worried about being out in the area during evenings due to the presence of gangs and drug dealers in Handsworth and Lozells.
- Young people themselves are intimidated by the presence of gangs and drug dealers in Handsworth and Lozells. Some young people stated that

- The presence of drug addicts on the streets across the area – makes the some local people feel unsafe.
- There is a perception amongst some local people that Handsworth and Lozells experiences high levels of violence, which makes local people and visitors, feel unsafe.
- Crime (in particular drug dealing and taking) deters people from visiting and/or shopping in the area. Shoplifting is also a problem commonly experienced by many traders.
- Crime and fear of crime are thought by the residents to be exacerbated by the absence of a visible police presence across the area. Lack of a visible police presence in Handsworth and Lozells is identified as a key local challenge. A significantly greater and more visible police presence on the ground in the area would help to make local people and other visitors to the area feel safer.
- The presence of pedestrian subways (especially in the Birchfield Road area) is a major problem. According to some local people and traders, the subways are not used by the general public to cross the major dual carriageways and they have become a prime location for drug dealing in the area.

All of the main groups that were interviewed as part of the Informal Dialogue process, identified at least one aspect of criminal and anti-social behaviour as an issue – women, the elderly, young people, the unemployed, the ‘hard to reach’, newly arrived communities and local traders (see Annex 1).

Recent reports by consultants also show that residents think that the local police are out of touch with residents and that more visible policing was necessary. The police appear to have responded by becoming more engaged with the community and by putting more community officers into the streets, but it is not clear that the historical lack of trust between the police and sections of the community have been overcome. This may be particularly true of young people, who are seen as are the source of fear of crime for many older people.

3.1.3 Young People: Lack of Activities

The problem of young people having nothing to do is a common complaint in urban and rural areas across the country. From local reports, it is clear that young people hanging around the streets are perceived by many people in the community as a major challenge facing Handsworth and Lozells. It is linked to both crime and anti-social behaviour, above, and to opportunities for employment, below.

The key issues that were identified by the Community Dialogue process were:

- The need to provide activities for young people who have nothing to do during their leisure time.
- As a result of the lack of appropriate activities and facilities, many young people hang around on street corners and local parks which, in turn, can lead to tensions and violence between groups of young men, and their affiliation to local gangs / involvement in gang-related activities.
- There are no 'girl-only' youth facilities – which in turn limit the informal leisure opportunities available for many local young women.

Hanging around on street corners is, of course, not only a result of lack of social and leisure activities for young people; it is also related to a lack of opportunities for employment and training. The statistics point to youth unemployment as a continuing and serious problems that reinforces the segregation of communities and the lack of cohesion within different ethnic groups across the Handsworth and Lozells area.

3.1.4 Opportunities for Employment

Previous surveys have indicated that people in Handsworth and Lozells are much more likely to be concerned about unemployment as a local issue than others across Birmingham. This reflects the extremely high levels of unemployment in the area. Their concerns about high rates of unemployment are supported by statistics which show that these rates are not only high but that, relative to the Birmingham average, the situation has been deteriorating over the past 17 years. However, in addition to unemployment, the levels of other benefits and disability are higher than average and the overall levels of income are much lower, when compared with the city average. Part of the reason for the higher incidence of low income levels across Handsworth and Lozells, appears to be that those who have jobs may be over-represented in low-income employment. The largest group of employers in the area are small firms in retail and catering (mainly fast food outlets).

Those who participated in the Community Dialogue programme said that:

- There is a need for more local jobs to be generated to address the needs of local people out of work. There are relatively few work opportunities in the area and few major employers located in Handsworth and Lozells.
- There is limited job support / advice services available for local people looking for work. More employment support and advice services are needed in the area.

3.1.5 Education & Training

The problem of low education levels is confirmed by the fact that educational performance in Handsworth and Lozells has been well below the Birmingham average in all areas of attainment, from pre-school to secondary school. Historically, pupils living in Handsworth and Lozells have performed very much worse than children from across the City and nationally, and there is still some evidence that in early years of education this is still the case. The most recent statistics show that there are lower levels of performance in both primary and secondary education and few local young people go on to attend college and university. However, the gap between the ward and the City average narrows as children progress through school and there have been recent improvements in pupil attainment, particularly at secondary level.

Some local people were highly critical of the quality of the area's schools – which they feel limits local pupil's access to the educational qualifications that are necessary to secure access to quality employment opportunities or further / higher education.

Local residents through the Dialogue process indicated that:

- There are problems for local families in accessing a quality secondary school for their children. There are long waiting lists for access to the area's better quality schools.
- More local people need access to further education colleges and training
- Apprenticeships for local young people are needed.
- There is limited career advice and support available to people aged over 17 years of age.
- More employment / training / careers support and advice is needed for young school leavers.

3.1.6 The Local Environment

Local people's concerns with rubbish, rats, dumping and run-down properties are a constant feature of previous consultations in Handsworth and Lozells. Calls for less litter and rubbish on the streets are reinforced by a community view that this is the main aspect of service delivery in Handsworth/ Lozells that needs improving. Recent surveys show that fly-tipping and the dumping of bulky rubbish are major problems in the area, as is the number of properties that are not being adequately maintained. Recent improvements in the cleaning of the area appear to have been insufficient for many residents.

The main problems that were identified by local people through the Dialogue process were:

- Litter / rubbish on streets and open areas represent a major problem in Handsworth and Lozells, detracting from the image of the area and the quality of life of local people. This problem is exacerbated by:
 - local residents putting out their household rubbish bags too early – which creates an un-kept / dirty environment, which in turn attracts rodents - in and outdoors;
 - the limited number of bins provided on local streets;
 - the large number of take-away food shops / restaurants operating in the area, that generate a lot of street rubbish, which also creates problems of rodent infestation; and
 - poor quality household / business refuse collection services and poor street cleaning.
- The area experiences major problems with vermin infestation.
- The volume of goods displayed by traders on the pavements of the area's main shopping / retail areas, detracts from the image of the area and creates problems for pedestrian access and mobility.
- There are few public toilets available for local people across the Handsworth and Lozells area – especially within the area's main shopping areas.

This issue of the environment is a major determinant of the quality of life and, as noted above, it contributes considerably to the negative image of the area. It is also a deterrent for individuals who might otherwise stay and invest in the area, and it reduces the morale of those who do remain in Handsworth and Lozells.

3.1.7 Housing

The area's housing is currently benefiting from a large-scale investment by Urban Living. Home ownership is well below the Birmingham average and the private rented sector is large and growing. Much of the private stock fails decent homes standards and some of the social housing is in a state of dereliction. There is a rapid turnover of people, particularly in the private rented sector and, at the same time, a group of long-term residents with particular housing needs. Different people from the locality's various Black and minority ethnic groups have different needs, based on cultural influences on family size and the way in which houses are used. Furthermore, the demographics of the area generate particular demands for the elderly and the large numbers of young people who will soon enter into the housing market.

The key housing issues identified by the Dialogue process were that:

- The area suffers problems with family overcrowding and lack of access to larger housing in the area (long housing waiting lists for larger family houses in the area).
- There is an inadequate supply of quality social rented housing in Handsworth and Lozells. Much of the housing available for rent is of a poor quality.

3.1.8 Local Businesses

Local business is dominated by small firms employing less than 10 people, and over the past ten years Handsworth and Lozells has been losing enterprises, whilst the rest of the Perry Barr Constituency and Birmingham as a whole, has been gaining them. Larger employers (in this case those employing more than 50 people) based in the area are all in the public sector. New businesses established in Handsworth and Lozells have a less than 50% chance of surviving four years, a situation that is much worse than in Birmingham as a whole.

The key issues identified by the residents and traders were:

- Insufficient resources have been invested in supporting and developing Black / African Caribbean businesses in the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- There is a relative absence of high street financial institutions (banks/ building societies) and ATMs across the Handsworth and Lozells area.

For the owners of local businesses and residents, traffic and parking were also amongst the key issues.

3.1.9 Traffic & Parking

Surveys have shown that residents of Handsworth and Lozells think that the area has good transport links, both to the city centre and, via the Outer Circle bus route, to other parts of the city. There are long-standing issues of congestion on the Soho Road, where health-damaging pollution is higher than in the city centre; and although the A34 Birchfield Road is a main route into the city centre, there are issues in relation to the safety of the pedestrian underpasses and the quality of the physical environment adjacent to it.

The key traffic-related Issues which residents highlighted through the Dialogue process were:

- There is inadequate on- and off-street car parking areas especially in Handsworth and Lozells' main shopping centres – which creates major traffic congestion problems. These problems have largely been neglected by the key traffic planning and enforcement agencies. Many of the local roads are too narrow to allow sufficient on-street parking, which means that people park their cars wherever they want (especially around the Lozells Road area). This problem has been exacerbated by the designation of 'Red Route' on major traffic routes and inappropriate double yellow lines adjacent to retail and other businesses in the area. These problems have had a detrimental impact on the passing trade attracted by local traders.
- Problems with car parking and traffic congestion on the main shopping streets during peak hours can lead to conflict and violence.
- Problems with road safety across the area – speeding vehicles and poorly located zebra crossing near to children's play areas (e.g. adjacent to George Street Park).

3.1.10 Local Services & Facilities

Health statistics relating to Handsworth and Lozells are almost uniformly worse than for the City as a whole. They should be seen in the context of the investment that is being made by The Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust to reduce health inequalities and there have been recent improvement in mortality rates and infant mortality rates. Nevertheless, Handsworth and Lozells fares worse than the City average on all major health indicators except death by cancer. Levels of exercise undertaken by local people are also much lower in the area. Some groups, such as new arrivals, have difficulties in gaining access to GPs and this group also have particular language support needs.

City Council policy documents have identified improving early learning and providing play facilities for young children as key priorities; and a key objective

of the Birmingham City Council Plan for 2008-2013 is to address the quality of life of older people. Nevertheless, at the present time, a number of problems still remain in the area.

The key issues local services / facilities issues that were that were identified through the Community Dialogue programme were:

- There is insufficient affordable play scheme / nursery places in the area for families with young children.
- There is a lack of facilities for elderly people living in the area.
- There is a need for greater support for local elderly people who are unable to get out of their homes due to mobility problems, and are isolated in their home.
- Health centre provision in the area is deemed as inadequate. In addition, many GP surgeries and Health Centres are not accessible to elderly people with mobility / health problems.
- Local people in general experience difficulties in accessing health services – especially accessing timely GP appointments.
- Local shopping and leisure facilities in the area are poor.
- Insufficient support is provided for adults (especially people newly arrived or migrant worker communities) who experience English language difficulties.
- There is a need for local agencies to be better equipped to meet the different community languages needs present in the Handsworth and Lozells area.

3.1.11 Community Cohesion

The findings from the literature review support local residents' concerns that a lack of community cohesion in Handsworth and Lozells remains a serious issue, particularly in the Lozells area. Across the Perry Barr constituency residents say that people from different backgrounds get on well together. However, the evidence suggests that the different ethnic groups in Lozells and West Birchfield may be living together in close geographic proximity, but they are leading separate lives. The underlying tensions that lay behind the 2005 Lozells disturbances do not appear to have gone away.

The main cohesion-related challenges that were highlighted through the Community Dialogue process were:

- There are real and significant underlying problems with regard to tensions between people from different communities and increased community segregation across the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- There is a lack of dialogue between people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds living in the area. There are not enough facilities / activities geared at bring people from different backgrounds, cultures and ages together.
- People generally do not interact with others from outside of their social / community groups and neighbourhoods. There are few opportunities for people from different backgrounds, religions, age groups to get to know each other and talk about / share their experiences and concerns

3.1.12 Community Involvement & Access to Information

One of the aims of the Dialogue Programme is to empower citizens to contribute to building cohesion by being active in their local community. However, the evidence from the literature review suggests that in Handsworth and Lozells, for whatever reasons, there is less desire to get involved in community affairs and issues compared with other parts of Birmingham. Handsworth and Lozells residents are far less likely than those in other parts of the city to help people other than their relatives. When local residents were asked if they had sought to increase awareness of local issues, they were also less likely than others across the city to get involved. On the other hand, participation in local groups, organisations or clubs is much higher than the city average.

This broader evidence implies that in Handsworth and Lozells bonding social capital is low, bridging social capital is high, and linking social capital is lower than, but closer to, the city average³. There appears to be a great deal of cynicism about whether that City is serious about involving people, listening to them and following up with action.

When asked about their satisfaction with the opportunities for participation in local decision-making provided by local public services, satisfaction levels are once again much lower in Handsworth and Lozells than across the city. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they were able to influence decisions that affect the local area, a full 50% of the areas residents said they neither agreed nor disagreed or were unsure (compared to 29% in the City as a whole). One interpretation of the stark difference in local residents' views of their ability to influence decisions that affect their area is that for a large proportion of residents in Handsworth and Lozells, this is not something they think about.

³ For a discussion of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in neighbourhoods that work, see Middleton, A., Murie, A and Groves, R. (2005) Social Capital and Neighbourhoods that Work', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 10, pp. 1711-1738.

Nevertheless, the key community involvement and access to information issues identified by local people were:

- There are not enough community meetings / information about what's happening in Handsworth and Lozells: local people are not informed about what's going on in the area. Local agencies should involve local people to a greater degree in decision-making.
- Local traders feel a lack of representation / influence on decision-making affecting the local area – especially with regard to the activities of the City Council

3.2 From Issues to Solutions

Depending on the issue, dealing with the problems identified by the community may require different types of approaches. For example, the question of rubbish on the street appears to drive an approach that concentrates on cleaning up the mess, rather than dealing with prevention of litter being dropped in the first place - the longer term and more intractable challenge of changing people's behaviour.

With respect to the underlying issues of low income and unemployment, these are unlikely to be resolved by focusing on employment creation in the immediate or surrounding locality. Given the number of firms, the size of these firms and the type of businesses in the area, they can only make a small contribution to solving the problem. It may require collaboration across local authority boundaries and public sector organisations may need to review their recruitment policies.

The range of policy options that will be needed to address the issues identified by the community, therefore, will include both short-term and long-term solutions. The Dialogue programme invited participants to address the problems they identified; asking what ought to be done about them.

The following section of the report examines potential solutions identified by local people geared at tackling the wide range of challenges facing the Handsworth and Lozells area.

4. LOCAL SOLUTIONS FOR LOCAL PROBLEMS

4.1 Overarching Community Solutions and Priorities for Action

The local residents and traders that participated in the Semi-Formal and Informal Community Dialogue process, identified a numerous specific actions that could be taken by key local service delivery agencies to address the wide range of problems and challenges identified in Section 3.1 of this report. The community solutions / priorities for action proposed by local people are presented below using the following theme headings:

- Improving the Image of Handsworth and Lozells ('Re-Branding')
- Education, Training, Employment and Other Facilities for Young People; Raising Aspirations
- Role Models & Community Leadership
- Cleaning-Up the Area
- Dealing with Traffic Problems
- Access to Jobs for Local People
- Improving the Business Environment
- More Visible Policing and Improved Use of CCTV
- More Opportunities for Communities Living & Working More Cohesively
- Accessibility to Health and Other Services ('One-Stop Shop')
- Improved Communications
- Business Support for All Community Groups

More detailed information relating to the key community solutions and priorities for action, identified by local people through the Semi-Formal and Informal Community Dialogue process, can be found in Appendices 3 & 4 of the Community Dialogue Technical Report. The implications of what the community has identified as a way forward will be addressed in Section 6 of this report.

4.1.1 Improving the Image of Handsworth and Lozells ('Re-Branding')

Local people want to see a new more positive image developed and marketed for the Handsworth and Lozells area. This new image / re-branding of the area should focus on the strengths and positive of the features of the area which have (to date) not been adequately promoted or exploited by key agencies. These include:

- The area's diverse, multi-cultural and multi-faith communities
- The openness and friendliness of most local people "*its not the area that makes the people; it's the people that make the area*"

- The area's history, such as its role in the development of democracy and industry in Britain, through Chamberlain, Bolton and Watt.
- Handsworth Park as a refurbished Victorian green space that could be used to celebrate the area's rich cultural heritage.

A number of actions were identified by local people that would help to underpin a rebranding of Handsworth and Lozells. These suggested actions included:

- Demolishing dilapidated older housing in order to improve the quality of the local environment and allow for building of better quality family housing in the area.
- Action should be taken by the City Council to demolish the empty tower blocks in Birchfield, which convey a neglected and declining image of the area along one of the City's main arterial transport routes.
- Empty / vacant houses should be brought back into use more quickly.
- Addressing derelict and underused sites across the area.
- Building new high quality housing in Handsworth and Lozells: which would help to improve the image of the area and improve the quality of life (happiness) of local people, and providing more affordable housing in the area.
- Private landlords should be encouraged, and where necessary forced, to maintain the quality of their properties and their gardens / boundary walls.
- The City Council should provide support to local people to help improve and maintain the quality of their gardens and boundary walls / fences. Community 'handy person' / gardener schemes should be established to assist elderly residents to maintain their homes and gardens.
- Action should be taken to reduce the number of vacant properties that are found across the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- Greater support should be provided to local people in accessing home ownership, as this would increase their commitment to and stake in the long-term future of the area.
- Pedestrian subways should be removed and replaced with surface-level crossings.
- Improving street lighting across the area.
- Planting more trees to make the area's streets feel more natural and greener.

- Investing in the infrastructure of Handsworth Park: such as re-establishing boating leisure activities on the lake.
- Holding more high profile community cultural events in the area and bringing back the Handsworth Flower Show.
- Improving the physical environment and image of the area's main shopping areas (Lozells Road, Villa Road, Soho Road, and Birchfield Road).

4.1.2 Education, Training, Employment and Other Facilities for Young People; Raising Aspirations

Community solutions and priorities for action identified by local people included:

- There is an urgent need to provide activities and facilities for young people in the area with nothing to do, as an alternative to hanging around the streets / parks, and to divert vulnerable young people from affiliation to and involvement with local gangs. A more robust programme of youth activities / support focused on Handsworth and Lozells should be developed by the City Council in conjunction with local voluntary and community groups. Examples of initiatives suggested by local people included:
 - More detached youth workers operating on the streets where young people gather in the area.
 - Enhanced financial support for existing and new community-based youth organisations, activities and centres across the Handsworth and Lozells area.
 - More local youth centres / facilities.
 - Access to affordable / free sports facilities that specifically target the needs of local young people.
 - Provision of a high quality cyber centre that would provide internet / computer access for young people and homework / study groups.
 - A dedicated music recording studio.
 - The provision of girl-only youth centres / clubs / activities to meet the informal leisure needs of local young girls.
 - Training facilities that provide practical work-based skills for young people (such as motor vehicle repair / maintenance, plumbing, bricklaying, etc).
 - There is a need for local services (especially the City Council's youth service) to engage with young people and gain their views about the future of the area and the provision of local services / facilities that meet their needs.

- Volunteering activities that provide a potential route into employment should be promoted and made available within the area for local young people.
- Better education and training facilities for young people are needed in the area and steps should be taken to recruit and retain high quality teachers in local schools.
- There a need for more careers advice and support to help local people (especially young people) access to further education colleges and training. Careers and employment advice days / events should occur on a regular basis across the area.
- A local apprenticeship programme should be established targeting local young people.

4.1.3 Community Role Models & Leadership

Local community solutions and priorities for action identified through the Dialogue process included:

- More support should be provided to develop local community leaders (especially amongst local women and young people), alongside the elected City councillors.
- There is a need to identify and support local 'role models' who could influence and inspire others in Handsworth and Lozells. The role models should include women and young people.

4.1.4 Cleaning Up the Area

Local solutions and priorities for action identified by local people through the Dialogue process included:

- Need for more street rubbish bins and an improved street cleaning service across Handsworth and Lozells - ensuring that the streets bins are emptied more often; providing more recycling centres across the area (the Council's household recycling boxes are not enough).
- The provision of street wardens for each street in the area.
- Improved City Council Environmental Services pest / rodents control and eradication activity targeted on Handsworth and Lozells
- Action should be taken to address the problems of households putting out their household rubbish for collection to early.

- There should be targeted rubbish collection and street cleaning in the neighbourhoods where there is a concentration of fast food establishments and / or restaurants.
- Action needs to be taken to address the rubbish and litter problems across the area. Young people and faith organisations should be more involved in improving the local environment.

4.1.5 Dealing with Traffic Problems

Local people's solutions and priorities for action identified included:

- Improved transport infrastructure: with better and more non-paying off-street local parking facilities provided to assist in reducing congestion on local streets (especially the main shopping areas). Improved use of traffic wardens to address problem parking on the main traffic routes (especially Lozells Road, Villa Road & Soho Road)
- More speed cameras are needed to reduce the number of dangerous and speeding vehicles across the area.
- The main 'Red Route' designations in the area should be reviewed / suspended to improve the footfall of local retail businesses (especially in the Birchfield Road area).
- Pedestrianisation of parts of the area's main shopping centres would improve the quality of the local physical environment.

4.1.6 Access to Jobs for Local People

Community solutions and priorities for action identified through the Dialogue process included:

- The City Council should take action to enhance the access for local unemployed people to its own vacancies and those of its partner agencies.
- Need to have more local organisations that are geared at supporting local people gain access to jobs and promoting job creation in Handsworth and Lozells.
- Need to improve the range of businesses operating in the area that could employ local people – the area is overly dependent on retail businesses (especially take-away food shops).
- Larger employers and business organisations need to be attracted into Handsworth and Lozells.

- More enterprise / employment advice centres and support staff are needed in the area, to provide help to local unemployed people and support the development of new businesses.

4.1.7 Improving the Business Environment

Local community solutions and priorities for action identified included:

- There is an urgent need to attract more high street financial institutions (banks/ building societies with ATM facilities) into the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- There is a need to improve the representation and influence of traders within the Handsworth and Lozells area on local decision-making – especially with regard to the activities of the City Council.

4.1.8 Business Support for Community Groups

Community solutions and priorities for action identified included:

- The Local Authority should provide more information and support to aid the development of Black / African Caribbean businesses in the area.

4.1.9 More Visible Policing and Improved Use of CCTV

Community solutions / priorities for action identified via the Dialogue process included:

- Increasing the number and visibility of police patrols in the area to improve local perceptions of community safety – need to address gangs / anti-social behaviour / drug dealing. The Police also need to take a tougher and more effective stance on tackling the ‘drug problem’ across Handsworth and Lozells.
- Improved and increased use of CCTV cameras across the area – to assist in addressing problems on the streets associated with gangs, anti-social behaviour, and drug dealing. Higher visibility policing and the introduction of CCTV on more local streets in the area would help to make young people and other local residents feel safer in Handsworth and Lozells. In particular, these measures would act as a deterrent to gangs and drug dealers operating in the area.
- Improving Police and local community joint working and dialogue in order to address the area’s gang, crime and drugs problems.
- The pedestrian subways in the Birchfield Road area should be closed off and surface level pedestrian crossings provided instead.

4.1.10 Communities Living & Working More Cohesively

Local solutions and priorities for action identified by local people included:

- There is a need for more opportunities to be provided to enable positive interaction between people from different age groups (especially older and young people in the area). This could be achieved through a range of initiatives such as providing opportunities for inter-generational dialogue: through *living histories and finding our local 'unsung heroes'*, *enabling local young people to learn interview and journalistic skills by interviewing their elders and promoting their stories*.
- There is a need for more community-based projects and events that are focused on bringing people from different backgrounds together and promoting community cohesion.
- There are few opportunities or places for local people to socialise and interact. More community workers are needed in order to promote better links and interaction between people from different backgrounds and communities. The City Council should take action to promote community cohesion events, initiatives and visits involving local people from different backgrounds. There should be 'fun' community interaction and intergenerational evening events / activities (such as festivals) within Handsworth Park. Local agencies should develop and organise events and activities (with the active participation of local people) that promote better interaction between people from different communities.

4.1.11 Accessibility to Health and Other Services ('One-Stop Shop')

Key solutions and priorities for action identified by local people included:

- Steps must be taken to improve the accessibility of GP surgeries / health services located in Handsworth and Lozells (especially for local elderly people). Key local agencies should consider establishing a number of 'one-stop shops' at accessible locations across the area. It is envisaged that the 'one-stop shops' would provide:
 - a useful and accessible point for people to access a range of key services (for example: dentists, opticians, nurses and doctors) under one roof;
 - access to female GPs and health professionals;
 - late hour and weekend health appointments;
 - access to information about
 - * a wide range of key other agency services (e.g. City Council)
 - * what's happening in the area (events, planned developments etc.) and;
 - * opportunities for people from different backgrounds, areas and age groups to interact (for example local people running informal

class-type sessions based on their own skills and interests (for example cooking, flower arranging, sewing, music, etc.)

A casework approach should be adopted in the 'one-stop shop', where a single officer / worker is required to address a particular resident query, complaint or issue (from the initial contact with a customer to resolution of the matter).

- There is need for more facilities geared at meeting the social needs of elderly people living in the area.
- There is a need to improve local people's access to health services, especially access to General Practitioner (GPs) – so that local people can gain quicker and easier access to doctor services. People experience major problems in gaining appointments with their GP. There is a clear need to reduce the GP / patient ratios of GP practices operating within the area in order to:
 - reduce the GP appointment waiting times experienced by local people;
 - improve the quality of the service received by local people; and
 - enable positive relationships to be developed between local people and their GP.
- There should be improved services that promote health and wellbeing of local people. For example, more community nurses; campaigns for blood and body organ donors; healthy eating campaigns (particularly within schools; more targeting of free health facility slots/ encourage more regular health screening; awareness campaigns relating to high-risk diseases such as diabetes, sickle cell and thalassaemia, more relevant to specific ethnic groups often living within this area; tackling alcohol abuse), infant mortality and teenage pregnancy.
- There is a need for affordable play schemes / childcare places for young children.
- More support through local Colleges and community based organisations is needed for local people whose first language is not English.
- Local agencies should ensure that their services are to be better equipped to meet the area's different community languages (especially GP and health services, the local police and Neighbourhood Offices).
- There should be better local marketing of the 'gym for free scheme' with special sessions put on for local young people.

4.1.12 Improved Communications

Community solutions and priorities for action identified by local people included:

- There is a need for better information sharing and publicity about community events occurring in the Handsworth and Lozells area. For example, a special list of activities taking place in the local area could be included in Birmingham Forward each month or a local newsletter delivered to every household in the area. The establishment of 'one-stop shops' (see Section 4.1.10) across Handsworth and Lozells, would help in disseminating information to local people about local services and events / what's going on in the area.
- Local agencies should involve local people to a greater degree in decision-making that affects the area.

5. DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY VISION FOR HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLS

5.1 Overarching Vision for the Area

The Community Dialogue process provided an opportunity to ascertain the views of local people, local workers and traders regarding their long-term vision of a regenerated and rejuvenated Handsworth and Lozells. The key elements of an embryonic vision for Handsworth and Lozells, outlined through the Semi-Formal and Informal Community Dialogue process, was focused on the concept of a '**Global Urban Village**' with the following characteristics:

Handsworth and Lozells will be:

- An area with a positive image and a good reputation.
- A place where people want to raise their children.
- An area with quality schools and a reputation for delivering a high standard of education for all pupils.
- An area that has high quality educational facilities and teaching staff and where young people can grow, prosper and gain access to a quality education and fulfilling careers.
- A place where young people are inspired to achieve their true potential and become all that they want to and can be.
- An area where young people are able access quality leisure and youth services / facilities.
- A place that values the views and opinions of young people and meets their needs.
- An area where all young people can access job training opportunities.
- An area where young and older people get on and interact positively.
- A socially and economically prosperous place - where all local people can access employment.
- An area which provides local people with opportunities to develop and achieve their potential and provides employment opportunities for people of all ages.
- A place where local businesses are able to prosper and all communities are able to develop effective and viable enterprises.
- A place that has easily accessible and quality banking services for local people, visitors and businesses

- A safe and attractive place for people to operate and set up businesses.
- An area with high quality and attractive housing for families.
- An area with a clean environment and attractive streets
- An area where people want to live, move to and stay.
- An attractive place where people want to visit, shop, recreate and work
- A place that feels friendly and welcoming to everyone.
- A positive and safe place for children to grow up in.
- A drug and gang free area
- A place where people feel safe and there is less crime.
- An area where people from different backgrounds get along well, interact and look out for one another.
- An area that is peaceful and where local people live in harmony
- An area where all people are able to access health and community services
- An area with clean, high quality and attractive shopping centres that provide a quality shopping environment for local people and visitors, as good as the City Centre, and provides quality facilities for retailers and their customers.
- An area where people are involved in decision-making affecting their lives and the well-being of local residents.
- A regenerated area with landmark, attractive buildings / developments and an impressive physical environment that will make Handsworth and Lozells a major shopping destination within the City.

6. INFORMING A COMMUNITY-INSPIRED CALL FOR ACTION

Following on from the findings of the dialogue process, this section of the report seeks to draw out some broad conclusions that will help to inform any future call for action. The key guiding principles are that the community will own and drive the process and that key local agencies will make a long-term commitment to the future of the area.

6.1 Empowerment and Governance

One of the aims of the Dialogue Process is to enable and empower citizens, stakeholders and communities to contribute to creating a transformational vision for the area that is owned by local people. One key element of the Programme was empowering local people to influence policy and service delivery by key agencies through a community-inspired call for action. This presupposes that local people want to be involved and that there are effective structures of local governance that facilitates their engagement.

We have seen above (Section 3.1.12) that there are questions over the extent to which local residents are willing to participate and feel they are enabled to do so. This means that the City Council and other service deliverers may have to make a special effort to support the engagement of a broad range of community members. Beyond those who were involved in the Dialogue Programme, there needs to be a wider engagement to help shape the way forward. This will require the development of new and innovative mechanisms of public engagement.

Longer-term sustainable mechanisms need to be developed for engaging all residents, especially young people. Two potential areas to explore are the concept of Citizens' Assemblies/Forums and the possibility of a local version of a Youth Parliament, which would operate more as a Youth Assembly.

The Citizen Assemblies concept involves a random selection of residents, from which a quota sample is selected to reflect the social composition of the area. The assembly would complement the work of elected representatives, acting as a consultative group and sending their recommendations directly to Councillors for debate and Council ratification. It would be larger than Citizen's juries and panels and a revolving membership would not necessarily be representative of any local interest groups.

Rather than being directly elected, the Youth Assembly would follow similar selection principles and would lock young people into the future of the area. It would enable youths to use their energy to change their local area and would be constantly renewed by new young people coming through.

Of course these mechanisms will only work if resources flow from the advice that is offered, raising the question of participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting has many forms and can be adapted to local circumstances. Many local authorities claim to be operating participatory systems when in fact they are referring to the devolution of budgets to local areas through, for example, constituency committees. Linked to a Citizen Assembly or a Youth Assembly, parts of the City's budget would be seen to be locally owned and they would create a new local social dynamic.

The above proposals are possible examples of alternatives that may be worth investigating further, but having new structures and processes in place is a pre-requisite for the effective implementation of any Handsworth and Lozells Community Call for Action.

6.2 Rebranding Handsworth and Lozells

One of the priorities for future action is improving the image of Handsworth and Lozells so that it can be realistically rebranded and promoted. However, **if a new image for the area is to be believable (to both local residents and 'outsiders') and supported by the local community, it must be based on a changing reality.**

There are social, economic and environmental aspects of the area that contribute to the poor reputation and the fact that Handsworth and Lozells is stigmatised. Many people in the area believe that their neighbourhood is no worse than elsewhere in the City. But the reality is that, for a variety of reasons, the external perceptions of the area have an adverse effect on:

- local people's self-esteem;
- the ability to attract inward investment;
- out-migration of higher-income groups;
- access to employment for those who remain, and so on.

The experience of other regenerated areas would suggest that overcoming the stigma and negative media stories attached to Handsworth and Lozells could be a 10-year project. However, there are improvements that are taking place in Handsworth and Lozells that ought to be celebrated and mechanisms ought to be set up to communicate what improvements do take place over time. Consistent with the philosophy that has driven the Dialogue Programme, these mechanisms ought to be in the hands of the local community.

Local agencies could start this process by working with local people and businesses to more effectively communicate what is good about the area. This implies identifying the progress that has been made, such as:

- the recent improvements in the educational attainment performance results of pupils in Handsworth and Lozells;
- the reduction in local crime rates;
- the continued public sector investment in health and education services in the area;
- the locality's vibrant cultural and arts scene; and
- the MyPlace investment that is about to be made in Handsworth and Lozells.

Agreeing what types of media should be used must involve the local community, in order to ensure that the messages reach all parts of the diverse populations of the area. These could include a single newsletter for the area that would go to every house, an extended use of the existing website, blogs, pirate radio stations and Newstyle Radio. Involving young people, particularly local media students and new graduates if possible, would also have a demonstration effect in the local community, in that it would show what can be achieved through joint work with the local further and higher education institutions. This would begin to address the concern of the residents that communication across the area needs to be improved.

Key local agencies should recognise, however, that any community-based media activities will inevitably be critical of service deliverers. This underlines the need to not only celebrate what is good now, but also improve the reality for the future. There is a possibility of re-branding Handsworth and Lozells as a '**Global Urban Village**', but that will not be possible unless people are convinced that the place has changed. This would mean, amongst other things:

- providing easy access to public services;
- carrying out environmental improvements (such as cleaning up the area and upgrading the Birchfield Road);
- dealing with problems associated with 'guns and gangs';
- creating employment opportunities;
- regulating private landlords;
- creating an iconic multi-cultural building as a focal point for a more cohesive local community;
- identifying and promoting role models (but not just high profile celebrities such as footballers and musicians);

- minimising the likelihood of other public disorder through community tensions by addressing the underlying causes of such tensions; and
- having in place effective and robust local community cohesion contingency planning arrangements to in order to alleviate the wider impacts of any future public disorder arising from local community tensions.

The participants in the Dialogue Programme identified the need for a single point of contact for services. This is mainly about improving access to the services, but it is also related to the perceived need for the providers of these services to communicate better with the public about what they are doing in the area.

The proposed Poolway and Newtown Customer Service Centres offer a potential model for Handsworth and Lozells. The co-location and integration of services in one main front-of-house facility would help residents to obtain information about a range of services and to have their problem dealt with quickly. Careful consideration needs to be given to the location of such a facility, so that all sections of the community can feel ownership.

Such an investment by the City Council and its partner agencies in Handsworth and Lozells would respond to the wishes of the residents for a more accessible comprehensive route to public services and also address other concerns relating to the improvement of communications about what the City Council and other agencies s are doing.

6.3 Environmental Issues

Improving the environment of the area is a fundamental issue that is constantly repeated in the findings of numerous local surveys and studies, and it arose again as a major issue in the Dialogue Programme. Rubbish, rats and rundown properties are a concern across the area and upgrading the Birchfield Road (by getting rid of subways) was a major solution proposed by people who cannot make use of these dangerous pedestrian walkways. The rubbish and rats issues require two types of solutions. One is dealing with the problem by cleaning up the streets and exterminating the rodents. The other is by changing behaviour so that litter is not dropped in the first place and more careful handling of household and business refuse. Council services have been responding to resident's complaints by attempting to improve the service to keep the streets clean, but the residents continue to be unhappy.

Residents concerns can be addressed by making further improvements to the service and this can be assisted by activities such as 'deep cleaning' events, that involve both the City Council and residents, particularly young people. These types of cleaning events, however, can only have short-term impacts. Within weeks, the streets are likely to be littered again, leading the participants to become disillusioned with the effectiveness of their action. Some residents would like to see litter bins on every lamppost or street

corner, but these are only effective if people will use them and they are regularly emptied.

Changing people's behaviour is more difficult to achieve, but stopping the dropping of litter, some of which exacerbates the area's vermin problems, is essential if the litter problem is to be tackled. Prevention would make service delivery much easier and less expensive. Since dropping litter in public areas is a criminal offence, police activity in dealing with the people who do this is important. An increase in the application of the law could have a preventative effect. However, the extent of the problem in the area suggests that a more concerted campaign that addresses the social and economic impacts of littered streets is also needed.

Raising the consciousness of local children through engaging schools in environmental campaigns, such as that started in Lozells, can make a contribution, but this could be extended and expanded through the allocation of professional resources. A "social marketing" campaign, for example, that addresses parents behaviour through their children, could change their attitudes to litter and have considerable positive effects.

The existence of rundown properties, both publicly and privately owned, has a substantial negative effect through the proliferation of crime and graffiti, creating a loss of respect, motivation and interest in the area. Local resident complaints about dumping of household rubbish by private landlords, both inside the perimeters of their properties and outside on the streets, were extensive. These 'anti-social landlords' can be dealt with by the enforcement of existing legislation, but an effort should be made to involve the landlords themselves in dealing with this problem, since the practice of a few is something which affects the reputation and standing of all local landlords. Peer pressure from the community of landlords should be pursued.

The boarded up social housing in the area around Birchfield Road and the perceived dangers of using the pedestrian subways, makes this area a prime target for environmental improvement and infrastructure upgrading. The A34 Birchfield Road is a major infrastructural feature that creates a physical divide between Lozells and Aston/Birchfield - part of a fractured urban form with poor pedestrian links. While the road offers excellent access to the north and centre of Birmingham, it creates divided communities and a vehicle dominated environment. The Aston, Newtown and Lozells Action Plan proposes the possibility of:

- creating an enhanced living and shopping space;
- upgrading the shopping experience;
- improving the quality of life of local residents;
- getting rid of dangerous underpasses;
- removing the physical divide between young people; and

- extending and upgrading the shopping offer.

Lowering the main through traffic carriageway of Birchfield Road and creating a high quality mixed use space above and alongside it, would respond to some of the issues raised by the traders and residents of the area.

The concept of an urban boulevard has been suggested for the stretch of the Birchfield Road that runs from Newtown Row to the Perry Barr shopping centre. Linked to the city centre by an extension of the rapid transit system, an urban boulevard offers the possibility of an improved environment for business and leisure - an improved public realm, new mixed use development with tree planting, attractive open spaces and a new landmark development.

The implementation of this proposal would transform the eastern edge of the Handsworth and Lozells area. According to the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan of 2005, the development of such a light rail extension would further Birmingham's strategy for economic and urban regeneration. Removing this physical and psychological barrier, would also open up links to any new employment opportunities in the Aston area for the people of Handsworth and Lozells. The resources required for such a development would be considerable, but if Lozells is a Priority Neighbourhood for the City, the redevelopment of the Birchfield Road and the surrounding area could be a priority infrastructure project.

6.4 Employment and Business

Resolving the issues of unemployment and low income are fundamental for the long-term success of Handsworth and Lozells. The poor economic position of the area, as evidenced in the Government's Indices of Deprivation, is in large part due to the low levels of income in the area. Retaining the higher-earning middle classes and getting people into higher paid employment would help local businesses to employ more people. Support for new and existing firms in the area could help reduce the small firm failure rates, which are far higher than in Birmingham as a whole.

The promotion of social enterprises is another option. The largest employers are public sector organisations and there is scope for their recruitment policies to offer more employment to local residents. Some of these organisations are already negotiating the use of local labour by subcontractors, and there is also scope for more of this. However, because of the number, size and type of firms in the area, the promotion of local businesses is unlikely to have a major impact on the area's income and employment problems.

All of the above are necessary, but not sufficient. The shortage of development land in and around the area makes the attraction of substantial inward investment into the locality extremely difficult. Dealing with the area's low incomes and unemployment will require a wider geographical perspective and a longer-term economic strategy.

This broader strategic approach will involve a 20-year programme of investment in industrial and commercial infrastructure in the North-West sector of Birmingham and it is likely to require collaboration with neighbouring authorities. The City Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country has, for example developed a proposal for an Accelerated Development Zone which includes a number of projects across the seven local authority areas. One of these is for improvements to Junction 2 of the M5 motorway. This will enable the growth of West Bromwich Town Centre and along the corridor to Oldbury, creating employment that can be accessed by the people of Handsworth and Lozells and dealing with the issue of congestion on the A41 Soho Road.

The Soho Road is one of the most congested and polluted roads in Birmingham. As part of a development plan for the north-west of the city, the diversion of through traffic off the A41 would improve the quality of this shopping environment and improve the health of the people who live around it.

The next 20 years may see a growth in inward investment in the UK from the emerging economies of India and China. Such investors may not be constrained by the same locational preferences as current investors. The diversity of Handsworth and Lozells and the historic connections to the Indian sub-continent could be a point of attraction if the infrastructural conditions were right. The redevelopment of the North West sector of the City, in conjunction with neighbouring authorities, would be a necessary condition for this.

This type of investment in North West Birmingham is a long-term project. However, immediate action could be initiated through discussions between Planning and Regeneration staff of the neighbouring local authorities about whether such a proposal would be worth pursuing. If it was decided that there was some merit in it, the next stage would be feasibility studies. Clearly there would be governance issues that would need to be resolved, but this would be true of any city-region strategic initiatives.

6.5 Young People

Engaging young people in the development of a strategic vision for Handsworth and Lozells, reinforces the need to deal with issues associated guns and gangs, building on recent successes in the fields of educational attainment and crime reduction. Local problems associated with guns and gangs contributes to creating an anti-education ethos that could deter young people in Handsworth and Lozells from being able to take advantage of an improving economic situation in the future. Police activity in this area needs to continue but alternative activities need to be on offer. Most activities for young people are currently aimed at the under-18 age group and it is important that these continue to be developed. However, if we are to ensure that there are to

be no more community tension ‘flare-ups’ in the area, the 18-25 age group needs to be targeted more effectively.

The local community is looking for role models for young people and there are some in sports and music. These are important and they ought to be given a higher profile than they are at present. However, we should be looking at not just celebrities like athletes, footballers and musicians. If musicians, for example, are important, it is not merely because of their celebrity status – it is because they open up a perspective on opportunities in the cultural industries. If the growth of the knowledge economy is a national economic objective, and if the cultural industries cluster is thought by Advantage West Midlands to be important for the economic success of the region, what is the potential role of young people in Handsworth and Lozells in these fields? Where are the role models, whether or not they live in Handsworth and Lozells, who can become reference points for young people in the area?

6.6 Community Cohesion

The Villa Road is the primary link between the vibrant Soho Road and the declining Lozells Road. However the currently run-down and neglected Vila Road area could become the location for an important cultural/arts project to be based at the ‘Old Bank’. It is also an area that has two sites, one of them the contentious Black Cat site, which are suitable for mixed-use development. These Villa Road development sites present an opportunity for an iconic building that would bring young people from different communities in the pursuit of common economic and cultural goals.

The bringing together of role models and economic opportunities could be realized through commissioning a new building that would bring communities together to celebrate both cultural diversity and integration. Such a building could be based on, but not entirely dedicated to, the cultural industries. A relocated Mohammed Ali Centre, for example, designed by a young emerging architect (such as David Adyaje), could bring young people together in the pursuit of economic opportunities as well as cultural aims. This would be based on the harmonising identity of Mohammed Ali, as both a Black man and a Muslim and, because of its focus on a particular section of the economy, the creation of such a facility would provide role models beyond celebrity. Such a development would not only be a multi-cultural building as a focal point for a cohesive community, but also the foundation for the regeneration of an area that is at the heart of the current problems of Handsworth and Lozells. It could be an important step towards making the concept of the ‘**Global Urban Village**’ credible and believable for local people and non-residents alike.

ANNEX 1: HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLS KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES: LOCAL COMMUNITY OF INTEREST VIEWS

The information outlined below provides a more detailed breakdown of the comments made by the key local 'communities of interest' that took part in the Semi-Formal and Informal Community Dialogue process. The key sub-groups of local people that were targeted through the Community Dialogue were:

- Women & Families
- Older People
- Young People
- Unemployed People
- 'Hard To Reach' Groups
- Newly Arrived Communities
- Local Traders

Women & Families

Local issues / problems reported included:

- Poor quality housing (especially vacant / dilapidated old properties) in the area detracts from the image of the area.
- Problems with family overcrowding and lack of access to larger housing in the area (long housing waiting lists for larger family houses in the area).
- The poor image and physical environment of the Soho Road area.
- The volume of goods displayed by traders on the pavements of the area's main shopping / retail areas.
- Insufficient resources have been invested in supporting and developing Black / African Caribbean businesses in the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- Problems with tensions between people from different communities and increased community segregation across the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- Problems with gangs and drug dealers operating within the area.
- Problems in accessing open spaces and parks due to people causing trouble / participating in anti-social behaviour.
- Lack of support for adults whose experience English language difficulties.
- Young people hanging around streets due to lack of activities. There need to provide activities for young people in the area that have nothing to do during their leisure time.
- Feeling intimidated by the presence of some groups of young people who may be involved with gangs and drug dealing in the area.

- Need for more local jobs to be generated to address the needs of people out of work.
- There is insufficient affordable play scheme / nursery places in the area for families with young children.
- Problems with road safety across the area – speeding vehicles and poorly located zebra crossing near to children’s play areas.
- The area has a major problem with litter / rubbish on streets and fly-tipping.

Older People

Local issues / problems reported included:

- The poor state of repair / physical conditions of housing in the area and the presence of a large number of empty properties creates a poor living environment for local people generates a poor image for Handsworth and Lozells.
- The neglected state of many frontages to houses in the area (un-kept gardens and broken down boundary fences contributes to poor physical environment for local people.
- There are too many people moving in and out of the area – there is a need to promote a more stable community that has a long term commitment to living in Handsworth and Lozells.
- Litter/ rubbish on streets represent a major problem in Handsworth Lozells. This is exacerbated by local residents putting out their household rubbish bags too early – which creates an un-kept / dirty environment which in turn attracts rodents - in and outdoors.
- There is a need for greater support for local elderly people who are unable to get out of their homes due to mobility problems, and are isolated in their home.
- Many GP surgeries and Health Centres are not accessible to elderly people with mobility / health problems.
- Feelings intimidated as a result of groups of young people hanging around the area with nothing to do and behaving in a disrespectful manner and the presence of gangs and drug deals in Handsworth and Lozells. Many people are scared to go out in the area during the evening.
- Fear of different people from new communities (defined as ‘illegal immigrants’) who are ‘loitering’ on the streets in groups.
- Tensions between people from different ethnic groups / communities living in Handsworth and Lozells and the lack of dialogue between people from different

ethnic / cultural backgrounds. There are not enough facilities / activities geared at bring people from different backgrounds, cultures and ages together.

- The presence of a large number of empty retail units in Handsworth and Lozells, which creates a perception of a run-down and neglected area.
- There are few public toilets available for local people across the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- The lack of off street car parking areas creates traffic congestion problems – especially in the main shopping streets across Handsworth and Lozells area.
- There are too many take-away restaurants operating in the area that generate a lot of street rubbish.

Young People

Local issues / problems reported included:

- Lack of activities and youth facilities for young people in the area. Many young people have nothing to do other than hang around on street corners and local parks, which in turn, can lead to violence / tensions between groups of young men. Furthermore, there are no girl only youth facilities – which in turn limit informal leisure opportunities available for Muslim young girls in particular.
- Fear of gangs and drug dealers operating within and around the Handsworth and Lozells area. Some young people stated that they were worried about being out in the area after 8.00pm in the evening, due to the activities of local gangs and drug dealers / users
- Lack of a visible police presence in Handsworth and Lozells: A significantly greater and more visible police presence on the ground in the area would help to make young people and other residents feel safer in their neighbourhood.
- The area has a negative image focused on violence, crime, drug dealing and gang activity.
- Poor quality education facilities and support in the area – which limits access to qualifications necessary to access employment opportunities.
- Need to provide jobs for local people and more support for young people not in work or training
- Litter / rubbish on streets which has generated rodent infestation problems and detracts from the image of the area and the quality of life of local people.
- Lack of community interaction and cohesion – people generally do not interact with others from outside of their social / community groups and neighbourhoods. There are no opportunities for people from different backgrounds, religions, age

groups to get to know each other and talk about / share their experiences / concerns.

- Concerns about the quality of housing available generally in the area – which detracts from the image of Handsworth and Lozells
- Many of the local roads are too narrow to allow sufficient on-street parking, which means that people park their cars wherever they want (especially on Lozells Road). Problems with car parking / traffic congestion on the main shopping streets during peak hours can lead to conflict and violence.

Unemployed People

Local issues / problems reported included:

- Drug dealing on the streets across the Handsworth and Lozells area is a major problem
- The presence of drug addicts on the streets across the area – makes the area feel unsafe.
- There is a lack of affordable decent quality housing in the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- There is a problem with lots of people (particularly young people) hanging around the streets in the area with nothing to do.
- The area experiences high levels of violence which makes local people and visitors feel unsafe.
- The local pedestrian subways are deemed to be unsafe
- There few work opportunities in the area and few major employers.
- There is limited job support available for local people looking for work.
- There is limited career advice and support available to people aged over 17 years of age. More employment / training / careers support and advice are needed for young school leavers.
- Litter and rubbish is a major problem across the area, which gives Handsworth and Lozells a poor image.
- There is a lack of community cohesion across the area. There are few opportunities / places for local people to socialise and interact.
- There is a lack of car parking spaces in the main shopping areas (especially Lozells Road)

- There is a lack of facilities for elderly people living in the area.
- Local people experience difficulties in accessing health services – especially gaining GP appointments.

‘Hard To Reach’ Groups

Local issues / problems reported included:

- Gangs, crime and drugs are a major issue across the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- Car parking problems across the area (especially Lozells Road)
- Poor quality roads – too many potholes
- Dangerous and speeding vehicles – safety risk for local people especially young children and elderly people
- Difficulties in getting access to health services – particularly appointments with local GPs.
- Health centre provision in the area is not adequate
- More local people need access to further education colleges and training
- Access to apprenticeships for local young people is needed.
- Activities for young people are needed in the area
- There are few employment opportunities for local people
- There are not enough community meetings / information about what’s happening in Handsworth and Lozells: local people are not informed about what’s going on in the area. Local agencies should involve local people to a greater degree in decision-making.
- Litter and rubbish are big problems across Handsworth and Lozells.

Newly Arrived Communities

Local issues / problems reported included:

- There is an inadequate supply of quality social rented housing in Handsworth and Lozells. Much of the housing available for rent is of a poor quality.
- There are problems in accessing local health services, in particular appointments with GPs.
- Fear of crime is a major problem across the area
- There is a lack of cohesion and interaction across Handsworth and Lozells' various communities.
- More support is needed for local people whose first language is not English.
- There are problems for local families in accessing quality secondary school education for their children. There are long waiting lists for access to the better quality local schools located in Handsworth and Lozells and adjacent areas.
- The educational attainment of local school children is generally poor – which raises questions about the quality of education delivered in local schools.
- The area has major rubbish, rodent and street cleaning problems that detracts from the attractiveness of living in the area.
- Local shopping and leisure facilities in the area are poor.
- More employment support and advice services are needed in the area.
- There is a need for local agencies to be better equipped to meet the area's different community languages needs in Handsworth and Lozells.

Local Traders

Local issues / problems reported included:

- The physical environment and image of the area's main shopping areas (Lozells Road, Villa Road, Soho Road, and Birchfield Road) is generally poor and unattractive, compared with other parts of the City.
- There are problems with car parking in the area's main shopping centres. This problem has been exacerbated by the designation of 'Red Route' on major traffic routes through the area and inappropriate double yellow lines adjacent to retail and other businesses in the area. These problems have had a detrimental impact on the passing trade attracted by local traders.
- Crime (in particular drug dealing and taking) is a major problem across Handsworth and Lozells, which deters people from visiting / shopping in the area. Shoplifting is also a problem experienced by many traders. The local crime problem and local resident fear of crime is exacerbated by the absence of a visible police presence across the area.

- The presence of pedestrian subways (particularly in the Birchfield Road area) is a major problem. The subways are not used by the general public and have become a prime location for drug dealing.
- The area experiences major problems with rubbish and vermin.
- There is a relative absence of high street financial institutions (banks/ building societies) across the Handsworth and Lozells area.
- Local traders feel a lack of representation / influence on decision-making affecting the local area – especially with regard to the activities of the City Council