

REPORT TO:	CABINET 22nd February 2016
AGENDA ITEM:	6
SUBJECT:	Opportunity and Fairness Commission Report: A Better Croydon
LEAD OFFICER:	Sarah Ireland Director of Strategy, Communities and Commissioning
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Mark Watson Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice
WARDS:	All

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT:

The work of the Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission supports the Council's ambition to reduce inequality and promote fairness for all of its communities by working with partners in the public, business and voluntary sectors in order to secure better outcomes for all.

AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON AND WHY ARE WE DOING THIS:

In an economic climate where public services face cuts, fairness and inclusion matters more than ever. The work of the Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission supports the Council's ambition to reduce inequality and promote opportunity and fairness for all of our communities by working with partners in the public, business and voluntary sectors in order to secure better outcomes for all.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no additional costs, savings or efficiencies associated with this report.

KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO:

This is not a key executive decision.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to consider and agree the Council's :

- Response to the key themes and recommendations that have been put forward by the Opportunity and Fairness Commission (OFC) in its final report <http://www.opportunitycroydon.org/> (Appendix printed separately for Council Members), as detailed in section 4 of this report.
- Current activities that are being delivered or are included / to be included in the

Council's forward plan that will to help reduce inequality and promote fairness in the borough

- Key policy developments that will embed the themes of the OFC further over the next 12 months

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission (OFC) published its final report on 28th January 2016. The report highlights the key inequality and fairness challenges for the borough and presents recommendations on how these can be addressed by the Council and our statutory, voluntary and community sector partners.
- 2.2 The recommendations in the report are presented under the following six broad themes:
- Vibrant, responsible and connected communities
 - A town centre that lifts the whole borough
 - Leaving no child behind
 - Finding homes for all
 - A connected borough where no one is isolated
 - Supporting residents towards better times
- 2.3 The Commission's view is that the Council and local partners should use the above themes and supporting recommendations to develop targeted interventions to advance fairness and opportunity for residents (particularly for those that are currently disadvantaged) and deliver a sustainable and meaningful change in Croydon.
- 2.4 The Council accepts the findings of the Opportunity and Fairness Commission report and supports the themes and recommendations identified by the Commission and notes that there is strong alignment with the "Ambitious for Croydon" vision and priorities as set out in the corporate plan and supporting strategies.
- 2.5 The Council also agrees with the Commission's suggestion that the Council and partners in the statutory, community, voluntary and the business sector have a shared responsibility for taking forward the Opportunity and Fairness Commission recommendations.
- 2.6 We endorse the Commissions view that the Council as an enabler will work closely with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to take on a leadership role in working with residents to co-produce and deliver sustainable initiatives to address the key fairness and inequality challenges that the residents in the borough face.

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 Context

3.1.1 The current economic climate, coupled with the impact of wide reaching welfare reforms, reductions in public sector funding and other social factors have led to an increase in inequality and poverty in the borough. Croydon is currently ranked in the 100 most deprived places in the country and 17th out of 33 London boroughs (including the City of London) in terms of overall deprivation. It has some neighbourhoods with low levels of disadvantage and others that are amongst the most deprived in England.

3.1.2 Croydon, like other places in London and elsewhere, is experiencing significant demographic change which, at a time of economic constraint has significant implications for social and economic policy, resource allocation and service provision. Croydon shares similar demographic, economic and social characteristics with both inner and outer London boroughs but also faces unique challenges such as:

- One of largest boroughs in London in terms of overall population
- One of the largest populations of children and young people
- One of the highest proportions of black and minority ethnic groups in South London, and one that is rapidly growing
- Increasing deprivation relative to other authorities with significant areas of entrenched inequality.

3.1.3 The key inequality challenges that Croydon faces include:

- Deprivation experienced by people living in the borough, in particular neighbourhoods in the north as well as New Addington and Fieldway
- Growing social and economic pressures including food and fuel poverty and social isolation
- The proportion of children in child poverty is improving. However, the large population of children that we have in the borough means that we remain high in terms of the total number of children in poverty.
- Lack of affordable housing and a rising trend in homelessness
- Youth unemployment and lack of opportunities for people, especially those aged between 16 – 24 to be in education, training or employment
- High economic inactivity in areas of the borough
- Health inequalities across the borough including obesity in children and adults, individuals and families with complex needs such as poor mental and physical health and drug and alcohol problems
- Ensuring that growth and regeneration is sustainable and inclusive
- Violent crime - especially domestic abuse and sexual violence and serious youth violence
- Anti-social behaviour including hate crime and fear of crime

3.2 The Opportunity and Fairness Commission

- 3.2.1 The Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission was set up in January 2015, as an independent body in order to investigate the key inequality and poverty challenges that residents in the borough face and in the context of continuing budget cuts consider how the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership can use its resources in a more effective and targeted way to address these challenges. .
- 3.2.2 The Commission was chaired by the Bishop of Croydon, Rt. Rev Jonathan Clark, who along with 13 volunteer commissioners led work on a year-long programme of engagement with local people, members of the voluntary, community and business sectors and statutory service providers.
- 3.2.3 The Council is extremely grateful to the Chair and members of the Opportunity and Fairness Commission (including the Young Opportunity and Fairness Commission) who have voluntarily committed their time, their experience and their expertise to listening to the views of over 3000 people and developing the recommendations that have been put forward in the report. The Council also wishes to thank the many individuals, groups and organisations within the borough that gave their time and contributed their ideas to support the Commission's work.

4. CROYDON COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

- 4.1 The Council accepts the findings of the Opportunity and Fairness Commission report and supports the suggested themes and key issues identified by the Commission. We note that there is strong alignment with the "Ambitious for Croydon" vision and priorities as set out in the corporate plan and supporting strategies.
- 4.2 The Council also agrees with Commission's suggestion that the Council and partners in the statutory, community, voluntary and the business sectors have a shared responsibility for taking forward work on the suggested themes and key issues that are set out in the Opportunity and Fairness Commission report.
- 4.3 We endorse the Commissions view that the Council and the LSP should work in close partnership and agree to taking on a leadership role in working with residents to co-produce and deliver sustainable initiatives that can address the key fairness and inequality challenges that the residents in the borough face.
- 4.4 The Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission report, along with the 2015 borough profile and the Indices of Multiple Deprlvation (IMD) provide the Council with a detailed and robust evidence base for the strategic inequality, fairness, deprivation and cohesion challenges that we need to focus on.
- 4.4 The Council will take on an enabling role to ensure that OFC report recommendations are considered and embedded through a review and update of Croydon's borough wide plans. In particular, we will take a lead role in embedding the themes and outcomes in the development of the new Community Strategy and the supporting delivery plans. The Commission's work will underpin the development of the equality and inclusion policy which will include new equality objectives that will be set for April 2016. In addition, a section of key related indicators measuring implementation and progress will be embedded within the Ambitious for Croydon performance framework. Finally, the Council will present a

progress report to cabinet outlining how we have taken forward the themes and recommendations set out in the OFC report.

4.5 OFC report themes - summary of current Council activity and those included in the forward plan

4.5.1 The section below provides a summary of the activities that are currently being delivered by the Council to address the inequality and fairness themes highlighted by the OFC. It also describes the policy developments that are or will be included in our forward plan to further embed the themes of the OFC.

4.5.2 Theme 1 – Vibrant, responsible and connected communities

- The Council is committed to enabling the development of the social economy in the borough and has pledged its support to cooperatives, mutual and social enterprises as a solution for elements of the local economy. In April 2015, the national campaign body Social Enterprise UK officially awarded Croydon with social enterprise status, one of only 11 towns and cities across the country to achieve this. There are more than 120 registered social enterprise businesses in Croydon with hundreds more operating in the wider voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector providing a range of employment and voluntary opportunities.
- The OFC report recommends a number of measures to ensure that social enterprise is encouraged and reciprocity, volunteering and community activism is supported through initiatives such as the development of a borough wide framework to promote volunteering, support for asset based community development, development of online volunteering community, support for successful resident associations to share best practice, enabling the development of community led programmes to support migrants and devolution of power to neighbourhood centres.

Work currently being undertaken

The Council is enabling the delivery of interventions to support reciprocity, volunteering and community activism. These include:

- A volunteering scheme is in place for Council employees, which is being promoted to encourage take up.
- Support for an online volunteering portal which is managed Volunteer Centre Croydon.
- An annual Civic Awards Scheme is in place to recognise the contribution of Croydon volunteers.

- The Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach has been integrated with the development, delivery and commissioning of services. The Council and local partners have commissioned ABCD within the voluntary sector. Public Health are working on the over 65's JSNA and this includes some asset mapping around health and wellbeing / community assets.
- Partnership with individuals and local groups to coordinate help and support for migrants. This includes engaging with and signposting individuals to local services and support networks to enable them to access help.
- Funding support to a range of voluntary and community groups that deliver a wide range of services that are accessed by migrants.
- Set up a Stronger Communities Partnership Board to develop and deliver the community cohesion work plan.
- Introduced a pilot for community ward budgets to provide increased opportunity for local people to determine local priorities in consultation with ward councillors.
- Enabling local residents and business associations to increase their involvement in shaping outcomes in their local areas.

Actions to include in Forward Plan

The Council will take on an enabling role and work with partners to take forward work to:

- Review and revise existing borough-wide strategies such as the Community Strategy and supporting strategies and plans.
- Review funding arrangements for the voluntary sector to ensure it is focused on the key Ambitious for Croydon outcomes.
- Launch a new Community Fund ensuring alignment with the themes of the Opportunity and Fairness Commission.
- Explore options of devolving power out to neighbourhood centres - review existing initiatives and develop a transparent and consistent framework to engage residents, businesses and community groups in local decision making.
- Develop further the localised democratic process (online voting etc.) within the ward to identify projects and gain consensus on priorities and how to spend funding.
- Explore best practice in community planning and neighbourhood agreements which are a deal between residents and local services could be something that helps tackle key issues in deprived wards.

- Explore the scope to work closely with resident associations and tenants associations that are keen to get involved with local issues and concerns.
- Consider options for developing a community led programmes that welcome migrants to the borough and explain rights and responsibilities to encourage greater community integration.

4.5.3 Theme 2 – A town centre that lifts the whole borough

- The Council is taking a leading role in driving growth through a devolved settlement and financial support to ensure projects supporting growth and jobs come forward, including securing £15m of funding to progress our growth priorities; £7m of which has already been committed by the Treasury. It is also working with regional partners through the Coast to Capital LEP and the South London Partnership (SLP) to access significant Local Growth Deal funding for infrastructure priorities as well working with Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) to ensure they access the opportunities provided by the Council's supply chain and commissioning activity and promoting cooperatives, mutuals and Social Enterprises (SE's) through Value Croydon.
- Over the next five years Croydon is set to deliver a £5.25 billion regeneration programme with potential through Croydon's Growth Zone proposals to accelerate its growth plans to provide upwards of 23,500 new jobs and 8,300 new homes in Croydon's opportunity area by 2031. Within the Growth Zone the £1 billion redevelopment of the Whitgift Centre and Centrale will see Croydon become one of London's most visited retail and leisure destinations.
- Through the Growth Promise, the Council is delivering a number of initiatives to "create a place where people and businesses want to be." As a result, Croydon has a relatively high employment rate compared to London, with residents more likely to be employed in lower-wage, lower-skilled jobs in the business administration, support and retail sectors. Croydon also has the fastest growing tech cluster in London, and the number of apprenticeships offered by Croydon businesses and organisations outnumber any other borough. It is anticipated that over the next five years more than 24,000 jobs will be created in Croydon through regeneration activity in the Croydon Opportunity Area through growth mainly in the construction, financial services, health and social care and ICT sectors. The Employability Hub in Croydon College is also set to help 8,000 students meet and network with local big name employers.
- The OFC report recommends a number of measures to ensure that the benefits and opportunities presented through the regeneration of the town centre are shared by residents across the borough. These include setting up a wider BID district, strengthening partnerships with businesses and employers on skills, supporting high tech and growth industries, campaigning for a University and developing a strategy to broaden the cultural offer.
- The Council will embed these measures into existing plans and enable the delivery of the following outcomes:

- Reducing long term unemployment (those receiving JSA for 12 months or more)
- Reducing the % of working age on out of work benefits
- Reducing the unemployment gap between the highest and lowest wards
- Reducing the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

Work currently being undertaken

The Council is delivering a number of interventions to ensure that the benefits and opportunities presented through the regeneration of the town centre are accessible to all residents across the borough. These include:

- Building on the Pathways to Employment programme designed to remove barriers to employment through a range of partnership activities and projects. This approach enables the council and its partners to maximise the number of local people securing jobs. The programme focuses on improving skills and qualifications and developing a better understanding of the labour requirements of our business sector.
- Working with partners to develop a Job Brokerage Service which aims to match unemployed and under-employed residents into the jobs created by regeneration, investment and growth in the borough.
- Delivering part-time courses through the adult learning service (CALAT).
- Working with businesses to deliver training aimed at raising the skills level of employees.
- Working on securing the necessary funding to deliver infrastructure projects in the borough through the Growth Zone.
- Funding to set up a new tech business incubator in Davis House that is scheduled for launch in early 2016.
- Working in partnership to deliver externally funded projects to promote apprenticeships. This involves engaging with employers, identifying vacancies and skills gaps and matching them with potential candidates on the Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) register via job centre plus, colleges and training providers
- Substantial investment to deliver a refurbished Fairfield Halls at the heart of a new Cultural Quarter.

- Planned regeneration schemes are set to transform Croydon's evening economy. These include Whitgift re-development, creation of a new Cultural Quarter and a new Boxpark Croydon – opening in 2016.
- Offering formal support for the creation of a BID in South End.
- Ensuring that a Town centre regeneration plan is in place to mitigate the impacts of development

Actions to include in Forward Plan

The Council will take on an enabling role and work with partners to take forward work on:

- Strengthening partnership with colleges through the Job Brokerage Service and review joint employment and skills strategy to ensure that provision of skills training will meet needs of employers in the area.
- Value Croydon programme to build on the current approach to developing fair and equitable approaches to employment practises across Croydon.
- Continue development of partnership with Sussex University to increase access to higher education courses.
- Initiate discussions with other Universities to establish sites in the borough.
- The development of a new cultural plan in partnership in stakeholders and the community.

4.5.4 Theme 3 – Leaving no child behind

- Croydon's population of 0-18 year olds is the largest child population in London, and this is expected to rise by 10% by 2021. The Council is working in partnership with local agencies to deliver a wide range of services to improve the outcomes for children and support families by giving their children a better start in life.
- We have implemented the wide ranging requirements of the Children and Families Act which ensures that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will be supported to achieve the same ambitions as any other child or young person in Croydon. This includes the publication of a Local Offer to inform families and practitioners about the services available to them.
- The Council is also working with partners to raise educational standards for children and young people in the borough with the aim of supporting economic growth,

develop personal independence and also ensure that local residents have the skills to take up the jobs being created in the borough.

- We are investing resources to improve performance at the Early Years Foundation Stage as we believe that it is an important starting point for learning and is crucial to ensuring future success. Success at this stage means that children are ready to enter the primary phase of schooling with the skills and knowledge needed to access the curriculum and achieve the expected standards in reading, writing and maths at this age range. Croydon performance in the Early Years Foundation Stage at age 5 improved significantly (by 8%) from 2014 and is now only slightly below statistical neighbours, London and national averages.
- Key Stage 2 tests at age 11 show Croydon to have fallen below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics combined scores at Level 4 (the expected level of attainment), although we achieved a 2% borough increase and 13 schools achieved in excess of 10% increase in their combined attainment. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 4, is very positive with an increased percentage of pupils achieving A* - C in comparison with last year. Croydon remains significantly above the national average and permanent exclusions remain low.
- In 2015, Croydon had the highest proportion ever of Croydon schools judged by Ofsted at good or better. In November 2015 90% of primary schools and 71% of secondary schools were judged to be good or better, - an improvement from 61% and 68% respectively from summer 2012. The higher percentage of schools now judged good or better indicates a stronger platform for success in the 2015-16 academic year.
- We are supporting children and families to increase their resilience which helps prevent the need for more intensive support/interventions. We have established an Early Help Hub to provide advice, guidance and direct support to agencies and lead professionals, including the use of Early Help assessments and quality assurance. Our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) ensures there is comprehensive information-sharing between agencies and that prompt and appropriate decisions are made about whether families require social work or early help services. In 2015/16 we have seen a significant increase in the number of early help referrals and assessments and stronger links with staff in other agencies (i.e. schools) to support early intervention.
- Croydon has one of the highest numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) nationally. Our placement stability for looked after children (% with 3 or more placements in a year) is currently above the national average at 8%. The number of adoptions and special guardianship order has increased significantly. There has also been a reduction in local LAC by 9% in 2014/15.
- In January 2016 the Council have the go-ahead to build a £6m state-of-the-art youth zone will offer sports, arts and music activities, as well as employability and mentoring support to young people aged 8 to 19, or up to 25 for those with disabilities.

- The Council will consider and embed the preventative measures suggested in the OFC report into existing plans as they support our vision to “Enable people of all ages to reach their potential through access to quality schools and learning”. The suggested measures such as investment in early intervention initiatives, greater collaboration between statutory providers and the community / voluntary sector to deliver child development schemes, developing outcome based commissioning and tackling bullying on public transport will support the delivery of the following outcomes:
 - Services for children, young people and their parents are more responsive and consistent
 - Families are healthy and resilient and able to maximise their life chances and independence
 - Children and vulnerable adults are protected from harm and exploitation
 - Children, young people and their parents/carers enjoy emotional wellbeing
 - Children, young people and parents are healthy and physically well
 - People of all ages are able to reach their potential through access to quality schools and learning

Work currently being undertaken

The Council is delivering a number of interventions to improve access to and the quality of education for children in Croydon in order to improve their life chances. These include:

- The Best Start programme due to be launched in April 2016 that will offer a new model of service delivery for 0-5 year old children by developing joint services with Health providers. . The Best Start model will consider and address the specific service needs of young children and their families, mothers and mothers to be, women experiencing mental health conditions and service users from BME communities in a holistic way. It will also enable earlier and better identification of the needs of vulnerable children and young people and parents with a disability or mental health condition.
- In March 2015 Cabinet approved funding for the development of a new and innovative Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Strategy. As part of the council's overall work, we established the Caring Dads programme in partnership with Probation, working with fathers who are primarily perpetrators of domestic violence. A specialist post for Domestic Abuse has been introduced in the Children in Need Service.
- The Family Justice Centre is an integral part of domestic abuse services in Croydon. The Centre provides immediate support to victims of domestic abuse and a range of support services in a single place. Over the past year we have seen increasing numbers of people accessing this service. In 2014/15, the number of people accessing the FJC stood at 2588 which is a 20% increase on the previous year. The FJC is also receiving more referrals from partners, which has seen a 50% increase in GP referrals compared to the previous year.

- Over the past year we have significantly upgraded our strategic and operational capacity to address Missing Children and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The Council has been part of a number of ground breaking operations with the Metropolitan Police and voluntary organisations on CSE. The Council is working with the Police and the National Crime Agency to profile the development of this good practice at a national level. In November 2015, the Leader of the Council used a Local Strategic Partnership Congress meeting in to strengthen the profile of child sexual exploitation with the local community.
- 100% of Troubled Families outcomes met by the Council's Family Resilience Service – the Council is a “Wave 2” early starter.
- Working with schools through Octavo to ensure that specialist advice and support is provided to schools to promote wellbeing.
- Implementing a Health and Wellbeing Strategy – its key focus is to build ‘Learning Communities’ by offering learning, challenge and support at build confidence and resilience in families and communities.
- Providing specialist advice and support for inclusion, learning access and Special Educational Needs through the Octavo Partnership Forums.
- Extending its current provision for “talking therapies” “via the voluntary sector, within the framework of Children and Young Peoples Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (CYP IAPT).
- Implementing the second phase of the People’s Gateway service that seeks to improve outcomes for customers by broadening the “gateway” approach to include greater integration between Gateway and Welfare Services and Early Help and Children’s Social care services. Specifically the programme will consider how it can support services to:
 - Reduce the risk of a child becoming looked after for reasons linked to homelessness
 - Reduce the number of households where unsuitable housing is a key barrier to a looked after child being returned to the family unit
 - Strengthen the early intervention services through greater joint working and use of a “gateway” approach to identify and support children and families at key trigger points and reduce the costs associated with children in care.

Actions to include in Forward Plan

- The Council will work with local partners to enable local communities to do more to raise the aspirations of local children and explore funding options to further strengthen early interventions and improve attainment and well-being for children.

- The Council will use the Active Communities Fund to encourage applications from community groups that are interested in working on raising aspirations and improving the life chances of young people.
- Maintain a high percentage of schools judged to be Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, and support vulnerable or underperforming schools to improve rapidly. Support schools to improve English and maths at a faster rate across all Key Stages, through support from Octavo and 'teaching schools'.
- The revised three year school place planning strategy was agreed by the Council in January 2016. This sets out plans to deliver 20 new reception classes, 14 new Year 7 classes, and 210 SEN places across the borough which will ensure that we deliver a sufficient number of school places to meet local demand.
- As part of our plans to transform services for children, young people and adults with SEN and disabilities we will create a 0-25 integrated SEND Service for implementation in April 2016 followed by the establishment of a 0-65 Service by autumn 2016.
- Further development of Troubled Families Programme and early help services, including the implementation of the Children in Need project to strengthen preventative work.

4.5.5 Theme 4 - Finding Homes for all

- In Croydon, we have seen a rapid increase in homelessness over the past three years resulting in more families being housed in temporary accommodation. Despite Croydon house prices and rents being below the London average, housing costs are rising and many Croydon residents are finding it increasingly difficult to afford local homes due to falling incomes and benefit changes.
- The Council is committed to using its planning powers to get the best out of the housing market. We have already increased the affordable housing requirement outside the opportunity area in Croydon from 15% to 50% with effect from 1 April 2015.
- The Council is establishing a housing Development Company to optimise the supply of new housing and support delivery of the Mayor's London Plan, the London Housing Strategy and Croydon's Local Plan requirements and targets for new homes. The company is a key intervention for the delivery of new homes with potential to increase the supply of affordable homes and provide mixed tenure development including social rent, affordable rent, low cost home ownership and market sale. Alongside the new Development Company, we have established a Revolving Investment Fund to develop new homes for various tenures.
- We are also working with other London boroughs to restrain the increasing cost of procuring emergency accommodation for homeless households by negotiating a standard rate across the capital. We have also purchased 94 properties on the open

market to use as temporary accommodation, committing to invest £30m in the Real Lettings Property Fund to provide 94 nominations and a financial return on investment for which we have been shortlisted for an LGC Award for housing innovation.

- The Council will consider and embed the measures suggested in the OFC report to address the causes of homelessness and strengthen partnership initiatives that include a “rent in advance” funding scheme, “Good Agent and Landlord Charter”, the idea of a “FairBnB” and a new community fund to tackle homelessness. These initiatives will enable us to “provide a decent, safe and affordable home for every resident who needs one” and deliver the following outcomes:
 - Prevent homelessness whenever possible
 - Provide an efficient and effective statutory homelessness service
 - Tackling street homelessness and destitution
 - Minimum possible use of emergency temporary accommodation
 - Increasing supply of private rented accommodation for homeless households.
 - Improving health outcomes for homeless households

Work currently being undertaken

The Council is delivering a number of successful interventions to address homelessness in the borough. These include:

- Preventative work through the Gateway Service that offers specialised and tailored support to prevent homelessness. The Gateway Service now also includes the Housing Tenancy Income team that focuses on resolving housing, financial and social issues to enable residents to become more independent.

As a result of the People Gateway (phase 1), redesigned services have helped over 1,100 of Croydon’s most severely affected families to avoid homelessness, 16 people moved out of Bed and Breakfast, with 9 customers actively engaged in looking for alternative accommodation, 5,400 people to become more financially independent and supported 587 residents into employment.

In addition, an integrated ‘end-to-end’ homeless journey through Council services was developed by moving Housing Needs and Assessment service into the Gateway and Welfare division. Through improved intervention and prevention work facilitated by this move, the Council has reduced the numbers of families placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation and their overall length of stay,

- A “Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme” to drive up standards in the private rented sector.
- A successful “rent in advance” scheme to help young people avoid homelessness.

- Piloting a lodging scheme for young homeless families.
- Pilot project to engage specifically with Central and Eastern European nationals with aim to get them into employment and accommodation.
- The Growth Promise – this outlines regeneration plans for the borough including New Addington.

Actions to include in Forward Plan

- The Council will review the impact of current initiatives that are underway to address homelessness in the borough and further develop its preventative advice services that are delivered by the People’s Gateway Project.
- Work with our partners to consider how best to develop and take forward the “rent in advance” funding scheme, “Good Agent and Landlord Charter”, the idea of a “FairBnB” and a new community fund to tackle homelessness.

4.5.6 Theme 5 – A connected borough where no one is isolated

- The OFC report recommends a partnership approach to tackle social isolation amongst residents, particularly the most vulnerable groups such as the elderly, residents with a disability, younger people and newly arrived communities through strategic measures such as mapping social isolation in the borough, developing a wide volunteering framework, making social isolation a commissioning priority and delivering more joined up support services
- The Council will embed these recommendations in existing plans and enable the delivery of the following outcomes:
 - A thriving and lively cultural offer which engages communities and supports regeneration
 - A place that is easy and safe for all to get to and move around in.
 - (Enabling) Digital services that meet the needs of local residents and help reduce isolation.

Work currently being undertaken

The Council is delivering a number of interventions to create a connected borough and reduce isolation. These include:

- Mapping social isolation by completing a Joint Strategic Needs Analysis of social isolation in the borough.

- Hosting a Congress meeting in June 2016 to explore the challenges of social isolation in the borough and work with local partners to identify sustainable activities that can be delivered to address social isolation in a holistic way.
- Partnership work with the CCG to deliver a 'Transforming Adult Community Services' programme that reduces unnecessarily admissions into hospital through shared community services either in or closer to the patient's own home. The service also coordinates health and social care services to proactively prevent patients becoming unwell or socially isolated.
- Developing "CarePlace" - the centralised resource for care and community services and information that provides direct access to a wide range of services along with information and guidance on how to source and pay for them.
- Supporting a number of projects that link residents and care groups or community organisations to socially isolated residents. This includes support for groups such as Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association (CNCA) and Advice Services Croydon.
- Delivering a programme of activities to promote digital inclusion and reduce social isolation. These include setting up digital zones, supporting local organisations to provide skills and resources into the community and the use of technical solutions to support vulnerable elderly residents.

Actions to include in Forward Plan

- Enabling and supporting the CCG to develop a more co-ordinated, community led and sustainable approach to address social isolation in the borough through:
 - Including social isolation as an outcome in the Outcomes Based Commissioning approach for the over 65s in Croydon
 - The use of social prescribing, led by the CCG, and delivered through GPs

4.5.7 Theme 6 – Supporting residents to better times

- The council has taken on a lead role to drive economic growth in the borough through working with partners and the private sector. We have used our powers, activity and resources to support local businesses expand or start up to drive economic growth, secure local jobs and address poverty and inequality.
- A sustained focus of our work is on supporting our residents, both young and old, into employment and enabling them to benefit from opportunities by ensuring that they are equipped with the necessary skills and qualifications that modern businesses look for. This is being delivered through providing access to skills training and education and actively engaging with the full spectrum of education providers from primary schools, colleges and universities and on into adult education.
- We are also working in partnership to deliver externally funded projects to promote apprenticeships. This involves engaging with employers, identifying vacancies and

skills gaps and matching them with potential candidates on the Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) register via job centre plus, colleges and training providers

- Recent figures show unemployment in the borough is continuing to fall however compared to the average for London Croydon lags slightly behind in the 18-24 age groups. We are working to ensure that provision is available for this target group through the “employability hub” at Croydon College and the “students lounge” at John Ruskin College where students can obtain specific employability information and support.
- The OFC report recommends a partnership approach to address inequality and poverty in the borough through measures such as supporting growth of small local businesses, encouraging greater job opportunities, encouraging employers to sign up to the London Living Wage, services in GPs surgeries to support long term sick and disabled people to offer benefit/debt advice and working with employers and developers to encouraging childcare provision in new developments.
- The Council will embed these measures in existing plans and enable the delivery of the following outcomes:
 - Supporting people to be resilient, self-reliant, and helping them move towards/into employment, and financial and digital inclusion
 - Families and individuals are more financially resilient and live affordable lives;
 - People from all communities live longer, healthier lives through positive lifestyle choices;
 - Families are healthy and resilient and able to maximise their life chances and independence

Work currently being undertaken

The Council is delivering a number of interventions to support residents to better times. These include:

- Using its purchasing power through the “Value Croydon” programme to support local businesses and generate jobs for local people.
- Encouraging better job opportunities by providing work experience placements for local residents and students. Our initial target was to provide 50 work experience placements by September 2015 and we exceeded our target by offering 69 placements to students from local schools.
- Working in partnership with Croydon College and John Ruskin College to support the training needs of local people, including the development of apprenticeships. There is a particular focus on the 18-24 age groups.
- Supporting the long term sick and disabled people back into work through:
 - Weekly advice sessions that are offered from over 10 GP surgeries as well as

- other local organisations.
 - Providing debt consolidation, benefits advice and money wise training through outreach benefit surgeries from Community Drop in centres, Food Banks, Carers centres, district housing offices, and over 10 GP surgeries.
 - A dedicated home visiting service for those who are unable to leave their home, a free borough-wide telephone advice line and a debt advice line.
- The Council has been accredited as London Living Wage Employer. We are also working to fully implement the London Living Wage requirement through the procurement and commissioning processes and wherever possible include a contractual requirement to that effect.
- The Council is working to re-launch the local Credit Union to provide community banking facilities for those most at need. The service will include supporting people to save, providing low cost loans and specific banking facilities to those most in need of financial support.
- Through the Gateway project (phase 2), we are seeking to improve outcomes for customers by greater integration of a range of customer journeys through our services within adult social care and supported housing. The specific focus of this programme will be to consider:
 - Further support that can be provided to most vulnerable customers who are living in supported housing to help them move on to financial stability and independence.
 - Ways to reduce the number of customers who overtime repeatedly present to services through using a more systemic and joined up approach to service provision and monitoring of outcomes.

Actions to include in Forward Plan

- Look at ways to maximise social value from the Council's commissioning activities and existing contractual relationships with external partners through:
 - Embedding Buying local and Buying social.
 - Development of "Value Croydon Charter"
 - Quick Quotes – one of which should be from a local supplier.
 - Embedding the London Living Wage as a requirement into the council's contractual arrangements.
- Work with partners to consider how best to take forward the following measures suggested by the OFC through integration with the "Growth Promise":
 - Work with local colleges and businesses to support local training needs and roll out of "First Step " so that every young person at college is offered local work experience.
 - Support the long term sick and disabled people back into work by offering new services to support employment from within GP surgeries

- Develop programme to support social lending, including peer to peer lending
 - Lead on promoting the London Living Wage through making the town centre become a “Living Wage Zone”.
 - Negotiate with Westfield Hammerson developers to make childcare provision a centrepiece of the new development and support social enterprise hubs to build up childcare networks
- Launch of the Voluntary Sector Funding Framework (Prospectus) and enable the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to develop and deliver debt counselling and promoting good money management advice services.

Conclusion and next steps

- 4.6 Tackling inequality and poverty is a difficult and long-term task given the range of complex social, economic, environmental and political factors which proliferate in a borough as diverse and varied as Croydon. The challenge is made all the more difficult by growing demand for services, particularly children and adult social care services and shrinking budgets.
- 4.7 The Council, therefore, welcomes the Opportunity and Fairness Commission’s report as the suggested themes and outcomes provide us with an evidence based framework of community priorities to address inequality and disadvantage. We recognise that these recommendations alone cannot solve all the inequality and fairness challenges that exist in the borough. However, they will help the Council to strengthen its enabling role and focus on improving the existing partnership work between the statutory organisations, voluntary and community sector and the business community in the borough. In its enabling role, the Council will ensure that partnership resources are effectively deployed to deliver targeted interventions that can help narrow the inequality and opportunity gap in the borough and support the delivery of the OFC recommendations.
- 4.8 The Council looks forward to working with the LSP and the voluntary and community sector partners over the coming months to take forward the OFC recommendations. The Council, in its enabling role will encourage co-production of interventions to address inequality in the borough. Co-production will help us make sure that that the way services are delivered is aligned as closely as possible to the root causes of demand, while making sure that residents and their communities are at the heart of the organisational change as the Council focuses on transforming its services over the next few years.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1** The Opportunity and Fairness Commission has carried our detailed consultation

and engagement activities with stakeholders such as residents, community / voluntary sector groups, business sector partners, statutory service providers as well as focused engagement with groups that share a “protected characteristic” to understand the inequality / fairness challenges for the borough.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The Council provided one-off funding of £130000 for the independent support function of the Opportunity and Fairness Commission. The funding provided covered costs related to research, community engagement, communication and project management and enabled the Commission to deliver its work programme.

1 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

None

2 The effect of the decision

None

3 Risks

None

4 Options

None

5 Future savings/efficiencies

There are no savings or efficiencies associated with the approval of this report.

(Approved by Jabin Jiwa, Business Partner for Resources, Financial Planning and Strategy on behalf of Lisa Taylor, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer on behalf of Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer)

7. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 The Council Solicitor comments that there are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

(Approved by: Gabriel Macgregor, Head of Corporate Law on behalf of the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer)

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

8.1 There are no human resources considerations arising from the recommendations of this report for LBC staff or workers.

(Approved by: Michael Pichamuthu, HRBP on behalf of Heather Daley, Director of Human Resources)

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 The work of Croydon's Opportunity and Fairness Commission is essentially an extensive analysis of equality and inclusion issues and challenges that the borough faces. The report and recommendations made by the Opportunity and Fairness Commission, supported by the qualitative and quantitative research undertaken, will act as a full equality analysis.

9.2 The Opportunity and Fairness Commission report and suggested recommendations and outcomes will support and inform future budget decisions, the development of statutory equality objectives required by 1 April 2016, as well as the borough-wide Community Strategy.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

None specifically identified.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

11.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

12.1 To support the Council to demonstrate its transparency and fairness in its operations as well as compliance with its public sector equality general duty and specific duties as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

13. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

13.1 None.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

APPENDIX: Opportunity and Fairness Commission Report

<http://www.opportunitycroydon.org/>

printed separately for Council Members