

## COUNCILMEETING – 26TH FEBRUARY 2026

## AGENDA ITEM NO. 8

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE CROSS-PARTY COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP**SUMMARY**

This report outlines the work undertaken by the cross-party Community Engagement Task and Finish Group. The Group was established following a Council motion in 2024 to understand and address community concerns following protests and instances of social unrest.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Consider the report and note the achievements and effective cross party working of the Task and Finish Group.
- Confirm the work of Task and Finish Group is now concluded and that improving cohesion and integration is embedded in business as usual within service planning and day to day operations
- Continue to receive updates on cohesion activity through regular all Member Briefings and written updates.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report outlines the work overseen by the Members Community Engagement Task and Finish Group.
- 1.2. It provides details of the activities delivered by the Belong Network and the Council's Community & Partnership team and recommends a future approach to supporting cohesion and integration activity.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. In August 2024 an extraordinary meeting of the Council was called to consider a Notice of Motion relating to the increasing tensions in the community. The Motion received unanimous support.
- 2.2. Members acknowledged that Rushmoor was a welcoming Borough in which no individual or group should feel unheard and/or fearful and it was important to ensure the concerns of the whole community were listened to and heard.
- 2.3. A cross-party Member Community Engagement Task and Finish Group was set up with an overall purpose *to work with local community groups and*

*leaders to better understand and address community concerns.* Remit of the group included:

- To be open and transparent.
- To understand concerns by facilitating constructive engagement with community groups and residents.
- To create a safe environment to discuss issues of concern including hate crime, safety and wellbeing.
- To work with community groups and develop an enhanced programme of community events and activity.

(Full Terms of Reference at Appendix One)

- 2.4. The Group was allocated a budget of £50k from the Asylum Dispersal Fund, to carry out their work, supported by officers from the Council's Community and Partnerships Service.

### **3. DETAILS OF THE WORK OVERSEEN BY THE MEMBER TASK & FINISH GROUP**

#### **Working with the Belong Network**

- 3.1. In October 2024 the Task and Finish Group unanimously agreed to commission the support of the Belong Network, a national organisation specialising in community cohesion and inclusion. Belong acted as an independent body working with community groups and leaders supporting the Council to better understand community issues and concerns.
- 3.2. Between November 2024 and March 2025 Belong delivered a programme of activity in the local community focused predominantly on listening, understanding concerns, engaging, and creating safe environments. This work became known as 'Rushmoor Voices' and included the following activities:
- Facilitating a public meeting on 20th November for approximately 40 participants, including members of Rushmoor People First, anti-racist campaigners, voluntary sector groups, community members and Councillors from the Task and Finish Group.
  - Delivering a workshop for all Councillors about conflict and tensions.
  - Hosting a series of informal local meetings with community members to explore and address key issues, emotions and experiences.
  - Conversations with local agencies: Including Rushmoor Councillors and officers, Police, MP, voluntary, community and faith sector representatives, housing providers, youth workers, educationalists, and MHCLG colleagues.
  - Facilitated workshops for partner groups – developing an understanding of local issues and exploring hopes, frustrations and ambitions and exploring opportunities for change.

- 3.3. The total cost of this work was £18k and was funded from the Council's Asylum Dispersal budget.
- 3.4. In April 2025, the Task and Finish Group received a report on the Rushmoor Voices programme. The report presented key findings and set out a range of options for the Council's consideration, including the continuation of work with Belong and an outline of proposed further activities (Appendix Two).
- 3.5. Key findings:
- Wider social issues including economic disparity, cost of living pressures and health inequalities contribute to a feeling of unjust unfairness and are a factor in community tensions
  - There is a perceived lack of trust by some residents with the Council and the democratic process
  - Misinformation and disinformation can create additional tensions
  - A need for clear communications to promote the Borough as a great place to live and to nurture and celebrate shared identities.
  - A need for a plan or programme of work for the Council to promote social cohesion and build strong and resilient communities.
- 3.6. A further meeting between Belong and the Task and Finish Group took place in May 2025 to review the report and the options for additional work. Following this, the Group agreed to continue its partnership with Belong for a further 18 months. To date the following has been delivered:
- Continued community engagement through the Rushmoor Voices programme – working with local groups, faith groups and partners
  - Working with young people in youth clubs to talk about what is important to them and what concerns they have
  - Facilitating local community meetings in specified locations to see what improvements local communities would like to see for their areas
  - Specialist consultancy support for the Council to consider a broader cohesion approach
  - Delivery of Partner Workshops – 3 skills workshops on conflict awareness, positive messaging and countering misinformation
- 3.7. The cost of this work is up to £55k and will continue for the remainder of 2026. This is funded using the remaining £32k from the original £50k Asylum Dispersal allocation, and a contribution of £23k from the Community Recovery Fund (CRF). The CRF is £600K grant money received from Government as a direct result of the community unrest in the Borough.

### **Cohesion & Integration**

- 3.8. In addition to the Rushmoor Voices programme and working with Belong, the Council has implemented a range of initiatives to support cohesion and integration. This work specifically aligns to the following objectives of the Task and Finish Group: *Work with community groups, develop an enhanced programme of community events and activity and being open and transparent.*

3.9. Cohesion activity is now co-ordinated by the Council's cohesion and integration team of two, a Resettlement Manager and a Cohesion and Integration Officer (two year fixed term post). During 2024 and 2025 the team, supported by the Communities and Partnerships Service and Service Manager, delivered the following:

- Prepared the Rushmoor Together Partnership Plan, which was endorsed in July 2025 [Rushmoor Together Plan - Rushmoor Borough Council](#) The plan includes a Community Belonging priority and seeks to develop strong, resilient communities where people support and respect one another.
- Creation and delivery of a Rushmoor Together Grant programme to fund partner projects that support and encourage cohesion and community belonging.
- A monthly written Member briefing on resettlement and cohesion to ensure transparency and help prevent the spread of misinformation across the Borough. The briefing includes feedback from Elected Members on what answers residents need
- Dedicated Community Engagement pages on the Council website providing regular updates on the Rushmoor Voices programme [Rushmoor Voices - Rushmoor Borough Council](#),
- Regular updates to the resettlement and cohesion pages [Resettlement and asylum schemes - Rushmoor Borough Council](#) on the Council website in a bid to be transparent about Council support and data and to counter misinformation
- Allocated funding to partners to help deliver local projects aimed at strengthening community cohesion. This includes funding for a mediation service, to be delivered by Citizens Advice, providing a free service for residents to resolve community disputes. (A summary of other projects can be found at Appendix Three)
- Co-ordination of regular partner meetings to disseminate local offers of support for all residents including refugees and asylum seekers.

3.10 In addition, work outside the scope of the Task and Finish Group has also been delivered to support the Council's approach to cohesion including;

- Introduction of a new housing portfolio lead overseeing all aspects of housing
- Planning for an Armed Forces Covenant Conference for the North East and Hampshire to celebrate and strengthen the partnership between armed forces and civilian communities
- Successful bid to secure the hosting of Armed Forces Day celebrations in June 2026 with a strong focus on inclusive communities
- Developed a process inviting residents to ask questions at Council meetings to improve engagement and transparency of Council decision making.

## **Embedding Cohesion and Integration Work – Approach for 2026/7**

- 3.11 On 3rd September, Council officers and the Police delivered a confidential briefing to all Members on asylum, resettlement, and cohesion. The briefing provided an overview of cohesion and integration activities to date, a summary of the work delivered through the Task and Finish Group, and a proposal outlining plans for cohesion for the next 6–9 months
- 3.12 The proposal outlined work including, delivering community place-based meetings in identified neighbourhoods where engagement is low and establishing multi agency strategic officer meetings.
- 3.13 The proposed approach to cohesion and integration, alongside work on asylum and resettlement, for 2026/27 will form part of the Community and Partnerships Service Plan and become fully embedded as business as usual. Members will continue to receive monthly briefings keeping them regularly informed and ensuring prevention of misinformation where possible. Work will include, but not be limited to the following:
- Homes for Ukraine Programme of activity including case work and outreach activity
  - Delivery of community place-based meetings in areas of low engagement
  - Rushmoor Together and pride in place grant applications to support local community led activity
  - Workshops and skills sessions for partner groups
  - Partnership approach to reducing street drinking and supporting mental health
  - Regular all Member briefings including an opportunity for Members to feedback about what answers residents need
  - On going communications – through website pages including countering misinformation
- 3.14 This work will be delivered by the Council, with the support of Belong in line with the agreement in place. There will be no additional costs to the Council

## **4 IMPLICATIONS (of proposed course of action)**

### **Risks**

- 4.1 This is a sensitive area of work that carries some reputational risk. Whilst the Council must support resettlement activity as required by the Government, it also needs to balance this responsibility with an awareness of local perception and the potential impact on local services. The Council recognises it needs to provide clear information and assurance to residents.

### **Legal Implications**

- 4.2 There are no legal implications directly associated with this report.

## **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.3 Resettlement and cohesion resource and activity is currently funded through Government Asylum Dispersal grants, Homes for Ukraine and the Community Recovery Fund Grant. This funding is ringfenced with strict criteria.
- 4.4 Funding for these grants is held in the Council's reserves and drawn down as required for resettlement and cohesion purposes/activity. This includes the cost of the Resettlement Manager and the Cohesion and Integration Officer.
- 4.5 The current status of the reserves is as follows. These figures may fluctuate due to any unspent funds or further Government funding received.
- Asylum Dispersal: £231, 528
  - Homes for Ukraine: £413, 543

This funding will be used to deliver cohesion and integration activity highlighted in 3.20. This includes work that benefits the wider settled community (where it is in line with grant criteria), and costs of the Resettlement and Cohesion posts.

- 4.6 The Community Recovery Grant has been fully allocated as outlined in the report to Cabinet in July 2025 [Microsoft Word - Community Recovery Fund - Report No. ED2502](#) ). No further CRF funding is available.

The work identified in this report will be carried out using existing resources in the Community and Partnership Service and the funding already allocated to Belong. Where possible Asylum Dispersal funding will be used to support the community place meetings. There is no other broader cohesion funding available.

## **Equalities Impact Implications**

- 4.7 An impact assessment will be carried out against any future cohesion work. The nature of cohesion and integration activity is that it focuses on individuals who may already face discrimination and inequality.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 Members of the Member Task and Finish Group have been consulted on this report and ask that Council note that the Group has worked well together and delivered a programme of community engagement in line with its Terms of Reference. Whilst there is still work to be done, the Group is satisfied with the progress made to date and recognises that work is now fully embedded in service plans and day to day operations.
- 5.2 The Council is therefore recommended to (a) note the work of the group and the plans for ongoing activity and (b) confirm that the work of the Task and

Finish Group is concluded on the basis that work is now embedded in business as usual.

**LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEXES:**

Appendix One: Terms of Reference

Appendix Two: Belong Report

Appendix Three: Programme of current Cohesion Activity

SOPHIE PORTER  
PORTFOLIO HOLDER  
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES & ACTIVE LIVES

# **Community Engagement Task and Finish Group**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Scope and Purpose**

The Community Engagement Task and Finish group has been set up following a Council motion. The motion agreed that the Council would:

**Establish a cross-party working group to work with local community groups and leaders to better understand and address community concerns.**

### **Objectives of the group**

- To work together to mitigate community tensions.
- To understand concerns by facilitating constructive engagement with community groups and residents to ascertain their views and experiences.
- To work with community and voluntary groups to develop an enhanced programme of community engagement events and activities.
- To identify and learn from external speakers who have experience in community cohesion.
- To create a safe environment to discuss matters of concern and wellbeing, such as hate crime and personal safety.
- To encourage respectful participation in civic life and interaction between different community groups.
- To be open and transparent about the work and progress of the group and ensure frequent communication updates on cohesion related issues are shared.

### **Membership**

Cllr Sophie Porter (Chair)
Cllr Craig Card
Cllr Sue Carter
Cllr Alex Crawford

Cllr Halleh Koohestani
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Cllr Sarah Spall
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Cllr Stuart Trussler
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### **Meetings**

Frequency of meetings to be agreed.

### **Accountability**

There is a budget of £50,000 to support this work.

The group will report back to the Council on the findings, progress and allocation of funding.

# Report on ‘Rushmoor Voices’ project

April 2025

## About this document

This note sets out

- Information on work carried out by Belong between November 2024 and March 2025 in line with a commission from Rushmoor Council to support the delivery of the workplan of the Community Engagement Task and Finish Group, which has the aim of ‘working with local community groups and leaders to better understand and address community concerns’
- Information on issues which have been raised during our work, with brief observations on those issues
- Suggestions and proposals about further work that the council could do – often with partners. Belong proposes making inputs and providing support to some strands of this work, on the basis of a further commission

This note is intended as a working document for Rushmoor Council officers and elected members involved in the Community Engagement Task and Finish Group, rather than as a public document or as the content of a report to committee/s.

Following feedback from the Community Engagement Task and Finish Group, Belong will be happy to contribute to formal reporting to council committees as appropriate.

## Work carried out by Belong

A small team<sup>1</sup> from the charity Belong has worked on the Rushmoor Voices project, by making in-person visits to the borough, taking part in Teams meetings, and having multiple phone conversations and email exchanges. We have carried out the following work:

Supporting council officers in preparing for and running a public meeting (20 November 2024) which attracted around 40 participants, including members of Rushmoor People First, anti-racist campaigners, voluntary sector groups and community members

Regular liaison with key council officers

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<sup>1</sup> Belong’s practice was led by Jon, with support from Mike and practice inputs from Chrissie and Laura.

A briefing session / interactive workshop with council officers as part of gathering views and perspectives (27 January)

Meetings, conversations and email exchange with workers and volunteers from a range of organisations, including an informal group made up of disabled people, groups of asylum seekers / refugees, a litter-picking group and:

- Aldershot Football Club
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Grub Hub
- Hampshire Constabulary
- Holy Trinity Church
- Nepali Women's Group
- Potters International Hotel
- Resettlement Team (CAB)
- Rushmoor Voluntary Service
- Shiva Cultural Centre

Meetings, conversations and email exchange with members of a range of campaigning organisations:

- Friends of the Earth
- Rushmoor People First
- Rushmoor Welcomes Refugees
- Stand Up To Racism

In some cases, our meetings, conversations and email correspondence with members of these groups has been recurrent.

We have met the local MP and have regularly engaged with local councillors:

- Update (online) to Community Engagement Task and Finish Group (17 December)
- Evening briefing and seminar open to all members (16 January)
- Meeting (online) with those members of the Conservative Group who were unable to attend evening briefing and seminar (5 March)
- Meetings (online and in person) with individual councillors as appropriate

We have liaised with other agencies working in the borough or with a direct interest in the borough, including local arts and culture organisations who want to deliver events and

activities that support community cohesion and celebrate integration and diversity; the Thinking Place consultancy; and Civil Service colleagues from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

We have also spoken with many diverse members of the public in informal settings including cafes and pubs.

## **Issues and observations**

In this section, we highlight the issues in respect of which views and feelings which were shared recurrently through our work. Team members can provide verbally a great deal of additional information, including specific quotes and particular observations which have been put to us: when sharing information in this way, it is our definite practice to respect the commitments we have made to people who have spoken to us in respect of confidentiality.

Given the context of our commission, our conversations have often taken in views and feelings about the protests over and opposition to ‘migrant hotels’; the disorder in summer 2024; a meeting at Holy Trinity Church on 6 December which was disrupted by ‘counter-protestors’; issues to do with behaviour at and the handling of issues at an Extraordinary Council meeting on 5 February; a protest planned outside the Potters Hotel on 12 March, and a planned counter-protest; and other altercations between people with different views on issues around migration.

It should be noted that we have not always ‘steered’ people towards such topics, especially when talking to members of community groups, and to residents in general, so as to help us ascertain the extent to which issues around migration and race are – or are not - key concerns for Rushmoor community members overall.

## **Impact of / perceptions around immigration**

- Concern over migrants / asylum seekers being housed in particular locations, some of which are seen as ‘high profile’
- Antipathy towards migrants
- Racism and Islamophobia
- Activity of an anti-migrant campaigning group
- Activity of pro-migrant campaigning groups
- Support offered by some to residents of Potters Hotel
- Experience of Nepali community members / integration of Nepali people into Aldershot

- Protest / counter-protest dynamic: meetings and disruption of meetings
- Extent to which political actors from outside Rushmoor are involved in / encouraging / orchestrating dynamics of protest and counter-protest
- Role of social media in relation to these issues: ‘misinformation’; ‘disinformation’
- Sense of vulnerability on the part of campaigners (expressed in particular forms by both pro-migrant and anti-migrant campaigners)

### **Wider relevant social issues**

- Cost of living pressures
- Issues of economic and social disparity
- A sense of competition (‘are others getting what we should be getting?’)
- Community safety (especially at night, especially in Aldershot)
- Physical improvements promised but not delivered? ‘Landscape’ / appearance of urban centres seems ‘stuck’ (though the recent unveiling of Union Yard shows that things have been happening behind hoardings, and this development has been well-received)

### **Trust in / responsiveness of council and other agencies; health of democratic process**

- Some evidence of lack of trust in / distance from / alienation from ‘council’ (referring both to the council and to public sector agencies more generally)
- Uneven understanding of council role and powers
- Desire by police to further improve links with council / councillors and to build increased public trust and confidence in the police
- Questions about quality and effectiveness of communication (episodic rather than regular, responsive rather than sustained?)
- Political disagreement about extent to which council is open / secretive’ / engaged
- Questions about extent to which ‘the council’ and other agencies are ‘fluent’ and confident in respect of race and equalities issues
- Political disagreement has sometimes been expressed in polarised and hostile terms: local expressions of wider shifts in political culture / culture wars’?
- Issues about ‘terms of engagement’ during political debate / disputes over social issues: what are the levels of ‘tolerance’ for dissent expressed in blunt terms? What language is appropriate / inappropriate?
- Concern on part of some elected representatives about personal safety / well-being given context of polarisation

### **Potential future directions**

- Most people express a desire to get ‘back to normal’
- Reaction against the idea that disturbances of summer 2024 or campaigns against migrants do or should define the borough
- Interest from a range of people and organisations in taking steps to build links and connections across lines of difference: ‘a desire to forge more useful dynamics’
- Interest from a significant number of people in taking steps to increase capacity to have difficult conversations / handle contention well

### **Suggestions and proposals for practical steps to address issues**

In this section, we propose some further work that the council could do – often with partners. Belong proposes making inputs and providing support to some strands of this work, and this would be on the basis of a further commission. The work areas listed below cannot and should not all be done ‘at once’: prioritisation and sequencing is appropriate, as is alignment with other plans and processes.

### **Overall cohesion approaches**

There should be a process of identifying the approaches and actions which the council and its partners are taking and could take to promote social cohesion in the coming years. In settled circumstances, this could take the form of developing a cohesion strategy which would not replace or rework existing strategies, plans and intentions, but complement them and sit alongside them, confirming and looking to maximise the extent to which these contribute to good relations and cohesion. Such a strategy or framework might cover:

- The case for building strong and resilient communities<sup>2</sup>
- Acknowledging and addressing social issues and concerns – specific local issues and those which are expressions of wider national and international developments

The process would include focus groups and design lab process on specific issues and particular areas of work to maximise the extent to which these can contribute to cohesion; and to ensure that services activities are appropriately coordinated and publicised.

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<sup>2</sup> More socially connected, cohesive local areas generate individual and community level benefits: higher levels of individual subjective wellbeing; increased levels of volunteering / active social engagement / more extensive participation; cohesive communities have increased resilience against problems / crisis / shock; improved capacity to anticipate, manage and make the best of social change (handling its negative aspects, maximising its positive opportunities).

The resulting document would guide the work of the council, working through both mainstream services and future plans and initiatives to look at how to

- Deliver and promote these well
- Deliver and promote them in ways which attend to the specific needs of particular groups of people (including but not limited to the needs of people with protected characteristics in equalities legislation)
- Deliver and promote them in ways which attend to everybody's interests

Rushmoor's current position in the context of proposed local government reorganisation should be taken into account in scoping and managing such processes: the ambitions formed on the basis of Rushmoor Council's assessment of needs and possibilities should inform a partnership approach and become central to the shaping of future local governance arrangements. This is corporate management and governance work which Belong is not placed to lead, but in respect of which we could provide substantial specialist consultancy and peer support.

### **Respond to the need / desire for shared community spaces**

In the future development of public space and facilities, attention should be given to maximising the extent to which these can be shared spaces, facilitating interaction between people from different backgrounds. Belong is not placed to lead on this work, but members of our network – both local councils and particular organisations – have relevant expertise. Related issues in respect of public space include the need to address community safety issues through design.

### **Developing skills, capacity and confidence – addressing contested issues and building good relations**

A range of skill-sharing sessions and training programmes could be delivered so as to increase the extent to which contention and disagreement in the borough can be handled well, and to increase the extent to which relationships can be made, developed and strengthened across lines of difference. These sessions and programmes would combine established approaches with bespoke material and sessions which would be specifically tailored to Rushmoor.

The quote set out below is for a comprehensive programme, comprising a variety of types and formats of sessions which would be delivered so as to suit different potential participants:

- Elected councillors
- Council officers (from senior level to ‘front line’) and workers from partner organisations
- Residents and volunteers involved with community, voluntary and faith organisations
- Members of campaigning organisations

The content of these sessions and programmes would cover

- Sharing skills in conflict awareness and in having difficult conversations on potentially divisive issues, including – for council members, political activists and campaigners – identifying the basis for some (possibly partial) agreements about behaviours and appropriate use of language in relation to democratic process and debate
- Skills to initiate positive encounters and build links and develop stronger connections across lines of difference, between people from varied backgrounds
- Skills to run dialogue programmes, including through development of skills to facilitate dialogue
- Confirming appropriate means to work through democratic process on conflicted issues, including in respect of language use
- Further developing relationship mapping, tension monitoring and community sentiment analysis systems and mechanisms
- Partnership work between agencies and community organisations to identify and develop appropriate and effective approaches to countering misinformation, challenging prejudices and stereotypes, and building trust, including through work to develop and promote critical thinking in relation to social media

Belong would propose leading this programme, whilst working closely with some local people who we see as having a great deal to offer the borough as potential practitioners.

Belong would then work with some of those who have taken part in the training to run appropriate ‘exemplary’ sessions, such as live ‘community dialogue’ evenings using the skills and confidence acquired. A key overall aim of the comprehensive programme would be to build capacity amongst some workers in agencies and some people involved in voluntary groups so that there is a basis for using and sustaining these approaches going forward. There is significant capacity and interest on the part of a number of people in the borough to take this kind of initiative, as part of the wider work of contributing to positive change, and to handling change well, thus making the most of what the borough can be going forward.

### **Positive communications**

Communications work both to underpin cohesion and to promote the borough as great place to live, work and invest is needed around the long-term promotion of Rushmoor, its towns and its places, and the nurturing and celebration of shared identities. This should take place in the context of changing structures of local governance, but the basis for this work could be laid now.

More immediately, there is a need for a review of the language and key points in council communications, including promoting agreed and clear messaging on some controversial issues on which residents and campaigning groups have raised concerns and questions, and which could be answered. Specifically, and as an example, some of the queries and concerns that have been raised about issues to do with migrants being allocated places in local hotels could be answered with accurate information which the council holds, and which can be put into the public domain, and this would be a response to requests from members of campaigning groups which are perceived as both ‘anti-migrant’ and ‘pro-migrant’. Such work would form part of effectively responding to misinformation and divisive disinformation detailed above.

### **Future possibilities and visibility**

Whilst there is the need to hold further discussion about the specific details of initiatives envisioned within this proposal, there is clear value in now progressing a range of activities, which could be implemented and would evolve in line with the Council’s priorities and policies and would be visible by stakeholders and the public (when both appropriate and possible).

These activities and initiatives could include but are not limited to

- Programmes of effective communications in relation to Rushmoor Borough Council’s core services, new and planned initiatives and one-off events
- Facilitated ‘have your say’ sessions for groups of people on topics raised as important by members, officers, stakeholders, groups which have been consulted or members of the public (e.g. discussions on personal safety in town centres). These could take the form of facilitated Town Hall meetings, with training in facilitation provided by Belong to co-facilitators from the council and partner organisations
- Facilitated ‘community dialogue’ events which invite members of the public into RBC buildings, or in which RBC representatives and people from partner organisations hold events in community venues to share views, feelings and suggestions about a range of

issues

- Sessions and ‘training’ workshops on messaging and communication

The above proposals are offered as realistic and useful possibilities which could be delivered from April 2025 and into the first part of 2026. Delivery and timetabling would be shaped by consultation with relevant members and officers.

**Further details on work proposed by Belong over coming period**

The aspects of work indicated above which Belong proposes contributing to would be carried out by a team of Belong associates led by Jon, supported by Laura, with ongoing overview, support and inputs from Mike, and with inputs from other colleagues from the charity as appropriate. This would ensure continuity with work already carried out, so as to make use of personal insights and connections already made, and also to utilise specialist skills of a range of Belong’s consultants, researchers and trainers as relevant to the work.

Initiative / support	Timeline	Cost
Ongoing community engagement and peer support so as to build on the ‘Rushmoor Voices’ work	April 2025 to March 2026	£8, 000 plus VAT
Specialist consultancy support contribution to developing cohesion approaches as central to future local governance	April 2025 to summer 2026	£8,000 to £12,000 (plus VAT) depending on level of input determined
Comprehensive programme of skill-sharing sessions and training courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict awareness</li> <li>• Having Difficult Conversations</li> <li>• Skills in democratic process on conflicted issues</li> <li>• Promoting positive encounters</li> <li>• Dialogue initiatives, including through ‘Town Hall meetings’</li> <li>• Language use and promoting positive messages / countering misinformation</li> </ul>	April 2025 to March 2026	£35, 000 (plus VAT)  Should the cost proposed be judged too high, particular aspects of the proposed programme could be run at a smaller cost
<b>Total cost of programmes detailed in this proposal if delivered in full</b>		<b>£55, 000 plus VAT</b>

**For more information on the content of this report, please contact Jon or Mike, Belong:**

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**For issues re contracting further work from Belong, please contact James Williams,  
Director of Partnerships and Products, Belong: The cohesion and integration network -**

[james@belongnetwork.co.uk](mailto:james@belongnetwork.co.uk)

### Appendix 3: Summary of RBC funded projects supporting cohesion

Project	Summary of Activity
CA	Community Mediation Service – providing free mediation support for community disputes.
RVS Buddying	Project delivered by RVS providing ‘buddies’ to residents at Potters. Buddies provide individual support and confidence, attending local services with residents to enable support integration into the local community.
ESOL projects	Delivering English lessons to support integration and future employability.
Roots in Community	Volunteering Project with Karuna coffee – Supporting refugees, Ukrainians and asylum seekers to earn a formal, qualification as baristas, improve English skills and become part of the local community
A Taste of Rushmoor	A community-led project celebrating the borough’s rich cultural heritage through food accumulating in a cookbook ‘A Taste of Rushmoor’. Residents, local restaurants, and community groups will share recipes and personal stories, collected via outreach in Aldershot, Farnborough, and North Camp. Catering students from The Vine Centre will recreate the dishes for a showcase while photography and graphic design students from Farnborough Sixth Form College will design and photograph the cookbook which will celebrate the diversity and traditions of Rushmoor.
Gift of Winter Tales	A Gift of 7 fairy tales for children from 7 different cultures. Winter Tales is an inclusive storytelling and art initiative promoting intercultural understanding among local primary schools. Each child will receive a winter-themed booklet of cultural stories alongside a teacher support pack for class discussions. The project culminates in a Wintertime Gift Box display on Sunday, 7 December in Farnborough town centre, featuring live storytelling from the booklet. There will be a display of large decorated wooden gift boxes which pupils have decorated that represent different winter traditions from around the world.
Pilot Community Meeting - November	An informal meeting for residents of Aldershot Park with the hope to gain a clearer understanding of local needs, foster pride in the neighbourhood, strengthen connections between residents and the Council, and identify small community-led actions that can make a positive difference through a small budget. The meeting will be facilitated by Belong along with support from RBC officers.
Famous & Inspiring People - H4U	A project led by a Ukrainian Guest to create mini clay figurines of famous and inspiring people from Rushmoor and Ukraine to develop a sense of community and belonging amongst the community. The aim of the activity is to identify people who are notable to the area, create a short story of their journey along with a headshot taken so the public can be inspired by the everyday people who

	have had a transformative journey and see how diverse their community is. Pictures painted by Ukrainian guests of local streets of Rushmoor will also be exhibited.
Together we Thrive	A volunteering/work experience scheme to enable asylum seekers and refugees to join a structured volunteering cohort within CA Rushmoor, where they will have the opportunity to work with the team, improve their English, learn about the system in the UK, and give back to the community.
Seeking Sanctuary	Project in partnership with CA – providing a case worker for 4 days a week to support those with new refugee status e.g. UC application, homelessness referrals, etc.
New Directions' employability	A pilot to support asylum seekers and refugees with English, CV writing, interview training, and applying for job opportunities.
Creative Response' Art Therapy	A weekly session led by 2 Ukrainian artists to support those who are affected by war; the pilot will run for 6 months.
Aldershot Cricket Club	Supported the club with funding to enable 4 asylum seekers to join the team and play during the summer of 2025.