

REPORT TO:	CABINET 30th June 2014
AGENDA ITEM:	8
SUBJECT:	Fairness Commission for Croydon
LEAD OFFICER:	Nathan Elvery, Chief Executive
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Tony Newman Leader of the Council
WARDS:	All

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT:

In an economic climate where public services face cuts, fairness matters more than ever. The proposal to establish a Fairness Commission for Croydon supports the Council's ambition to reduce inequality and promote fairness for all of its communities by working with partners in the public, business and voluntary sectors order to secure better outcomes for all.

The establishment of a Fairness Commission will require one off financial investment. However, the costs of this will be offset by the engagement that will take place with residents and community partners to define and agree the longer term service priorities and outcomes that are community-led.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

An indicative budget of £200K is needed to set up Fairness Commission and deliver its work programme.

KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO: Not a key decision

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to

agree the draft proposal to establish a Fairness Commission for Croydon including an the funding required to set-up and deliver its work programme.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Croydon is a socio-economically diverse borough that is marked by some stark contrasts in wealth and poverty. Croydon is ranked in the 100 most deprived places in the country and 19th out of 32 London boroughs in terms of overall deprivation. It has some wards with low levels of disadvantage and others that are amongst the most deprived in England.

2.2 Croydon, like other places in London and elsewhere, is experiencing significant demographic change which, at a time of economic constraint has significant implications for social and economic policy, resource allocation and service provision. Croydon shares similar demographic, economic and social characteristics with both inner and outer London boroughs. but also faces unique challenges such as:

- the highest overall population of all London boroughs;
- one of the largest populations of children and young people;
- one of the highest proportions of black and minority ethnic groups in South London, and one that is rapidly growing;
- increasing deprivation with significant areas of entrenched inequality.

2.3 The current economic climate, coupled with the impact of wide reaching welfare reforms and reductions in public sector funding have led to an increase in inequality and poverty in the borough. The key inequality challenges that Croydon faces include:

- ◆ deprivation experienced by people living in the borough, in particular wards in the north as well as New Addington and Fieldway;
- ◆ violent crime, especially domestic abuse and serious youth violence;
- ◆ anti-social behaviour including hate crime and fear of crime;
- ◆ growing social pressures including child poverty, food and fuel poverty, social isolation, lack of affordable housing and a rising trend in homelessness;
- ◆ underlying causes that prevent communities from becoming cohesive, integrated, resilient and active;
- ◆ youth unemployment and targeting areas of the borough with high economic inactivity
- ◆ opportunities for people especially those aged between 16 – 24 to be in education, training or employment;
- ◆ resilience of individuals and families with complex needs such as poor mental and physical health and drug and alcohol problems;
- ◆ health inequalities across the borough including obesity in children and adults;
- ◆ growth and regeneration is sustainable and inclusive.

3. Current activity

3.1 The Council working closely with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) has developed and is delivering a number of initiatives to address these challenges and create a strong and cohesive community. A summary of these include:

- ◆ In Croydon, there has been a reduction in the proportion of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) including those aged between 18 – 24, but remains high in areas of the north and east of the borough. Croydon's strategic partnership is delivering a "Pathways to Employment" initiative that aims to make job opportunities available to local unemployed people.

- ♦ Worked on improving health and well-being and reducing health inequalities through initiatives such as the Croydon Heart Town programme, setting up a Carers Support Centre, setting up an integrated commissioning unit for health and social, delivering a Croydon Healthy Schools programme and setting up the Healthy Living Hub;
- ♦ Managed to mitigate the impact of welfare reform for residents by working closely with landlords and Jobcentre Plus to negotiate rent reductions with landlords and supporting residents most affected by changes to benefits including finding work;
- ♦ Supported residents at risk of homelessness by providing pro-active information, advice and support for people at risk of homelessness, refurbished and developed new units of supported housing and reviewing the borough's homelessness strategy;
- ♦ Worked with partners to deliver an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Community Connectors project in the north of the borough. The project has strengthened volunteering, encouraged individuals to be more community-minded and created social support activities that have the potential to become sustainable, community-led enterprises.
- ♦ In Croydon, there has been a reduction in crime and the Safer Croydon Partnership has delivered a range of community safety initiatives such as targeted approach to address anti-social behaviour, providing a witness support service, introducing area enforcement officers, proactive use of CCTV and Safer Croydon Radio; delivering a number of initiatives to support victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse focussing on prevention; leading on partnership initiatives to address human trafficking and implementing a new multi-agency Gangs strategy.

4. A Fairness Commission for Croydon

- 4.1 The proposal for establishing a Fairness Commission for Croydon supports the Council's ambition to be a place that reaches out to all of its communities to provide the support needed to lead independent, healthy, and productive lives. It is also a clear recognition of the fact that the borough's overall future prosperity will be best assured where all local citizens are able to share in any benefits of this.
- 4.2 The remit of the Fairness Commission will be to gather evidence, to consult widely and make recommendations about the practical steps that can be taken in Croydon to make sure that fairness underpins the decisions that affect communities. Through the work of the Fairness Commission it is hoped to secure a stronger social contract between the people of the borough and develop a cohesive community with opportunities for all who live and work here.
- 4.3 The Council and partner organisations within the LSP will have to take some tough decisions about local service priorities and funding over the next few years. The Fairness Commission will work with LSP partners to review a range of evidence to determine local community needs and suggest priorities in the report it produces. The recommendations from the report will enable the Council and the LSP to ensure that funding decisions are made in ways that advance fairness and reduce inequality.
- 4.4 In setting up a Fairness Commission for Croydon it is recognised that the although national government policy provides the key levers to influence fairness, inequality and cohesion responsibilities held by national Government, the impact of decisions that are taken locally is significant. Policies in areas such as health and well-being, community

safety, social care, employment, housing and investment are all influenced at local level – and the choices the Council and the LSP make have fundamental implications for people living in the borough.

5. Proposed Fairness Commission model for Croydon

5.1 Purpose and expected outcomes

5.2 The purpose of the Fairness Commission is to lead work on recommending how to improve the quality of life across the borough by making it a fairer place for all who live and work in the borough by:

- ◆ Using a strategic partnership approach to understand inequality and inclusion issues that impact upon the lives of Croydon residents, identifying key actions to address local inequality and deprivation and gaining consensus to ensure that these actions are delivered through the work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP);
- ◆ Listening to the views of the diverse range of communities in the borough and in the role of a “critical friend” use these to shape policy to address inequality and deprivation in the borough and direct resources;
- ◆ Offering independent advice and expertise to influence decision-making and support partner organisations within the LSP to improve the lives of those communities in the borough who experience deprivation or disadvantage.

5.3 The proposed outcomes for the Fairness Commission are:

- ◆ Identify fairness and inequality challenges in the borough, through the examination of key thematic priorities such as socio-economic inequalities, health and well-being, education and employment, housing and the environment, community safety etc.;
- ◆ Set forward a vision for fairness for the borough - that will inform, inspire and influence the work of the LSP (including the LSP Boards) and the Council;
- ◆ Develop evidence based policy recommendations and responses to promote fairness and address residents needs through the work of the Council and LSP Boards;
- ◆ Inform and influence budgetary decisions proposed by the Council and LSP partners to address local challenges related to inequality and fairness in the borough;
- ◆ Influence corporate and civic behaviour and the community leadership role of key partners in the borough on the fairness and inclusion agenda.

5.4 The Croydon Fairness Commission will make a particular effort to reach out to people with multiple needs who often find it hard to make their voices heard, so that they have every opportunity to be engaged in its work and to influence Council priorities.

6. Structure and membership of the Fairness Commission

6.1 The proposed structure and membership of the Fairness Commission is suggested below:

- ◆ **Chair** -The Commission will be chaired by an independent expert, who will provide strong leadership, set the strategic direction and lead the production of a report that has recommendations for the council and its partners.

The leading independent experts that the Council are considering to take on the role of the Chair are:

- ◆ Matthew Taylor – Chief Executive of Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts (RSA). Prior appointments include Chief Adviser on Political Strategy to the Prime Minister and Director of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). Matthew is a frequent media commentator on policy and political issues, and has written for publications including The Guardian, The Observer, New Statesman and Prospect.
- ◆ Julia Unwin - Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust. She has previously held a position as chair of the Refugee Council, and is currently a member of the University of York's Council and a Governor of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. Julia has written several books, the most recent of which is entitled "Why Fight Poverty?" and was published in November 2013.
- ◆ Sir Michael Gideon Marmot - Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London and former Chair of the Strategic Review of Health inequalities in England post 2010
- ◆ Andy Hull from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) - a freelance researcher and consultant specialising in housing, security and equality. He has led five major inquiries on these subjects at local, regional and national levels. These include the Islington Fairness Commission (London Borough of Islington); Counter-Terrorism: The London Debate (Metropolitan Police Authority); Security and the Legal Domain: A Horizon Scan (Ministry of Justice); Commission on National Security in the 21st Century (IPPR) and English Housing Policy: A Fundamental Review (IPPR). Andy is also an elected councillor in the London Borough of Islington. His work there has focused on tackling poverty and reducing inequality, leading the council's groundbreaking Fairness Commission, championing the Living Wage and taking on legal loansharks as a growing cause of problem debt.
- ◆ Professor John Hills - Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics. His research interests include income distribution and the welfare state, social security, housing and taxation. He was Chair of the National Equality Panel (2008-2010). He carried out a review of the aims of social housing for the Secretary of State for Communities in 2006-07 and was Co-Director of the LSE's Welfare State Programme (1988-1997).
- ◆ Naomi Eisenstant – Senior Research Fellow, Department of Education and Social Policy, University of Oxford – Former Chair of the Camden, Equality Task force and Former Director, Social Exclusion Taskforce (2006-09).
- ◆ **Co-Chair / Vice Chair** - The Commission will also have a Vice Chair. It is proposed that the Chair of the Scrutiny and Strategic Overview Committee, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons will take on this role. In addition, it is proposed further political representation on The Commission include Councillor Hamida Ali and Councillor Sara Bashford.
- ◆ **Commissioners** - The Commission will comprise of representatives from the public, private and voluntary sector organisations in Croydon. Commissioners will help to

shape and promote the work of the Fairness Commission; identifying practical ways of making Croydon a fairer place and working collaboratively across different sectors to reduce inequalities and promote cohesion.

They will be ‘Ambassadors for Fairness’ within their own organisation and responsible for taking recommendations back to their own organisations and using spheres of influence to implement them.

- ◆ Recruitment to the Commission will be open and by application. It is proposed there should be a broad mix of expertise amongst Commissioners. The role of the Chair and Commissioners will be voluntary but travel costs and incidental expenses will be reimbursed.
- ◆ **Supporters** – Supporters can decide how they wish to be involved in the work of the Fairness Commission. This may involve taking part in surveys, consultation activity, attending meetings or themed events, making pledges, or simply be kept informed of what is happening. They will be able to commit as much or as little time as they wish.

7. Proposed and indicative next steps

	Indicative key actions	Proposed timeline
Setting up the Fairness Commission		
1	Produce draft proposal for Fairness Commission and share with Cabinet to seek feedback and approval Announce the establishment of a Fairness Commission for Croydon	30 June 2014
2	Plan and initiate arrangements to set up Fairness Commission i.e. recruitment of project team, Chair, Commissioners, research institutes policy think tank, communication with stakeholders etc.	July – Sept 14
3	Organise first meeting of the Fairness Commission. The Commission will receive and review information on key inequality and fairness challenges for the borough and discuss the proposed themes to be reviewed in detail	Sept 2014
4	Formal launch of the Fairness Commission at the Croydon Congress Meeting	Nov 2014
Engagement and gathering evidence		
5	Fairness Commission to start work on a year-long listening exercise that will involve engagement and gathering evidence through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Public meetings in different parts of the borough to discuss inequality and fairness challenges that residents experience and seek consensus on issues that are most critical; ◆ Engagement with local residents – collate personal experience stories / testimony from local residents; ◆ Seek evidence from expert witnesses; ◆ Seek written submissions from local community groups and individuals; ◆ Hold discussions and feedback from a wide range of community groups / groups that share “protected characteristics”; ◆ Look at existing evidence and carry out qualitative and quantitative research to collate evidence of inequality in the borough and determine priorities. 	Nov 14 – Nov 15

	Indicative key actions	Proposed timeline
Publishing Report and recommendations		
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Produce report and draft recommendations to Cabinet for the Council and LSP to take forward to reduce inequality in the areas that matter most to Croydon residents. ◆ Commission to produce high level interim findings; ◆ Commission to publish an Interim Report; ◆ Commission to publish a Final Report. 	<p>Jan 2015 Sept 2015 Jan 2016</p>

8. Resources to deliver the work of the Fairness Commission

8.1 Running the Fairness Commission will require considerable resources in terms of setting up the commission, recruiting Commissioners, on-going communication, organising and supporting the meetings of the Commission (4-6 meetings in 12 months), organising engagement events such as public meetings, workshops to explore specific inequality challenges, collating and analysing feedback and research etc.

8.2 Based on benchmarking information collated from Councils who have set up a Fairness Commission an indicative cost of £200K over a period of 12 -18 months is proposed for the following;

- A **small project team** consisting of three (full time equivalent) Officers for 12 -18 months,
- Procure services from a renowned independent subject matter expert from research institutions or policy think tank to support the Chair of the Fairness Commission to produce the report and the recommendations. The organisations that we propose to contact to procure this support include **The Equality Trust, Joseph Rowntree Trust, New Economics Foundation (NEF), CASE- London School of Economics, Centre for Local Policy Studies, Edgehill University, Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Web Memorial Trust,**
- Costs related to **hosting public meetings** and producing communication material.

8.3 The Fairness Commission will need on-going support from the Council's Strategic Intelligence team as well as input from our partners in particular to produce evidence on inequality issues / themes that the Commission will decide to examine in detail.

8.4 The Commission will also need the support from the external communications team to publicise relevant information such as public meetings.

8.5 The Croydon Fairness Commission's proposed role will be one of independent scrutiny and challenge to the Council and the Croydon LSP. The Fairness Commission's report and the recommendations will inform the work of the LSP Partnership Boards. It will also provide the evidence base that the LSP and the Council can use to review and update strategic plans such as the Community Strategy, the Council's Corporate Plan and the Equality and Inclusion statutory objectives for 2016.

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 The Fairness Commission will in the course of its work carry out a series of consultation and engagement activities with stakeholders such as residents, community / voluntary groups, groups that share a "protected characteristic" to understand the inequality / fairness challenges for the borough.

10 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

1 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

The Council needs to set aside an indicative one-off budget of £200k from earmark reserves to set up the Fairness Commission and deliver its work programme.

2 The effect of the decision

The Council needs to identify one-off funding in order to approve setting up of the Fairness Commission and deliver its work programme as well as inform future resource decisions that form part of the Council's budget.

3 Risks

Delivery of Fairness Commission is subject to financial resources.

4 Options

None

5 Future savings/efficiencies

There are no savings or efficiencies associated with the approval of this report.

(Approved by: Diane Ellender, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer on behalf of Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer)

11. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

- 11.1 The Council Solicitor comments that there are no direct legal implications arising from this report but legal advice and support will be provided to the Fairness Commission as required.

(Approved by: Gabriel MacGregor, Head of Corporate Law on behalf of the Council Solicitor & Monitoring Officer)

12. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 12.1 The delivery of the Fairness Commission will require additional resources (subject to the approval of a one- off budget).

(Approved by: Hansa Bharadia, HR Business Partner on behalf of the Director of Human Resources)

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 13.1 Croydon's Fairness Commission's report and the recommendations will inform the work of the Council and LSP. The Commission will pay due regard to the Equality Act 2010 as well as the Public Sector Equality Duty. The qualitative and quantitative evidence will be used to

draw out recommendations that promote good community relations, advance equality of opportunity, and tackle discrimination.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

14.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

16. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

16.1 To support the Council demonstrate transparency and fairness in its operations as well as compliance with its public sector equality general duty and specific duties as defined by the Equality Act 2010

17. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

17.1 None

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BACKGROUND PAPERS - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None