

# CIVIC COHESION IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT

– *TECHNICOLOR DREAM-COAT OR THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES?*

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## Overview

Fine initiatives have emerged from efforts by Bradford Vision and other agencies to build up 'community cohesion' – considered here mainly in the form of *civic cohesion*. We do have new tools for repairing social divisions and conflicts. But these alone cannot overcome a fundamental split that impedes our weaving of an inclusively integrated, peacefully multicultural future together. Its clear manifestations were identified in Lord Ouseley's and the two Home Office reports following the 2001 riots.

Bradford simply cannot be cohesive while different communities' socially separated lives remain so far apart. Unfortunately the District's definitive *Community Cohesion Delivery Plan* of 2003 almost disguises this central issue, and offers no explicit, unified strategy for addressing it directly. Yet without one, the pressures favouring self-segregation will not reduce.

The critical analysis here highlights that problem, but then advocates further initiatives for tackling the mind-sets which keep people apart. Authentic cohesion requires changed attitudes and habits within all of our ethnic/religious groupings and their internal subcultures. We can create civic loyalties through the fellowship which grows from sharing in *active citizenship*. These depend upon each of us experiencing and displaying the same shared *Bradfordian identity*, as a potent facet of our subjective self-image and a proud source of unity in diversity.

The intertwined strands at the heart of the proposed solution start with people of good will participating in *Citizens' Assemblies*, and confronting honestly our communities' real differences in basic values. Grass-roots civic involvement then becomes the basis for defining and adopting a multiculturally inclusive *Citizens' Charter* of local rights and duties. The processes of negotiating such an agreed foundation for mutual respect can themselves nurture more harmonious modes of respectful co-existence, to overcome social and civic fragmentation.

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\* The tentatively labelled 'Toller Group' is currently (February 2004) in the early stages of forming itself as a new socially inclusive community group within Toller Ward. It will aim to ensure that members of all the ethnic/religious, age, gender, and other sub-cultural groupings in the area can communicate, live and work together constructively in greater harmony. Views expressed in this document are not necessarily the agreed position of the Group's provisional Steering Committee. More detailed analyses, and sets of precise proposals for Civic Assemblies and for creating a Bradfordian Citizens' Charter of rights and responsibilities, continue to be developed by the author. Further information is available upon receipt of e-mailed requests to <I.Vine@Bradford.ac.uk>.

## *The District's failures of civic cohesion*

The collapse of textile industries helped to undermine our social fabric. Ted Cantle's *Community Cohesion* report on the Northern riot areas bluntly pointed out how torn its communities are. Residential 'segregation' between ethnic/religious communities is variously compounded:

1. *"Separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, means that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges."*

And as to 'open and honest dialogue' about the causes of this self-segregation:

2. *"We found little evidence of such a debate and rather, a reluctance to confront the issues and to find solutions. It was evident that this failure ran through most institutions, including the political parties and even voluntary organisations."*

Our fragile foundations for multicultural cohesion neglect shared identity and citizenship:

3. *"In such a climate, there has been little attempt to develop clear values which focus on what it means to be a citizen of a modern multi-racial Britain and many still look backwards to some supposedly halcyon days of a mono-cultural society, or alternatively look to their country of origin for some form of identity."*

Since 2001, Bradford has at last taken significant account of these key causes of continued social division and potential conflict. But its uses of substantial social regeneration funding have so far delivered suitable initiatives only on much too small and fragmentary scales.

4. **Worthy official aims and practical efforts to improve cohesion between separated communities have delivered almost nothing of substance to the average resident of the average mixed neighbourhood.**

Too often the rhetoric just cloaks inaction, and even hides the local pockets of conflict and misery. Most leaders and community activists alike have been short-sighted. They have failed to acknowledge openly, or to address directly and effectively, the real extent of social and civic divergences between local ethnic/religious communities and subcultures.

Yet in private everyone knows what so few dare to talk of freely (in deference to 'political correctness'), or else glibly ascribe just to pervasive prejudices ('racism' and 'Islamophobia').

5. **The unspoken source of division and suspicion is centred in deep-rooted discrepancies between many of the traditional 'in-group' values and habits of our distinctive subcultures.**

These embody differing judgements of how 'everyone ought to live' – particularly between ordinary members of our generally dominant indigenous 'white' population with Christian backgrounds, and of our rapidly growing minority with Pakistani Muslim origins. Conflicting values partly explain why these communities largely inhabit such remote social worlds.

Several inner-urban wards conspicuously reveal how selective departure and avoidance – alongside other factors like high Muslim birth-rates – have transformed large residential areas from mainly white to mainly non-white, within just a couple of decades. Latest census data appears to rank three Bradford wards as the second, third, and fourth highest nationally, for their proportions of Pakistani residents (Toller at about 60%, followed closely by University and by Bradford Moor). Yet there is official denial that 'white flight' remains at work, and consequent persistent neglect of one certain damaging effect of such rapid demographic changes.

**6. Some neighbourhoods now have clusters of streets in which just handfuls of scattered non-Muslims remain as forgotten *local minorities* – increasingly facing involuntary and often unwelcome social transformations of their lives.**

Cultural isolation from neighbours and facilities can be coupled with separation from everyday support of friends and family. The oldest, most vulnerable and solitary of such residents are especially at risk. They feel justifiably fearful and frustrated if they happen to have an inconsiderate or irresponsible family nearby, or their circumstances make them an easy target for any local youngsters with an appetite for antisocial recreation. Such conditions encourage the desperation that tempts more indigenous citizens towards racist political parties like the BNP.

Clearly the neglected problems of being an isolated social minority within a local neighbourhood are by no means confined to any one of the District's groupings. Especially in some outer-urban estates, it can be their handful of Muslim families who feel out of place or rejected, swamped by a local white majority. Fortunately, violent and overtly racist attacks, and even casual racial abuse and ridicule, had become relatively rare here – although at least the fear of them has again increased in recent years. Nevertheless, if Ouseley was right to call for “immediate action to initiate change to end racial self-segregation and cultural divisiveness”, then we must all embrace “a people programme that creates social harmony, rejects racial hatred, brings communities together and shows them how to value people of all backgrounds”.

**7. Equal justice requires civic leaders to strive to help every kind of victim of the fragmentation and distrust which has so hampered our regeneration efforts.**

## *Shared Bradfordian identity as a counter to separation*

Ouseley stressed how authentic, fully shared *civic pride* is so central to the goals of our 2020 Vision statement. It requires everyone to “respect and celebrate differences in gender, race, culture, and religion”. But our self-identifications are the keys to this achievement.

**8. Civic pride can only be based upon a newly inclusive sense of being ‘Bradfordian’ – the one thing that all subcultures must cherish because “it offers a single common identity to a diverse population”.**

Relevant initiatives “must bring people together so that they can learn with and from each other as part of the drive to shape a new positive Bradford District identity”. But these words have been insufficiently heeded. Too little has happened to address identity issues systematically.

**9. Our two main ethnic/religious groupings each remain predominantly inward-looking, and self-defensive. The bulk of members resist adjusting any of their own core values, habitual practices, and more parochial in-group loyalties.**

Stark symptoms of exclusivity and intolerance in Toller and adjacent wards have included youth gangs' further intimidation against landlords and customers of pubs not already burned or forced to close thanks to the 1995 and 2001 riots. Even arson attacks on local churches have gone unpunished because misplaced family and ethnic loyalties protect the culprits.

Concrete proposals outlined below respond directly to the urgent but largely unmet challenge. They give real substance to somewhat hollow official talk about *active citizenship* – which in any meaningful sense still remains confined to the few and not the many. For young people in particular – including those most alienated Muslim youths involved in the worst cases of inter-ethnic conflict – inclusive civic identity and loyalty can only be nurtured by coupling real equality of opportunity with positive social participation. Our new Youth Parliament does give young people a symbolic voice, but its evident limitations invite cynicism from many.

**10. For any local citizen, feelings of loyalty through belonging depend upon feeling empowered by having a respected, effective say in the District's future.**

Social science research pinpoints shared positive engagement with its collective activities as the main basis for internalized commitment to any kind of in-group. Identifying with them can then generate strong loyalties to its members at large. Feeling that one's own voice does not count must erode true 'patriotism' – whether towards one's country, one's city, or even one's family.

It is the fact of members sharing the same inclusive identity which in effect defines any functioning in-group, and specifies the social boundaries which exclude out-groups.

**11. An agreed cohesive identity would define all Bradfordians as every local citizen's civic reference group – implying mutual respect between all residents of any mixed neighbourhood, shared commitment to the District's public order, and to upholding everyone's individual rights.**

If such self-identification itself mainly stems from social participation in co-operative civic activities, there is a vital function for the fully inclusive multicultural recreations and symbolic ceremonies that are too rare in Bradford's civic life. Overall, we urgently require new and more active forms of local citizens' communication, fellowship, and politics – at street, neighbourhood, ward, and District levels. But which initiatives can best make local cohesion a reality, and a source for civic identity and pride?

There are many answers. Some neighbourhood initiatives which benefit from regeneration funding are striving to co-ordinate local contributions by small-scale community projects – and aim to weave an eventual tapestry of grass-roots social connections between every subculture. More centrally organized efforts are starting to show results under the wings of Bradford Vision (notably the Neighbourhood Renewal initiatives for local Action Planning, the Diversity Exchange's promised community website, and the Bradford Community Accord mediation service). Agencies like the Council's Area Co-ordinators' Offices, the C-Net Community Network, the SRB Regeneration Partnerships, Education Bradford, or West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police, are also playing essential parts in varying ways.

**12. One vital effort still advancing on far too modest a scale involves marrying-up citizenship education with very overdue co-operative twinning of predominantly white and predominantly Muslim schools.**

That the latter move is necessary reminds us how much local parents' real concerns sadly contribute to segregation. Nothing is more essential for our civic future than that children discover early how diversity and difference are to be cherished and not feared or ridiculed. But that cannot happen without regular friendly social contact, on equal terms, between people from unfamiliar subcultures.

Yet even the best initiatives in mixed neighbourhoods provide only locally patchy and even haphazard opportunities to stimulate a sense of inclusive social belonging. They still reach only small numbers of residents. Admirable youth schemes may fail to recruit precisely the most troubled and troublesome groups of young people. Those few make grossly disproportionate impact upon the quality of life of ordinary citizens, and especially of the most vulnerable local minorities. In wards like Toller, disaffected casual street-gangs still intermittently harass members of non-Muslim minorities, whom they regard as alien intruders on 'their' territory. Tighter policing of mixed neighbourhoods is necessary, but cannot itself eliminate such problems.

**13. Solutions to disrespect and conflict can only start from arranging effective intercultural communication and positive contact, between disparate ethnic/religious, gender, age, and other subcultural groupings within neighbourhoods.**

If carefully facilitated, these dialogues should especially reassure older citizens, or new immigrants unfamiliar with the indigenous culture. But we have no systematic and comprehensive programme for helping each and every member of our diverse subcultures to understand each other, respect differences, internalize liberal norms of public conduct and civic order – and thereby feel safe, welcome, respected, and generally at home together.

So how can productively talking together, across the boundaries between groups, be encouraged on the broad scale needed to forge a unifying civic identity – one which the vast majority from any background will freely embrace? There are many real overlaps to build upon between subcultural groups' distinctive values. Yet there can be profound discrepancies too, in private beliefs and social attitudes with religious dimensions. Some more public manifestations of these become barriers to multicultural neighbourliness and shared social participation – particularly between the indigenous English and Pakistanis with Mirpuri and other rural backgrounds. Similarly, conservative traditionalists from either grouping will be seriously at odds with many secular liberal individualists and with rebellious youth cultures.

**14. Anxieties about amplifying tension into hostile emotions and racial abuse probably explain why politicians and community leaders are reluctant to acknowledge or arrange public debates about seriously conflicting values.**

In the past, Bradford has certainly seen its share of open public discussions which descended into slanging matches between extremists of various kinds.

**15. Yet bringing subcultures together for open dialogue is ultimately the only way to develop flexible agreements about how to live together in diversity, without locally dominant groups simply coercing locally subordinate ones.**

It will often not be feasible to jump straight into holding large public gatherings. We all resist change most when we perceive our basic values, interests, and most salient in-groups are being threatened or coerced. In tense neighbourhoods or situations, careful preparatory work needs to be done first, in smaller and sometimes mono-cultural meetings.

**16. Fortunately, there are tried techniques for organizers to draw upon to facilitate rational dialogue, and to defuse conflict when mistrust, prejudiced stereotypes, and moral outrage are present.**

One benefit from regeneration funding is that the District can now draw upon numbers of relevant experts, familiar with both its history and its subcultures. Cautious courage and 'Yorkshire grit' then become the extra ingredients for making progress together – through increasingly frank but respectful talk which progressively allows all sides to feel more empowered and secure.

The end is still delicate and difficult, and the means require careful planning. Although a broadly uniform approach is suggested here, local contexts may vary so much across the District that individual areas need to devise and control their own schemes for conducting these debates (probably under the umbrella of their Neighbourhood Action Plans). Because success matters so much, a sound and co-ordinated overall strategy allowing for flexibility should still elicit everywhere the same strong public interest, and citizens' best co-operative efforts. What cannot vary is explicit recognition that every area must allow each of its subcultures or interest-groups their own fair hearing, and facilitate eventual frank and direct talking through of their differences.

The challenge is how to define, within these grass-roots public dialogues, some fluid but single conception of Bradfordian civic identity, acceptable to citizens of good will within every subculture. That task is still extremely daunting, if the outcome must somehow change people's firm attachments to their socially incompatible private values. But we can largely avoid this by acknowledging those differences, then firmly shifting the focus.

**17. An inclusive civic identity must be distilled out, through negotiation and compromise, from a set of shared values just solid enough to regulate equal participation in the public arenas of a liberal-democratic local state.**

The goal which matters is that all subcultures must embrace these broadly civic values, just sufficiently to reach amicable practical agreements about good citizenship. They must set standards for conduct in all aspects of civic political life, and for shared use of public spaces – but

ideally also for safeguarding everyone's fundamental human and civil rights in more private settings like families.

We must distrust over-confident claims that we already have sufficient 'multicultural integration' or 'community cohesion' – whereas hard debate will merely stir up trouble. Too many Councillors and other leaders (typically those belonging to whichever is the locally predominant ethnic/religious grouping in their own area) try to play down neighbourhood incidents as isolated actions by a few hotheads. Or they defensively deny that their own in-group as a whole bears any collective responsibility for what such individual members do. Complacently optimistic sloganizing about existing achievements, like self-deceived refusals to confront uncomfortable facts about segregation and hostility, mostly fool only those who live physically or socially remote from the 'frontline' tensions experienced by local minorities in disadvantaged mixed neighbourhoods.

Superficially peaceful co-existence amongst most members of neighbouring subcultures can mask suspicions, covert resentments, or segregated isolation amongst people who are more marginalized. Many citizens (and perhaps all of us) are scarcely conscious of how much they put their own parochial interests first, and fail to see situations through outsiders' eyes.

**18. Embracing a truly multicultural Bradfordian identity must imply a readiness to put inclusive civic loyalties above more exclusive ethnic/religious and other partisan ones, and above immediate self-interest, when essential civic values are at stake.**

There is no easy route to that sort of public-spirited commitment to living together in mutual solidarity. Defining a meaningful bond of identity that all citizens can share requires confronting rather than glossing over the obstacles to fair compromises. It demands critical appraisals of oneself and one's own in-groups, as well as respectful questioning of out-groups' attitudes when these also jeopardize civic unity.

## *Citizens' Assemblies as the way to a local Citizens' Charter*

On the basis already outlined, two major and interlinked initiatives deserve to become the flagship of our social regeneration plans. They are not merely worthy sources of civic pride in themselves. Rather, the ongoing processes that advance them can give everyone opportunities for participating as active citizens – and for experiencing the rewards of co-operation by helping with the same superordinate tasks that we can only achieve in partnership.

**19. A system of people's assemblies – with a first priority of formulating a charter of rights and duties for every individual local citizen – is the proposed setting for grass-roots public debates about divergent subcultural values, and how to reconcile these in agreed norms for harmonious civic relations and social order.**

If adopted and funded through the Council, the envisaged structure can also have a continuing, long-term civic role. As a major vehicle for the participatory citizenship currently being urged upon us by national government, assemblies in no sense rival or replace local government's normal statutory powers and functions. Popular assemblies do provide enhanced opportunities for ordinary citizens to initiate policy proposals, and to scrutinize decisions of Councillors and local government officers. They engage citizens, but their role remains informal and advisory.

The kinds of increased persuasive pressure and accountability they introduce can counter some of the widely admitted drawbacks of our prevailing indirect or 'representative' democracy. One is that non-proportional electoral representation of parties indirectly results in voting within Councils like ours being normally determined by leaders' decisions. Those may not reflect the wishes or interests of a Councillor's own ward electorate. Widespread voter-alienation keeps election turnout at around one third of those eligible. That number could rise, if even sometimes an overwhelming vote by citizens at a local assembly did induce the Councillors they elected to act and vote accordingly inside City Hall.

It was scarcely explicit in the District's initial *Outline Community Cohesion Plan* of 2002. But Sharmila Gandhi, as director of the agency that wrote that plan, has publicly floated tentative suggestions for a fully inclusive 'Bradford Assembly'. This would periodically bring the voices of various communities into ongoing consultations about achieving the *2020 Vision*. The *Outline Plan* did make passing reference to using "the Community Network to provide representative structures for community participation and a formal link with Bradford Vision as the local strategic partnership." Work does continue with C-Net on developing something of this kind. However, that would fall short of what is advocated here – a new three-tier structure of quarterly *Citizens' Assemblies* (CAs). Yet one relevant target does get cited in the *Delivery Plan* – increasing attendance at Neighbourhood Forums from 10,900 to 12,300 in the coming year. The proposals below should achieve far more participation than that.

The other key idea was prominent in the first plan's section on civic pride, participation, rights and responsibilities. It was announced as a direct response to the "alienation and exclusion from the decision making and participation processes of public life which pose a significant threat to community cohesion." It precisely promised: "Development of a 'Citizens Charter' for the Bradford District", although no more detail was given.

**20. The unexplained removal of a most significant contribution to civic identity and pride from the current cohesion plans is disturbing. Working through the CAs to define a District-wide *Citizens' Charter* (CIC) is advocated here as a key symbolic feature of giving substance to cohesion ideals.**

Its content should set out an outline specification of basic entitlements and responsibilities of every local citizen, in relation both to other citizens and to the Council and other public agencies.

The essence of any worthwhile CIC is that citizens can commit to its principles through feeling genuine ownership of them. This has to stem from making some active contribution to defining their moral image of good citizenship. That is why it simply could not be written for us by experts, after little more consultation than running a few focus-groups, and then be adopted by a vote of Council. A proper CIC clearly presupposes the extensive public debates about civic values as proposed above. Feedback from these must culminate in various drafts being sent back for amendment within the CAs – a process likely to take two or more years from start to finish.

But even then, only a rather small proportion of citizens will have contributed actively to developing the CIC – which is not yet enough to get overwhelming sincere backing for it.

**21. Given its enduring significance and need for popular approval of a *Citizens' Charter*, it will be a prime candidate for ratification through a local referendum.**

Once again, the Council could choose not to be bound by what the CAs recommend for its content, or by the referendum result. But in almost any plausible circumstance that would be pointless. If clearly backed by every local community and subculture, as anticipated here, achieving a CIC would be a massive endorsement of new forms of participatory citizenship. It could set landmark standards for overcoming the central obstacles to making cohesive multiculturalism real in British towns and cities, and be the example which other local authorities would want to emulate.

A simplified outline of how the proposed CA structures would function can now be given. There are three tiers, so that debates and resulting recommendations can take place across areas and populations of very different sizes and ethnic/religious compositions. Both for the sensitive discussions about values which must inform and constrain the CIC, and for considering community and civic affairs of all kinds, the most appropriate starting-point is the fairly small neighbourhood. For some purposes involving day-to-day relations amongst neighbours, the minimal social-geographical unit to which people feel belonging is just a small cluster of short and adjacent streets. But a District of half-a-million people may have thousands of these – far too many for meetings of each to be co-ordinated into any unified decision-making process.

It should be noted in passing that there is, however, an independent cohesion-serving argument for forming numerous all-embracing *neighbourship groups* on just this micro-scale – whether formally or more casually. Few exist at present. But each would have the simple objective of ensuring neighbourly fellowship amongst all of its own residents. Neighbourship and other kinds of community groups could well choose to mount their own debates about conflicting values and citizenship issues, in advance of members participating as individuals in meetings of their lowest CA tier.

The most practically sensible arrangement for the first CA tier throughout Bradford can in most cases correspond with the District's present subdivision into local areas – those already recognized for Neighbourhood Forums (the citizens' consultation feedback meetings arranged by the Council). The most local CAs can simply be minor elaborations of these gatherings, which are organized several times each year by their appropriate Area Co-ordinator's office.

**22. Any citizen from whichever subculture – and including teenagers – will have rights for notification, documentation, attendance, and democratic participation in his/her local *Neighbourhood Forum Assembly (NFA)*.**

Well below a hundred of these are envisaged (depending upon how some current local anomalies are tidied up). That is few enough to accommodate consolidated debates and formal voting on any motions that need to be considered District-wide (like approving drafts of the CIC). And that number of NFAs makes it reasonable to insist (unlike now) that at least one ward Councillor is always present, to account for him/herself and report briefly on recent and impending Council business. Comparable arrangements can apply to local community police officers. The general ground-rules for all three tiers of the proposed CAs can be broadly the same. Each meets quarterly, and Council is expected to circulate beforehand all of its formal policy-consultation documents, as well as making reasonable efforts to submit other locally relevant documents on request. Agreed resolutions from any CA then go to higher tiers, and/or to outside bodies as appropriate.

There is one Area Co-ordinator's office for each of our five parliamentary constituencies. It thus seems appropriate to create the new second tier of CAs on just that geographical basis.

**23. Any citizen will have corresponding rights in the single *Constituency Forum Assembly (CFA)* for his/her parliamentary area.**

Many of the resolutions passed at NFAs will appropriately be carried forward as motions for debate by their relevant CFA. Voting is confined to the individuals present (although other arrangements might be considered for our least mobile community-of-interest groupings), and no-one is precluded from opposing at the CFA level anything passed by their NFA. (This may be important where a citizen who is in a small and unwelcome minority subculture within his/her neighbourhood needs a more diverse audience in order to get his/her dissident views taken seriously.) At CFAs, as well as one or more Councillors from each ward, senior decision-makers from the Council and other agencies should be present as appropriate to the agenda. The constituency's MP should be invited, with local media also attending (but probably subject to certain reporting restrictions).

The third and overarching tier of the CA structure has to encompass the whole District, allowing all Bradfordians to participate together. It will receive appropriate resolutions from lower tiers, send its own to Council and other agencies, and initiate its own consultation documents for NFAs to debate.

**24. Every citizen will have standard rights as before, in the all-encompassing *Bradford District Citizens' Assembly (BDCA)*.**

Meetings will normally be attended and addressed by the Council's Leader, and by other local decision-makers as appropriate. They will be invited to respond to motions under debate, and will be expected to give broad outline notice of their own major policy-decision agendas. Therefore a BDCA meeting can decide to recommend which future decisions of such bodies should be the subject of prior public consultation papers. Local media reporting should highlight the issues discussed in BDCA meetings for a wider public audience.

This outline of the proposed system of assemblies can be rounded off with brief consideration of their democratic decision-making processes. Particularly during the earliest NFA and CFA debates – those proposing suitable core values for civic affairs in the narrow sense (and in broader terms, covering certain aspects of social relations and public order) – formal voting may not be helpful. With some other issues too, it will suffice if the independent chairperson passes on to higher CAs or to outside bodies a broad indication of the full range of ideas expressed, simply emphasizing any views which were close to unanimous. (This is roughly what happens now at Neighbourhood Forums.)

**25. In the spirit of CAs actively striving to enhance cohesion between diverse communities and subcultures, it is desirable that meetings do always aim to reach a full or near-consensus when motions are debated.**

But clearly, with topics where it does seem necessary to put formal motions to a vote – including drafts of the Citizens' Charter – recommendations do need to be recorded. Given what was said about the extent of discrepancies between prevailing values of different groupings, even reaching near-consensus may seem like a recipe for many CAs rarely to make decisions at all.

In fact when NFAs all have the opportunity to vote at about the same time (on, say, the same draft of the CIC), the overall functioning of the system would rarely be harmed by a few NFAs being unable to agree to make recommendations. What failure to do so repeatedly would signal is the need for outside mediators to engage with the internal conflicts of the NFA in question. However, where NFAs and CFAs do remain faced with some minority of members strongly dissenting from a clear majority view, it will sometimes be appropriate to take a recorded vote on a motion by secret ballot.

**26. If active dissent remains within a lower-tier CA after thorough debate, any resolution adopted by majority should go forward with the numbers of votes recorded. And however close the collective opinion is to consensus, it should always be open for dissenters to ask for statements of their contrary opinions to be accepted alongside the adopted resolution, also for transmission to the next tier. They are then free to defend these there.**

This mode of reaching collective decisions where necessary, while allowing for 'minority reports' at every stage, seems to offer the most reasonable compromise between traditional democratic voting and the imperative of local minority subcultures not feeling disenfranchised and alienated, through feeling intimidated or ignored by the majority.

## *Conclusions*

The Citizens' Assemblies proposed here would find their feet during the positively motivating process of helping, individually and collectively, to define and refine a Citizens' Charter capable of embodying our *2020 Vision* social aspirations. We need to grow a cohesively multicultural, liberal-democratic, local society – with a progressively enriched sense of shared pride in the socially inclusive Bradfordian identity available to every citizen of every kind. There is good reason to suppose that the process of progressing the CIC can itself establish substantially greater contact between different subcultures in small neighbourhoods and beyond. Active citizens can do this in their CAs – in ways that themselves start redressing our central problem of ethnic/religious communities leading segregated, sometimes isolated and fearful lives. One real mark of success on this score will be when non-Muslim families do start to move back into wards like Toller.

By its nature, a generally agreed CIC will only emerge as and when a core of shared civic values central to local harmony has itself been constructed, through the frank but positive multicultural dialogues which we must immediately do more to nurture on all fronts. We can learn to live with and tolerate radical differences in our private in-group values, so long as we agree to distinguish those from the essential common values which alone can generate cohesive community-spirit. As well as committing ourselves to active participation in civic decision-making,

we must commit to civility and neighbourliness towards people from out-groups. Every subculture needs to cherish local diversity. For doing so is the only way to avoid destructive suspicions and hostilities, which ultimately undermine everyone's satisfaction with their own life and neighbourhood.

A shared will to ensure the CIC's success should motivate attendance at early CAs, where lasting habits of participatory citizenship can be nurtured amongst substantial proportions of local citizens. Through these processes, the District and its existing electoral and policy-making structures can also gain huge collective benefits. It can start tapping properly into its citizens' so varied wealth of community knowledge, expertise, and reflective experience – something that we can all freely bring to every kind of significant policy debate and civic decision.

**27. To unlock our largely hidden grass-roots civic resources is not even difficult. To participate loyally and constructively, each of us simply needs to feel that our views and interests as citizens will be properly listened to and truly respected by others, whatever our backgrounds and theirs.**

If the political will is present amongst the District's leaders, Bradford can pioneer a form of active citizenship which does more than nurturing real civic cohesion. Simultaneously we can together raise local government policy-making to new levels of shared creativity, intelligence, and democratic accountability.

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