

Brighton & Hove Fairness Commission

Terms of reference

Why have a Fairness Commission?

Brighton & Hove is regarded by many as one of the thriving cities of the UK, booming socially, culturally and economically. It is a well-deserved reputation built on its unique natural landscape, its world class heritage and the spirit of its citizens over generations.

However, for many, the reality of life in Brighton & Hove is a struggle. A struggle to afford to live where housing and living costs are high but jobs are predominantly low paid. Where a lack of skills and poor physical or mental health prevent people from entering the labour market.

As the city's fortunes grow, more people will be attracted here. At the same time less money will be available for public services and to individuals, in the form of welfare. If we don't respond collectively the needs of a changing population may not be met and we risk more people, especially vulnerable people, being left further behind.

Perceptions of unfairness are also important because they can fuel tensions, distrust and conflict, even if the perception is not an accurate reflection of real inequalities.

This is why a Brighton & Hove Fairness Commission will be formed, to ensure that everyone, no matter where they live in the city, has a share in its economic success, and that everyone has the opportunity to lead healthy and productive lives in financial security and in cohesive communities. Brighton & Hove City Council will work with its many partners to use the findings of the commission to create effective and sustainable public services, better positioned alongside communities to work with them for their own health and wellbeing and that of the city as a whole.

What will the commission do?

The commission will be an independent body tasked by Brighton & Hove City Council. It will work to reach conclusions about how the council, public services and the city should better work together to improve life for citizens.

These are to:

- Examine existing data and analysis to map poverty and inequality in Brighton & Hove
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing council strategies, with partners, to deal with poverty and inequality
- Engage with stakeholders outside of the council and citizens to understand people's experiences and priorities
- Examine how the council, with partners, can make significant, tangible improvements to reducing poverty and inequality

- Make specific and practical recommendations based on the findings of this process
- Produce ways of checking and measuring the impact of public services to address poverty and inequality
- Charge the council, with partners through Brighton & Hove Connected, to act on the recommendations of the commission in service delivery and budget setting.

Who will be on the commission?

The commission will have up to 12 members including a Chair and a Deputy Chair. The Chair will be an independent person who will provide strong leadership around the agenda and set the strategic direction. The Chair of the council's Neighbourhoods, Communities & Equalities Committee will sit as an observer on the commission, as will an observer from each political group. Professional specialisms of members will include (but are not restricted to) child poverty, the community & voluntary sector, community safety and cohesion, early years' provision, employment and skills, financial inclusion, health inequality, housing affordability, homelessness and transport.

What will the role of members be?

All members will be asked to fully participate in all of the commission meetings and activities, which include:

- shaping the detailed aims and work programme of the commission
- creating, promoting and participating in inclusive engagement activities
- listening to and representing the views of people who experience inequality and poverty
- reviewing and constructively debating the evidence and views presented to the commission
- identifying practical ways to make Brighton & Hove a fairer place, working collaboratively across different sectors to reduce inequality
- considering ways to foster greater cohesion in communities and greater trust and collaboration between citizens and public sector organisations
- shaping, agreeing and publicising the findings and the recommendations of the commission
- acting as 'fairness champions', responsible for taking the recommendations back to their own organisations and using spheres of influence to ensure implementation

In addition, the Chair will preside over proceedings at commission meetings and supervise progress in between meetings on a planned and ad hoc basis. A Deputy Chair will be agreed by the commission to chair proceedings in the event that the Chair is unavailable.

How will the commission conduct its work?

The three fundamental governing principles of the commission will be independent enquiry, engaging and including people, and evidence of what works:

- **Independent enquiry**

Members of the commission will be selected on the basis that they operate outside of the council but with an understanding of the services provided by the council and other public services. Members are asked to act and contribute objectively in the interests of the city and citizens, bringing fresh insight into the causes and impacts of inequality.

The commission will also invite a range of expert witnesses from across sectors and communities within the city, and potentially from elsewhere, in order to shape the direction of its work and inform the final recommendations.

- **Engaging and including people**

The commission will seek to engage with and include a wide and reflective sample of the city's population. It is vital that personal experience, as well as more formal evidence, becomes part of the understanding of what will make the city fairer.

The commission will make sure people can engage in its work in ways that they wish to and feel safe to do so, be it in person, through social media or anonymously. Public meetings will be accessible.

The commission will make particular effort to reach out to people with multiple needs who often find it hard to make their voices heard, and communities encouraged to instigate their own discussions to feed back.

As the commission progresses its work will be communicated openly, which will generate greater understanding of its aims and opportunities to feed into its findings.

- **Evidence of what works**

The commission is asked not only to identify the issues which cause and are caused by inequality and poverty, but to make recommendations which are built on what has worked elsewhere. This might be actions delivered through the work of other fairness commissions or other initiatives.

The findings of the commission must meaningfully help and shape the transformation of services and spending plans for the council, along with the long term sustainability of public services as a whole for the city.

What will the commission look at?

To make this process manageable within the set timeframe, given the potential breadth of the subject, the commission will need to theme its work and focus on particular areas for enquiry. Potential themes will include employment and skills, financial inclusion, housing, transport, health and wellbeing.

The commission will focus on areas where there is the greatest potential for the council, with partners, to influence the best and fairest outcomes for citizens. This will be through the use of local powers and resources or by using our voice regionally and nationally, for example through the Greater Brighton platform.

The final work programme for the commission will be determined by its members.

How much will the commission cost?

The work of the commission will bear no extra cost to the public purse. Members of the commission will give their time within their professional remit or voluntarily. They will be reimbursed for any basic costs associated with travel or subsistence associated with the commission, but this will only be where necessary. Resources from the council to support the work of the commission will be met within existing capacity and resources.

How long will the commission take?

Final agreement for the establishment of the commission and its terms of reference will be given in July 2015. The commission will meet on a limited number of occasions and report its findings and recommendations by May 2016.

The breadth of issues the commission agrees to look at will determine how many times the commission comes together and frequency of any other events or evidence gathering sessions they may require.

Who will monitor delivery of the commission's recommendations?

Once the commission reports its findings, relevant committees of the council will consider them with a view to adopting the proposals and agreeing reporting mechanisms to monitor progress against all of the recommendations.

For more information please read the full report on the establishment of the Brighton & Hove Fairness Commission.

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