

CABINET

2 July 2014

FAIRNESS COMMISSION – RESPONSE TO COUNCIL

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

Council Meeting 2 April 2014 – Notice of Motion by Councillor Janet Berry

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At April Full Council, a resolution was passed that Cabinet should further investigate the Notice of Motion to establish a Fairness Commission.

To date, Fairness Commissions have been established by unitary councils or London boroughs to investigate issues surrounding significant levels of inequality and poverty and to recommend ways forward to close the inequality gap.

Winchester District does not face the same scale of issues as these areas. However, inequality is present and marked (compared to the general affluence of the area), and so it is recommended that an Informal Policy Group is set up to look at issues of relative poverty in the District, review work already being undertaken by the Council and its partners to address this, and recommend any further work it considers necessary.

This report is accordingly an interim report on the Notice of Motion. The recommendations from the Informal Policy Group will be reported to Cabinet and Council in due course.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That a Fairness and Equality Informal Policy Group is appointed, to report back with its findings to Cabinet and Council in response to the Notice of Motion.
- 2 That consideration is given to appointing one or more of the Council's partners as a 'standing invitee' on to the Group.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At Full Council on 2 April 2014, a resolution was passed that the Notice of Motion to establish a Fairness Commission be further investigated by Cabinet. This paper provides a background on the aims and purpose of Fairness Commissions and proposes a pragmatic way forward for the City Council within budget constraints and the local context.

2 Background to Fairness Commissions

- 2.1 The first Fairness Commission was set up by the London Borough of Islington in 2010 and since then around 12 have been set up. Although they vary according to local circumstances, they do have some shared characteristics. They all have been set up at arms length from the councils, have the objectives of developing a clearer understanding of what equality gaps exist in their areas and propose tangible ways of reducing local inequalities. All stress the importance of undertaking a significant 'listening' exercise with residents. As an example, Islington Fairness Commission's terms of reference can be found at Appendix 1.

- 2.2 Fairness Commissions tend to cover similar themes:

- Pay and income
- Negotiating a living wage
- Implementing pay ratios
- Employment and jobs
- Housing strategies to tackle poverty
- Inequality and social security

- 2.3 Fairness Commissions mostly follow a Parliamentary Select Committee model – enquiry based, taking evidence and producing a final report. This is also a familiar process to the City Council, as it is reflected in how informal scrutiny groups are run.

3 Context that Fairness Commissions operate in

- 3.1 The Fairness Commissions set up so far have been established by unitaries or London boroughs facing widespread and significant issues of deprivation

and inequality, for example higher than average levels of child poverty and high levels of fuel poverty. Appendix 2 sets out some of the initial data reviewed by a number of existing Fairness Commissions as well as some of the headline information for Winchester District.

- 3.2 From this data, it can be seen that the levels of deprivation are not on the same scale as that in areas which have already set up Fairness Commission; however, there clearly are issues of inequality which demand review as although 1800 children living in poverty, for example, represents just 1.5% of the population, it is still a significant number. It is also recognised that due to the affluence of Winchester district and the state of the housing market locally, areas of deprivation within the Council's area are all the more marked in comparison, impacting on the lives of a number of residents, especially in certain town wards.
- 3.3 To date, there have not been any district councils that have set up Fairness Commissions. However, there is nothing inherent in the concept of Fairness Commissions that rules out a district council establishing a commission.
- 3.4 The London Borough of Islington set out guidance for other authorities considering establishing a Fairness Commission, part of which states that the Islington Fairness Commission (IFC) required the support of three full time equivalent officers for six months, and that (excluding staff time) the total cost of the IFC was c. £14,000. A Fairness Commission covering a London borough will clearly be on a larger scale than a district council; however, it is recommended that a scaled-back approach would be more appropriate to at least initially review the scale of problem that Winchester faces and where further value can be added in addition to activities already being undertaken to address inequality.

4 Proposed way forward

- 4.1 Considering the difference in scale between issues being addressed by established Fairness Commissions and those facing the Winchester District, it is suggested that a more focussed approach would be appropriate, which is initially led by the City Council but involves other partners with a role in reducing inequality.
- 4.2 A number of programmes of work and projects are in existence already, involving the City Council and its partners (see paragraph 4.5 below for a non-exhaustive list) to address inequality in the District on a thematic and geographical basis. In order to ensure the best use is made of resources and any further work can add value, these efforts should be reviewed to see where (if any) the gaps are and whether the Council wishes to invest further to have an impact on any particular, significant, issues.
- 4.3 A Fairness and Equality Informal Policy Group (IPG), led by a Member of the Cabinet is proposed, to cover similar ground that would be examined by a Fairness Commission, but with a more focussed brief and realistic approach to the resources needed to support it. It is suggested that a group of six

Members (3 Conservative :2 Liberal Democrat:1 Labour) might be appropriate.

4.4 An IPG would follow a comparable process to that of a Fairness Commission, and follow three stages:

- A review of existing data held by the City Council and its partners to identify areas of inequality in the District around key themes such as health, educational attainment, income and housing, as well as relevant consultation already undertaken with residents.
- A mapping exercise to establish existing and forthcoming programmes of work which address the key areas of inequality (both thematic and geographical) and where there are gaps.
- Proposals for action to address gaps where considered necessary and where an impact can be made.

4.5 A key feature of all Fairness Commissions is the leading role played by the Council's partners in the process. A significant proportion of work currently undertaken by the Council to address deprivation and inequality in the District is delivered with partners. An initial mapping of work aimed at addressing inequality highlights the following:

- Young People and Employment/Training Informal Scrutiny Group, and related work implementing recommendations
- Wise Move scheme to enable Council tenants to downsize
- Fuel Poverty Informal Scrutiny Group (commencing in 14/15)
- The Stanmore Planning Framework
- Targeted sport development work for children and young people living in the priority areas of Stanmore, Winnall and Highcliffe
- Winchester Supporting (Troubled) Families Programme – a targeted multi-agency approach addressing the needs of families struggling with a range of issues e.g. poor school attendance, anti-social behaviour/crime, worklessness and domestic abuse.
- Community Agents – new initiative for the Stanmore, Winnall and Highcliffe areas. Primarily focusing on the needs of vulnerable elderly residents.

This list is non-exhaustive and a fuller mapping exercise would form the first stage of an IPG.

4.6 An IPG looking at this area of work will naturally wish to invite partners to specific meetings and Cabinet are asked to consider whether they would wish to appoint one or more 'standing invitees' to contribute throughout the duration of the IPG. This approach would be especially useful when discussing areas of need which cannot be directly influenced by the City Council.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

5 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

5.1 The Community Strategy's shared vision is as follows:

"Our vision for the Winchester District is of diverse and dynamic communities, where people work together to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life now and in the future."

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 As indicated in paragraph 3.4, the establishment of a full Fairness Commission in the model of existing commissions would take a significant amount of officer and financial resource. The approach proposed in this report is anticipated to require less officer time as it will build on existing work and take a more focussed approach.

6.2 However it is anticipated that an IPG on this subject would require officer time to support it; approximately 1-2 days per week to provide a secretariat whilst it is running, plus input from other officers across the Council to provide evidence and the initial analysis of the research for Members to discuss. If Members wish to gather further evidence from third parties, further time will be required to prepare background material, manage the process and analyse input.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

7.1 There are no significant risk management issues arising from the report, however there may be risks identified later on as the IPG makes recommendations for further work.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

LGiU Policy Briefing – Fairness Commissions

Fairness Commission websites

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Islington Fairness Commission terms of reference

Appendix 2 - Context in which Fairness Commissions operate

Terms of reference and meetings

Report from the Chair and Vice-Chair of The Islington Fairness Commission for the 19 July 2010 meeting

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report sets out the dates, times and venues for the meetings of The Islington Fairness Commission. The report also sets out the terms of reference given to the Commission by the Council's Executive.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the report.

3. Background

3.1 Terms of Reference

Despite the pockets of affluence for which it is known, the London Borough of Islington is the eighth most deprived local authority in England (HMG 2007). Improving the life chances of residents, especially in the more deprived parts of the borough, is the central task of the new administration.

Some of the ways this will happen are: more social housing, universal free school meals and cutting crime, which disproportionately affects the least well off. However, over recent years the Council's power and influence have been extended over a range of other areas, including economic development, public health and SureStart, which are fundamental to making Islington a fairer place. It is in this context that the Commission will consider in depth and in detail how to level the playing field in Islington, address persistent issues of poverty and exclusion, and advance equality of opportunity in the borough. The Commission's deliberations will need to be set against the backdrop of national economic recession and recovery, deficit reduction and cuts to services which threaten to impact disproportionately upon the most disadvantaged in our community.

The Commission's findings will be used to establish a strong vision to guide the work of Islington's strategic partnership and partner organisations and to provide further structure and direction for the Administration's work in its first term.

The Commission's clear focus is on tackling poverty and inequality to make Islington a fairer place. A fairer Islington means a better Islington, for everyone who lives and works here.

3.2 Agenda

The Commission will focus on areas in which the potential for the Council and partners to exert power and influence – and so make a real difference – is greatest. It will address both poverty and inequality, in terms of both opportunity and outcome. It will recognise the importance of wellbeing as well as wealth. It will avoid framing topics by departmental or organisational silos, avoid duplicating work occurring elsewhere in the borough, and recognise the financial constraints that the Council and partners have to operate within.

The Commission will need in its deliberations to consider issues of health, housing, family, community, social care, education, equalities, skills and training, employment, crime and safety, democracy, sustainability, the environment and the economy. The membership of the Commission reflects this agenda.

The Commission will meet in public at 7.30 pm – 10.00 pm on dates and venues as follows:

19 July	Two Islingtons: understanding the problem	Town Hall
7 September	Closing the gap from the bottom up	Andover Estate Community Centre
2 November	Closing the gap from the top down	Slaughter and May
7 December	Stock-take : agree interim report	North London Central Mosque
11 January	Making fair cuts	Venue tbc
15 February	Topic tbc	Jean Stokes Community Centre, Bemerton Estate
28 April	Plan of action : agree final report	Town Hall

The Commission will hold five of its seven meetings outside of the Town Hall in a variety of locations around the borough – taking it out into the communities it concerns.

3.3 Testimony

The Commission will hear evidence from a number of witnesses drawn from the local community, service providers, outside experts and others.

3.4 Outputs

An interim report in early December 2010, to inform Islington Council's 2011-12 Corporate Plan, its 2011-12 Budget, and how any remaining reward grant money is distributed.

A final report in April 2011, to set the long-term strategy for Islington Council's work for the years ahead, informing the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the work of the Strategic Partnership.

3.5 Outcomes

A concrete, evidence-based plan for what to do to make Islington a fairer place to live and work, during and beyond the first term of this Council. This will shape the corporate strategy, priorities and spending of the London Borough of Islington and guide our negotiations with partners

Professor Richard Wilkinson
Chair

Councillor Andy Hull
Vice-Chair

Appendix 2**Context in which existing Fairness Commissions operate***Data taken from Fairness Commission websites*

<p>Islington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourteenth most deprived local authority in England (fifth in London) • Most densely populated local authority in England (206,000 in 6sqm) • Highest level of children growing up in workless households in UK • Half of older people grow old in fuel poverty • Highest rates of male suicide and alcoholic mortality in London 	<p>Tower Hamlets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of households have an annual income of below £50,000 and over 20% an income of just £15,000 a year or less • Nearly half of the borough's residents are claiming some kind of benefit. • Tower Hamlets is the 10th most deprived borough in the UK according to income related deprivation • Ranked 3rd in the country for the extent of deprivation, i.e. how widespread it is across the borough • 24,655 children in Tower Hamlets live in poverty, a child poverty rate of 48%. • All wards in Tower Hamlets have higher rates of child poverty than the national average of 21% and London average of 28%. • 11.2% of all households are in fuel poverty compared to 10.9% of households in London
<p>Plymouth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 of LSOA's are in the most deprived 3% in England, representing 2.9% of Plymouth's population in 2010. • 17 of LSOA's are in the most deprived 10% in England, representing 10.5% of Plymouth's population in 2010, and a total of 25.9% of the population living in the most deprived 20% of LSOAs in England. • 21.9% of children live in poverty (16% is SW average) • Gap of 12.6 years between the neighbourhood with the highest and the lowest life expectancy. 	<p>Southampton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southampton is the 81st most deprived local authority in England (IMD 2010) • In total, 23% of our residents live in the some of most deprived Local Super Output Areas in England. • 26.1% of children live in poverty compared to a region average of 15% • Men living in deprived areas of the city can expect to live 7.7 years less than the city average.

Context for Winchester district

NB These are only headline statistics for the District. If commissioned, an IPG will be provided with more detailed data and analysis, down to the lowest level available. The information below is taken from Public Health England's Health Profile 2013 for Winchester district.

- 1.5% of children in the District live in poverty; however, the Children Deprivation figures show that the three worst LSOAs (lower super output areas) are in the most deprived 26% in the whole of England & Wales
- Life expectancy for the District for both men and women is higher than the national average.
- Life expectancy is not significantly different for men and women in the most deprived areas of Winchester District compared to the least deprived areas. (Health Profile 2013 – Public Health England) However, more detailed ward level data from the earlier period 2005/07 indicates that Winchester District had the widest life expectancy gap in West Hampshire for both men (9.7 years) and women (13.7 years). Work is currently being undertaken to source more recent data to see if this is still the case.
- Levels of deprivation overall, proportion of children in poverty, GCSEs achieved and long term unemployment are significantly better than the England average.
- However, GCSE attainment is markedly poorer for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. eligible for free school meals).