

**Report for:** Cabinet, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Title:** Haringey Fairness Commission

**Report**

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/**

**Non Key Decision:** Non-key

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1 The Haringey Fairness Commission 'the Commission' was established in July 2018, with the aim of better understanding the causes of unfairness and inequality in the borough through conversations with residents and other local stakeholders and developing practical recommendations for how the council and partners can tackle inequality and work to better support residents, communities and businesses in Haringey.
- 1.2 The Commission published its final report and recommendations on February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, shortly before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. This report set out a series of recommendations for the council, Mayor, national government and partners; including the police, voluntary community sector (VCS) and schools, designed to affect change and increase equality and fairness across the borough. These recommendations are included in Appendix B.
- 1.3 The Fairness Commission is a core priority for the Council and we committed in March 2020 to quickly publish a full Cabinet report in summer 2020 detailing in full how Commission recommendations would be implemented. This report had to be temporarily delayed due to the resource pressures of responding to the pandemic.
- 1.4 However, work to implement recommendations has continued during the pandemic – and in some cases has been accelerated in response to it. This report sets out implementation progress to date and suggests what issues within the Fairness Commission recommendations have been brought into sharpest relief and therefore have been prioritised as part of our ongoing response to Covid-19 and its impacts.
- 1.5 Implementation of Fairness Commission recommendations is being considered as part of work to refresh the Borough Plan, and will be embedded as objectives and outcomes as part of this document, which will be published in June 2021.

- 1.6 Fairness Commissioners will be consulted as part of the production of the June 2021 Cabinet report, to ensure that this work continues to draw on their significant expertise and experience and shared commitment to fairness and equality issues.

## 2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 The fight against poverty and structural inequality should define and guide everything that Haringey does as a Council. Our overarching ambition to create a fairer and more equal borough shapes our policy and is steadily being embedded into our practice.
- 2.2 The creation of a Fairness Commission was one of our five key manifesto pledges – and was one of the very first things we set about doing in 2018. It was a collaborative review of inequality and injustice where we talked in-depth and at-length with our residents and communities about what they think needs to change in Haringey.
- 2.3 We have set about implementing its recommendations, with the aim of tackling the key causes of inequality and unfairness in the borough. In the last two years we have:
- **London Living Wage:** raised the wages of the people who staff our services (especially our care workers)
  - **Council house-building:** begun hundreds of starts on site as part of our plan for 1,000 new council homes by 2022.
  - **Council Tax Reduction Scheme expansion:** introduced one of the most expansive council tax relief programmes for our lowest-income residents.
  - **Local welfare assistance:** strengthened the safety net available for our residents by introducing a local welfare assistance scheme for people in emergency need.
  - **Ethical debt reduction policy:** introduced a new ethical debt reduction policy, which includes a focus on benefits maximisation and ensures that bailiffs are not used for council tax where people are on very low incomes, facing mental health challenges or have other vulnerabilities.
  - **Haringey Preventing Debt Strategy:** introduced a debt strategy which aims to identify those residents with the most urgent need and unmanageable or 'problem' debt and provide them with debt management support.
  - **Haringey Works expansion:** grown the council's job support service – with a key objective to lower local unemployment by raising the number of local residents hired by the council itself.
  - **Youth Services expansion:** hired new youth outreach workers and created the Haringey Fairer Education Fund to offer young people on low-incomes bursaries for higher education, work placements at the council and continuous mentoring during their studies.
  - **Borough Partnership racial inequality work:** worked with the VCS, statutory partners and our communities to improve inclusion and equality for our residents and communities, by developing and delivering work under a Partnership Programme Plan Addressing Racism and Racial Discrimination.

- 2.4 While there has been serious progress already, there is clearly much more to do. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic it is clear that some recommendations from the Fairness Commission should be prioritised for urgent action – where health and economic inequalities immediately put lives at risk.
- 2.5 That's why we are now prioritising a Local Welfare Assistance Scheme – offering emergency financial help to residents who've lost jobs or income due to the pandemic; an ethical debt policy – to prevent those hit by the Covid recession from falling into a spiral of debt; expanded Free School Meals – supporting families on low and insecure incomes at a time when job losses and job insecurity is rising; alongside many other key progressive interventions that the Fairness Commission called for.
- 2.6 Progressive ideas rest on the conviction that the challenges – and indeed the crises – we face are structural. We do not overcome anything alone. We need and rely on each other. We need the community around us to thrive – to be, in every sense, safe and secure.
- 2.7 The pandemic has made it clearer than ever that without fairness, without a more equal, more just society, we are dangerously vulnerable. When too many of us have low and insecure incomes, low-quality and overcrowded homes, little faith in public institutions, or limited access to basic services, we are all at much greater risk. The pandemic has been a stark reminder that we cannot ignore structural inequality – we have a moral and pragmatic imperative to take it head on.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 Note the progress made implementing Fairness Commission recommendations to date (including as part of the Covid-19 response), including on the areas which have received particular attention as part of our response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.2 Note the plan to set out how Fairness Commission recommendations will be implemented as part of the Borough Plan refresh, due to come to Cabinet for decision in June 2021.
- 3.3 Note the proposal to consult Fairness Commissioners as part of the production of June 2021 Cabinet report.

### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1 The Fairness Commission was established in July 2018, with the aim of better understanding the causes of unfairness in the borough through conversations with residents and other local stakeholders and developing practical recommendations for how the council and partners can tackle inequality and work to better support residents, communities and businesses in Haringey.
- 4.2 In its final report (February 2020), the Fairness Commission made a set of recommendations to redress social, economic and political inequalities in the borough. A Cabinet report receiving the Commission's report and

recommendations noted the positive contribution evidence from the Commission had already made to informing on a number of important organisational agendas.

- 4.3 Within weeks of the publication of this final report, the UK went into the first national lockdown, and in the year since, the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on some of our residents has reinforced the need to address the injustices highlighted by the Commission, particularly: tackling poverty; prioritising equity and inclusion; and addressing structural inequality.
- 4.4 Learning from the Commission has helped shape our emergency response to the pandemic, including some of the ways we have worked differently with our communities and partners and in some of the new ways of delivering services. This impact is captured in a 'Recovery and Renewal' Cabinet report (December 2020), which is intended to inform the refresh of Haringey's Borough Plan, 2019-23, in light of the impact of Covid-19 on both the borough's residents and on the council, including the impact on council finances.
- 4.5 The refreshed borough plan will be published in June 2021 and will include detail on how Fairness Commission recommendations will inform how we deliver our priorities going forward. It will be accompanied by a detailed report setting out how recommendations will be implemented.
- 4.6 The purpose of this report is therefore to take stock of progress in implementation to date, as part of our response to Covid-19 (and more widely), with a focus on those themes from the Fairness Commission which have been particularly significant during the last year.
- 4.7 An overview of progress in each of these themes is included in Appendix A. Detailed actions and deliverables for these will be defined in the June Borough Plan refresh Cabinet report.

## **5. Alternative options considered**

None.

## **6. Background information**

- 6.1 Cabinet established the Haringey Fairness Commission (the 'Commission') in July 2018. The Commission was made up of twenty Commissioners and two Co-Chairs (Cllr Kaushika Amin and Professor Paul Watt) from a range of partner organisations and sectors including: the police, education, youth provision, faith groups and the voluntary and community sector (VCS).

It is important to note that the Commission is a cross-party undertaking and included councillors from all of Haringey's political parties.

- 6.2 The Commission was formally launched in July 2018, with the aim of better understanding the causes of unfairness in the borough through conversations with residents and other local stakeholders and developing practical recommendations for how the council and partners can tackle inequality and work to better support residents, communities and businesses in Haringey.

- 6.3 The Commission's final report focuses on five key themes: public services, housing, children and young people (CYP), community safety and developing the voluntary community sector (VCS). The themes were developed in response to what the Commission heard in the first phase of engagement and represent areas where there are significant inequalities for Haringey's diverse communities, for which it was felt that council and partners had the ability to address directly or influence at a local level.
- 6.4 Covid-19 has reinforced the urgent need to address the themes set out in the Fairness Commission, and in particular, the need to address the structural inequalities which have meant that some of our residents have been disproportionately exposed to the health risks of the virus, but also to the wider impacts of the pandemic. Particular Fairness Commission themes have emerged as particularly important. These are:
- Economic inequality: unemployment and low pay
  - Housing inequality: housing security, affordability and overcrowding
  - Young people: seeking to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on education and skills, and life opportunity
  - Addressing the inequalities facing our Black, Asian and minority ethnic; and, disabled, residents;
  - Trust in public bodies and democratic participation: bringing residents into decision making and service design, with a view to increasing equity of influence, access and outcomes
- 6.5 Appendix A sets out what has been done to implement the Commission's recommendations so far.

## **7. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

**Borough Plan refresh 2021-23:** Haringey is currently refreshing its 2019-23 Borough Plan, setting out how services, policies and priorities will change after the Covid-19 pandemic. The overarching priority for the refreshed Borough Plan will be to confront structural inequality in Haringey.

**Community Wealth-Building:** many of the recommendations from the Fairness Commission contribute to the the council's strategic objective of community wealth-building – keeping more of the council's pound within the borough, growing local businesses, raising local wages and lifting residents out of poverty.

## **8. Statutory Officers comments**

### **8.1 Finance**

As this is an update report, for noting, there are no immediate financial implications to highlight. Any financial implications arising from the Borough Plan refresh report, planned for June Cabinet, will be addressed at that time.

### **8.2 Procurement**

The contents of the report are noted. The implications for procurement occur at market to ensure that social, and economical considerations are designed in the procurement process to deliver these objectives.

### **8.3 Legal**

The Head of Legal & Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and in noting that this is an updating report, has no comments.

### **8.4 Equality**

8.4.1 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
- c. Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

8.4.2 The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status apply to the first part of the duty.

8.4.3 Cabinet are asked to note progress in implementing Fairness Commission recommendations and the plan to set out how Fairness Commission recommendations will be implemented as part of the Borough Plan refresh, due to come to Cabinet for decision in June 2021.

8.4.4 The overall objective of the recommendations is to promote fairness and equality in Haringey and address inequalities that have been identified through research, consultation, and engagement with Haringey's communities and partner organisations. Noting the recommendations therefore affords the Council an opportunity to consider steps to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between communities.

8.4.5 A report will be presented to Cabinet in June that sets how it intends to implement Fairness Commission implementations, as part of the Borough Plan refresh process. When considering the recommendations and planning their implementation, the Council will have due regard for the three aims of the public sector equality duty. The June report will note the implications of the and implementation of the recommendations for the Council's public sector equality duty. Equalities Impact Assessments will be undertaken where appropriate.

## **9. Use of Appendices**

Appendix A: Fairness Commission recommendations: progress so far

Appendix B: Fairness Commission recommendations

## **10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

Council response to Haringey Fairness Commission, 10 March 2020:  
<https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s115067/Fairness%20Commis-sion%20March%20Cabinet%20Report%201%20march%202020.pdf>

Recovery and Renewal: report to inform the refresh of the Borough Plan  
<https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s120026/Borough%20Plan%20refresh%20Dec%20report%20Cabinet%20301120%20FINAL.pdf>