

Crawley Borough Council

**Minutes of Social Mobility Scrutiny Panel**

Wednesday, 3 October 2018 at 6.00 pm

**Councillors Present:**

K Sudan (Chair)

M L Ayling, T G Belben, R S Fiveash, I T Irvine, K L Jaggard and L Vitler

**Officers Present:**

Heather Girling	Democratic Services Officer
Chris Harris	Head of Community Services

**1. Disclosures of Interest & Whipping Declarations**

No disclosures or whipping declarations were made.

**2. Minutes**

The minutes of the Social Mobility Scrutiny Panel held on 11 September 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3. General Updates**

The Chair updated Panel Members on work that had been recently undertaken:

- The Chair had recently met with the Head of Langley Green Primary School. There was support for the suggestion that careers advice should ideally commence at an early stage in primary schools.
- There will be a further meeting with the Head of Three Bridges next week and Chair would feedback to the Panel.

**4. Additional Information**

Panel Members reviewed the scope of the Panel's work in preparation for completing the review. It was recognised the wide ranging scope and that it was important to acknowledge that not every issue would be able to be rectified. The Panel focused on where it would be able to add value.

It reflected on measuring 'success' and whether this was linked to a monetary value, occupation, living conditions or being socially mobile. It was suggested that 'success' could be individually determined.

It was queried whether the Social Mobility Index data appropriately summarised Crawley's position or whether there was further data that contradicted this or highlighted improvement. An example being the WSCC data for KS2 disadvantaged

pupils shows improvement over 3 years (2016-2018), a distinct narrowing in the gap between the national disadvantaged others and Crawley disadvantaged figures (29.5, 25.3, 17.9). Additionally only 24% of Crawley residents were in professional occupations compared to the South East average of 23%. This was a decrease from the 2014 Crawley figure of 37% (NOMIS).

The Panel recognised the three areas identified – as specifically identified through the Social Mobility Index; Housing, Employment and Education and acknowledged that there were overlaps between them. These affected “life chances” and it was paramount that effort was made to fulfil potential and ensure everyone was given a chance to fulfil their aspirations and ambitions.

Each area was discussed in detail:

### Housing

It was recognised that the borough was one of the most expensive places to live in the UK (income related to housing costs), however the Council was committed to building affordable housing. There was an acknowledgement that there were limitations as to what the Council could do to ease the situation.

Discussions took place surrounding temporary accommodation as it was highlighted the importance of having a fixed location to find employment. It was noted that a change in the Housing Allocations Scheme in 2017 likely achieved a greater turnover of temporary accommodation stock and fewer out of borough placements. Placing households out of borough can be disruptive for those who attend work, school, college in Crawley and who are dependent on local support networks.

### Employment

The Panel was of the view that it would be beneficial to attract further employers to the town. The Council had 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 was based on six core principles:

- Aim to source labour from within the local community
- Contribute to raising aspirations, educational attainment and skills levels
- Improve the competitiveness and sustainability of smaller and locally based firms
- Inspire residents, visitors and potential investors in Crawley with the intentions, plans, progress and outcomes of development and investment
- Promote good and sustainable development and construction practices
- Encourage sub-contractors and suppliers to commit to the principles of the charter

Panel Members welcomed the fact that the charter represented a willingness of those who sign up to use reasonable endeavours to meet and publicise progress against these. Developers and partners signing up to the charter were issued with a charter certificate by the council. This enabled both the council and signatories to publicly demonstrate and illustrate their commitment and support for the charter.

Zero-hour contracts together with self-employment were discussed at length and it was recognised that in some instances certain contracts can create insecurity and this resulted in an impact on people’s lives.

Panel Members expressed support for the work of Employ Crawley which ensured customers could access one to one support from a single point of contact, advice about finding work and how to secure job, direct from employers. It also provided access to unique workshops and courses delivered by specialists.

## Education

Panel Members identified that it was paramount that everyone was given a chance to fulfil their aspirations and ambitions. It was felt that some careers advice was inconsistent and this should ideally commence at an early stage in primary schools. Members felt that input into the Junior Citizen scheme would prove beneficial in addressing this. The scheme run by the Council was open to all 10 and 11 year olds. It teaches children how to recognise and deal with all kinds of potentially dangerous situations while also helping them learn valuable life skills to encourage responsible citizenship. Consideration of incorporating careers advice into the Junior Citizen scheme would be advantageous.

Additionally further promotion was required with regards to free school meals as this benefits both pupils and schools. Schools receive additional funding from the government for each child registered for free school meals.

It was recognised by the Panel that the percentage of permanent exclusions was increasing, particularly for secondary schools pupils. Yet maintaining children in education was key and it was questioned if resources could be involved at an earlier stage. It was commented that the alternative provision service worked well but there was disappointment that it did not continue past the age of 16.

There was support for continuing work through 'Be the Change' project which had been undertaken for several years. "Be the Change" was a programme aimed at students who, for one reason or another, may have become disengaged with school or lack confidence in their own abilities; who may struggle academically, but have real potential once engaged in an activity that captures their imagination. The programme focused on happiness, confidence, hope, relationships and employability and encourages students to identify their personal barriers to success, before helping them find ways of overcoming them. It assisted in providing the student with career opportunities in their home town and beyond. It also provided an opportunity for businesses to engage with their future workforce, building awareness of their employer brand amongst young people in their local area.

## 5. Recommendations and Preparation of Report

The Panel discussed the preparation of the report. It was agreed that a draft report would be compiled incorporating the proposals as discussed and agreed. The report would be circulated to enable comments to be incorporated into the final version for a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet in February 2019.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank those Panel Members for their input into the review together with the Lead Officer and Democratic Services Officer for their support.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That consideration be given to incorporating careers advice into the Junior Citizen Scheme run by the Council.
2. That further promotion should take place with regards to free school meals as this benefits both pupils and schools. Schools receive additional funding from the government for each child registered for free school meals.

3. That the final report would be prepared by the Lead Officer for reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet in February 2019.

**Closure of Meeting**

With the business of the Social Mobility Scrutiny Panel concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.25pm

**K Sudan  
Chair**