

Crawley Borough Council

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Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 5 October 2015

Report to Cabinet 7 October 2015

Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel Final Report

Report by the Chair of the Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel:
Councillor K Sudan
OSC/242

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Financial Deprivation Scrutiny Panel, which was wound up in early 2014, established that relative deprivation (eg in terms of income, health outcomes, educational attainment, for instance) was an issue both within Crawley and between Crawley and its environs. The Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel was established to “investigate the viability of establishing Crawley’s own Standing Commission on Fairness in the Borough to influence and inform the Council and its partnership working”. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission resolved to establish the Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel in order to progress additional evidence and scope.
- 1.2 The Panel formally met 5 times between November 2014 and September 2015. The Members of the Panel were:
Councillors: MG Jones (Chair), C A Cheshire and G Thomas. Substitute Councillor M W Picket, with a change of membership in May 2015, Councillors: K Sudan (Chair), C A Cheshire, G Thomas. Substitute Councillor W A Ward.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.
- 2.2 To the Cabinet:

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the actions and recommendations set out in Section 7.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 Following the Panel’s investigations, the findings obtained showed there is a vast amount of work currently being undertaken throughout the Council and its partner agencies. In some cases this placed Crawley in a more advanced position than other authorities looking to establish a Fairness Commission. There would be value in drawing this information together

to understand individual's needs and assist in steering service priorities and future partnership working.

- 3.2 Evidence had been scrutinised from a wide variety of sources including other authorities' Fairness Commissions, CCG data, Census data, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Health Inequality Profile and Tackling Child Poverty in West Sussex. It was acknowledged that data and information is currently available for analysis.
- 3.3 It is vital to achieve clarity and understanding. It became apparent throughout discussions that Members were not always aware of the work being undertaken and it highlighted that information needed to be co-ordinated and shared as this could assist different agencies involved in addressing issues in a more effective way. Furthermore, any additional information would inform Members on the current work of the community and voluntary service and initiatives that could aid neighbourhood work.
- 3.4 As a consequence of the vast amount of work currently taking place in Crawley the terms of reference for the Panel had changed from its original scoping framework. The Panel did not believe there was viability of *establishing Crawley's own Standing Commission on Fairness in the Borough to influence and inform the Council and its partnership working*. The full Fairness Commission model resides better with '1st tier' authorities and therefore Model 1 (Appendix A) was eliminated. Notwithstanding this, it was acknowledged that the current arrangements are not always sufficient and there may be gaps in service provision and/or support and the Panel took the opportunity to investigate further.

4. Background - The Panel's investigations and information gathering

- 4.1 The initial scope of the review was to identify evidence of relative deprivation and understand the corresponding needs throughout the town. Its purpose was to explore ways of developing outcomes within the Council which may assist in steering or influencing service priorities, whilst also reviewing the partnership working and identifying any improvements. Ultimately the Panel would establish the viability for a Fairness Commission for Crawley.

Methods of investigation

Witnesses as listed below were invited to address the Panel

- 4.2 As the most appropriate representatives identified through the Scoping Framework, the following people attended witness sessions:

Lindsay Adams – Community Development Manager, CBC
Rachel Booles – Chief Executive, Crawley Community and Voluntary Services (CCVS)
Carrie Burton – Transformation Manager, CBC
David Clay - Senior Development Officer, Crawley Community and Voluntary Services (CCVS)
Lee Furlong - Client Services Manager, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
Lisa Phillips - Senior Outreach Officer, Crawley Community and Voluntary Services (CCVS)

5. Findings

This section contains the views of the representatives.

The nature and extent of the current issues:

- 5.1 CAB confirmed that presently a large majority of concerns relate to benefit issues. There is a concern with debt, mostly around the use of credit, which has been well reported and it is important to assist people to manage their situations. The service would like to complete more preventative work in order to assist people manage their budgets. It was highlighted that problems with benefit payments result in debt which in turn also result in difficulties with housing. This is time consuming work for the service to address.
- 5.2 CCVS provides the majority of support to voluntary organisations and stated that these organisations are seeing an increase in demand for their services. There are additionally small community groups emerging that are attempting to tackle issues. It was commented that there needs to be an awareness of the wider voluntary sector and how it acts as a central point to provide training and capacity building. Communication could be improved further through the Council offering groups resources, connections and other assistance; providing a voice and support not previously experienced. It would be of paramount importance that agencies work together and CBC has a role in harnessing resources in the most effective way.
- 5.3 It was discussed that perhaps it would be beneficial to focus on the available data and the evidence as this would highlight the issues. CCVS currently hosts various forums which discuss common concerns, collate data and inform virtual reference groups which feed into services and partner organisations. These forums already highlight the relevant data, and it would therefore be important and beneficial to encourage and develop the partnership working already in place.
- 5.4 Both CAB and CCVS commented when asked that due to its location some people had difficulty accessing the services.
- 5.5 Another issue highlighted by both agencies was mental health concerns. This has become a top priority identified in the Local Picture data and has an impact on individuals' capacity to manage situations. The Transformation Manager updated the Panel that the Community Safety Partnership had applied for funding for a Community Mental Health Worker to work with the Housing and Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams and this post was currently being advertised.
- 5.6 Officers from CCVS highlighted that any structure proposed would need to add value and 'buy-in' would need to be sought from the community and voluntary organisations regarding any potential benefits and impact.

6. Information and Analysis

- 6.1 The wide ranging research into existing and emerging Fairness Commissions was not as productive as hoped in providing examples of practical, focused solutions. This was due to a lack of published final reports of work completed.
- 6.2 Areas identified by Members which a Fairness Commission for Crawley may wish to look at included issues relating to debt, food, personal finances, problems for people on benefits (including the effects of sanctions) and people with learning difficulties and their access to services. Other areas which it was noted had been looked at by other Fairness Commissions included Food Banks, Job Clubs, schools, young carers' support groups and the potentially marginalised. Unemployment, benefits and skills had also been considered.

Some examples considered included:

Benefits

- 6.3 The Systems Thinking Re-design of Benefits has been examining and improving some of the issues. The Re-design team has been trialling taking in all new claims at Face to Face and over the phone, whilst giving customers a choice of contact. The Team has trialled operating on a 'case by case' basis, dealing with what is necessary to make an accurate assessment based on individual circumstances. The team was able to make a decision and offer discretionary housing payments at the point of contact with the customer, in order to help those most in need. Additionally the team attended Housing sign ups to provide customers with information and to explain their entitlement.

Food Banks

- 6.4 In terms of food banks, there is no 'traditional' food bank in Crawley. However, there are several organisations which provide food related crisis support. There are also other organisations which do not provide food services as a core activity, but sometimes provide emergency food to clients which can distribute food vouchers or emergency supplies. Many charities and organisations have formed a collective to distribute food.

Employment/Skills

- 6.5 Employment growth in the sub-region over the 1997-2013 period had been lower than the regional average but higher than the LEP area overall; Crawley recorded job growth, 5.5% and also had the highest recorded unemployment rate, 6.7% (ONS Annual Population Survey 2013). However, the average weekly earnings (resident based) was lower in Crawley, £510 (Mean gross average weekly earnings, based on Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2012). Additionally, the proportion of residents with higher level qualifications was significantly below average in Crawley, 26.9% (Equivalent to NVQ level 4 and above, ONS Annual Population Survey 2012).
- 6.6 The Council recently launched the Crawley Developer and Partner Charter to help maximise local opportunities from development and investment in Crawley for the benefit of the town's people, companies and communities. The charter is based on six core principles:
1. Aim to source labour from within the local community
 2. Contribute to raising aspirations, educational attainment and skills levels
 3. Improve the competitiveness and sustainability of smaller and locally based firms
 4. Inspire residents, visitors and potential investors in Crawley with the intentions, plans, progress and outcomes of development and investment
 5. Promote good and sustainable development and construction practices
 6. Encourage sub-contractors and suppliers to commit to the principles of the charter
- 6.7 Once signed up, developers and partners will need to demonstrate their willingness to employ local people, create local supplier opportunities and contribute to raising skills for people in the area.
- 6.8 Examples include committing to providing apprenticeships, promoting opportunities for local businesses to provide services and materials, keeping local people well-informed, supporting local initiatives and working closely with local organisations like Central Sussex College and secondary schools to promote the value of skills and training.
- 6.9 A key area of work focusing on skills and unemployment/employment will be the Council's work in furthering a local resident workforce skills development programme (in particular working with Central Sussex College) to strengthen employability which may assist in addressing inequality (and fairness) in the town.
- 6.10 A Skills Development Plan is due to be reported to Cabinet December 2015.

- 6.11 The Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015 – 2030, Monitoring and Implementation Framework document addresses employment as a significant issue. The key indicators set out in this Framework for these policies will be monitored internally on a monthly basis, with updated information published twice a year. If early warning signs indicate that the policies are failing to deliver the anticipated outcomes, the Council will be in a position to put into place appropriate intervention measures.
- 6.12 It was noted there is a lack of awareness and understanding surrounding Council services, and that there could be more Member input in some of these areas. There would be value in drawing information together to understand the needs and assist in steering priorities and future partnership working.
- 6.13 Knowledge gained by CCVS and CAB is currently an underused resource. Member attendance at CCVS Forums would be welcomed and could lead to specific ‘task and finish’ work if collaboration were viable, to add value.
- 6.14 To enhance Member understanding it has been agreed that ‘The Local Picture’ (issued by CCVS) would be issued to Democratic Services to forward on to all Members. CCVS has welcomed this change. An all Members’ seminar was also arranged on the current work of the community and voluntary service.
- 6.15 Practical progress could be perhaps be made on a smaller scale and the Council could offer groups resources, connections and other assistance; providing a voice and support not previously experienced. It would be of paramount importance that agencies work together and the Council has a role in harnessing resources in the most effective way.
- 6.16 Following consultation with representatives and officers, the Panel devised several possible models in advance of seeking the views from both political Group Leaders, together with those of CCVS and CAB. A copy of the models initially proposed is attached as Appendix A. It was hoped this would ascertain whether there would be value in drawing information together to understand the needs and assist in steering priorities and future partnership working.

7. Effective Solutions and Recommendations

7.1 The Panel has proposed the following as the most likely and effective solutions:

a) Favoured Model

It was discussed that perhaps an enhanced approach could be a way forward – model 3 (or a hybrid). Model 3 does not involve setting up a Fairness Commission. Feedback received was that a model 3 could allow organisations to develop links with a wider set of groups in the borough to address inequality, accessibility and deprivation.

This was with an acknowledgement that there are gaps within service provision/advice. An analysis of data/evidence is required to ensure a comprehensive examination to focus resources and service priorities.

The various views were expressed from recipients on the preferred model (model 3), with the majority opting for a mixed approach.

Enhance the current arrangements

- Agencies work together, with CBC having a role in harnessing resources in the most effective way. This would result in added value and avoid duplication of work and effort.
- CBC (Members) to work more closely with a variety of organisations and partners, (in particular CCVS Forums) to identify topics for further analysis. These topics could be assessed via a task and finish group, with Member attendance to improve communication and strengthen their voice.

- CBC (Members) could offer groups resources, connections and other assistance; providing a voice and support not previously experienced.
- Enhanced Member attendance at CCVS Forum meetings to improve communication. Council Members can attend a Forum meeting at any time.
- Improved support provision for external organisations.

Given the amount of work currently being undertaken within Crawley, and the work programmed to take effect resulting from the Local Plan and the Council's Economic Development Team it was felt that the establishing of a Fairness Commission would result in duplication of the excellent work that is already taking place within the town, and resource implications (officer and financial) would still be required in setting up a Commission.

Furthermore, it was felt that the formation of a Standing Committee may replicate the Local Strategic Partnership (Crawley Together) which existed between 2001-2007 and was resource intensive. It was felt that a Standing Committee would be 're-inventing the wheel' as the town has evolved and was therefore questioned whether it would be advantageous. Reviewing issues, positive outcomes and benefits potentially could be achieved by other means.

That being said, provision was discussed to highlight issues and this may offer an opportunity to involve the public, third and commercial sectors, providing an opportunity to review issues affecting the whole of Crawley. It was felt this provision (proposed as a 'Community Needs Panel') could maintain a structure and may be beneficial once the Community Profile is produced.

A recommended structure for a 'Community Needs Panel' (working title) is identified below in Figure 1.

This would allow Members to obtain further insight into the issues affecting the community, using evidenced based analysis and data. It could allow some Members to have a role in championing the work, co-ordinate and highlight issues further when working with partner agencies or other organisations (eg WSCC) by being able to challenge current operations.

Members attending the CCVS Forums would be able to have up to date information and be able to discuss the Local Picture information, information from the Forums and have an insight into the community's needs via their own perspective as a Councillor. By working with CBC officers who would also be able to bring data (including the Community Profile data), evidence and current service issues the 'Community Needs Panel' would be able to highlight any corresponding priorities, issues or actions. Additional voluntary and other organisations could be invited to the meeting if additional information/evidence or discussion was required. Actions could be followed by email update and reviewed at the next meeting.

It was acknowledged that any structure formulated (Community Needs Panel) would need to be administered and supported within a service department where the officers are experienced and knowledgeable. In accordance with report LDS/103 that was agreed by Cabinet on 8 July 2015, the service department would have ownership of the entire process ("single piece of flow") and also more importantly following the main Systems Thinking Review methodology it is paramount that "the right resource in the right place". Consequently any new structure would need to be the responsibility of a service department, using the Corporate Support Team (if appropriate).

CCVS + Other Vol Orgs

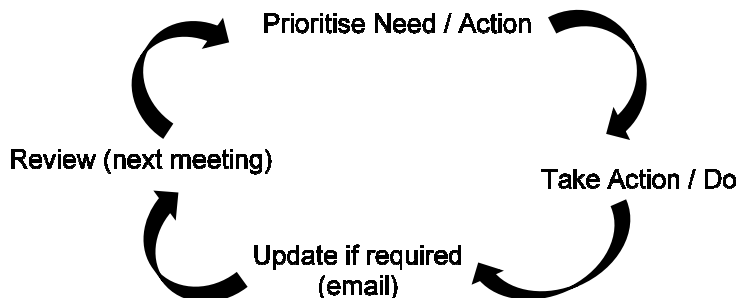
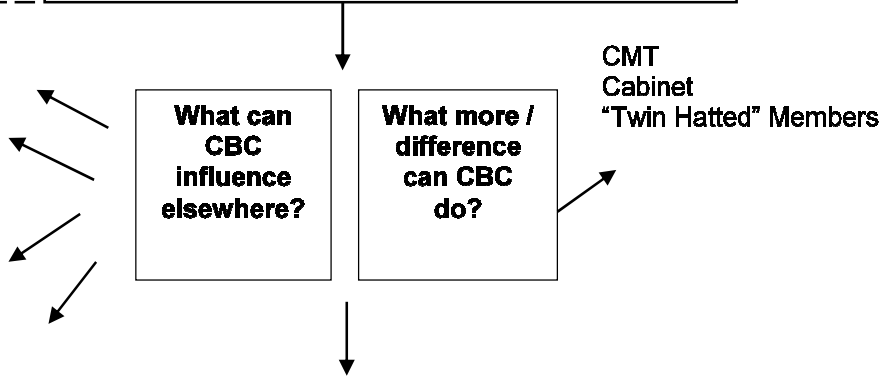
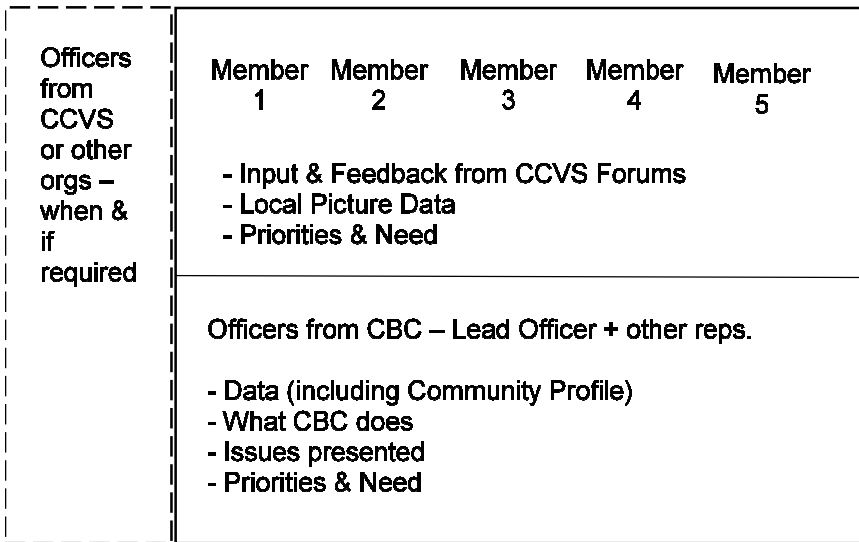
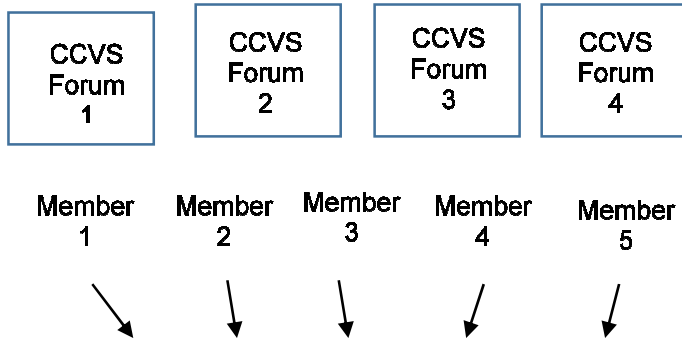


Figure 1 - Recommended structure for a 'Community Needs Panel' (working title).

b) **Improved Communication**

Improved communication regarding the current work of community, voluntary organisations and the Council would prove advantageous. It has been agreed that 'The Local Picture' (distributed by CCVS) would be issued to Democratic Services to be included in the Members' Information Bulletin.

c) **Awareness and Appreciation**

Increased awareness of the current work of the voluntary organisations and CCVS forums would also prove beneficial. In 2014 over 200 groups accessed at least one of the services provided by CCVS. An all Members' seminar took place on 16 July 2015 to inform Members on how the voluntary and community sector responds to local needs and issues; and the development support that is available to encourage community initiatives. The seminar was run by Community Development and CCVS (Crawley Community Voluntary Service) and provided an overview of the local picture, together with the community need.

Information was also provided on how to 'tap into' services and how to 'signpost', as well as the opportunity to become better informed on the Neighbourhood Network, CCVS Forums and the opportunities provided by other services.

d) **Data**

During the Scrutiny Panel meetings it became apparent that the latest data is paramount in order to analyse, interpret and prioritise. Panel Members discussed the need for a new Community Profile, which would compile data from a variety of sources and assist in targeting service priorities. Following discussions with the Transformation Manager, work is taking place for this to be resourced and will be a significant document providing specific data and a comprehensive analysis to focus resources and services priorities.

8. Implications

- 8.1 It is recommended that a test case of Local Picture/Community Profile data is carried out and a specific issue is identified. It is intended that the proposed structure is run as a pilot. It is recognised by Panel Members, CCVS and officers that any new structure proposed will only be successful if it adds value.
- 8.2 The Panel has been mindful throughout the review to have a minimal impact on services and the voluntary sector. It was therefore felt that the recommendations proposed would result in a more "involving and encompassing" process for Members.
- 8.3 That being said, there may be additional resource time required following any adoption of a structure/Panel. However, the service areas would have 'informed background' knowledge. There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

9. Background Papers

[Crawley Borough Council Local Plan 2015-2030 Monitoring and Implementation Framework](#)
[Crawley Developer and Partner Charter](#)
[Minutes – Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel 24.11.14](#)
[Minutes – Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel 15.1.15](#)
[Minutes – Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel 19.2.15](#)
[Minutes – Fairness Commission Scrutiny Panel 2.7.15](#)
[Northern West Sussex Economic Growth Assessment Main Report](#)
[Town Hall Utilisation and Refurbishment report – Cabinet 14.1.15](#)

10. Panel Membership and thanks

- 10.1 The Panel would like to thank all the witnesses and officers who gave up their time to attend the various Panel meetings, and for their valued comments, views and advice. Although this has been a relatively short scrutiny Panel, it had attempted to address a practical problem in an inclusive way.

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Potential Models for Fairness Commission

1. **Formal Fairness Commission consisting of public meetings.**

- Composed of an unspecified number of councillors, together with invited individuals including external organisations and groups with proven knowledge and expertise (rather than specific interests).
- Continue to support and promote agencies, encourage and promote activity.
- To prepare a report for publication.
- Make recommendations to the Council and other key bodies about what short and long term measures are required. The priority should be to identify those actions that can be taken by the borough itself and those which require external intervention, or a combination of both.

2. **A Standing Committee**

- Formal structure (similar to the LSP/Crawley Together).
- Composed of an unspecified number of councillors, together with invited individuals from external organisations and groups with proven knowledge and expertise.
- This model would be issue led, but would be an open-ended committee going forward, with a general remit to look into measures relating to inequality, accessibility and deprivation.

3. **Enhance the current arrangements**

- Agencies work together, with CBC having a role in harnessing resources in the most effective way. This would result in added value and avoid duplication of work and effort.
- CBC (Members) to work more closely with a variety of organisations and partners, (in particular CCVS Forums) to identify topics for further analysis. These topics could be assessed via a task and finish group, with Member attendance to improve communication and strengthen their voice.
- CBC (Members) could offer groups resources, connections and other assistance; providing a voice and support not previously experienced.
- Enhanced Member attendance at CCVS Forum meetings to improve communication. Council Members can attend a Forum meeting at any time.
- Improved support provision for external organisations.

4. **No change from the current arrangements**