

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 11th December 2017
SUBJECT:	Opportunity & Fairness Commission- Update the Council Response
LEAD OFFICER:	Richard Simpson Executive Director of Resources Sarah Ireland Director of Commissioning & Improvement
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Hamida Ali Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety & Justice
WARDS:	ALL
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON: The work of the Opportunity and Fairness Commission supported the Council's ambition to reduce inequality and promote fairness for all 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 decisions	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to

- 1.1 To note the Council's actions to date in responding to the issues raised by the Opportunity and Fairness Commission (OFC) (January 2016 A20/16) and recommend that as part of the review of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) the work of the OFC is used to shape a continued borough wide response to those issues.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Croydon OFC published its final report on 28th January 2016. The report highlighted the key inequality and fairness challenges for the borough and presented recommendations on how these could be addressed by the Council and our statutory, voluntary and community sector partners. In light of this many of the issues required a borough wide response with support and action

from other statutory, voluntary and community sector partners. This report highlights the Council role to date.

2.2 The recommendations in the report were presented under the following headings:

- Vibrant, responsible and connected communities
- A town centre that lifts the whole borough
- Leaving no child behind
- A connected borough where no one is isolated
- Supporting residents to better times.

2.3 The Council accepted the OFC findings and has embedded actions to achieve the desired outcomes within policy development and on-going service delivery and the impact of this is set out below. To continue to tackle the issues raised by OFC there needs to be a borough wide response and the report recommends that the LSP as part of its current review consider how the OFC findings can continue to be addressed harnessing the strengths of all partners to ensure this

3. DETAIL

VIBRANT, RESPONSIBLE & CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

3.1 In meeting the key inequality and poverty challenges residents face the OFC advocated for strong neighbourhoods where citizen activism and participation in local community faith and sports groups were well embedded, reinforcing healthy vibrant communities. The OFC asked the Council to show leadership in this area by promoting community involvement, supporting asset based development approaches and devolving power to local communities. The Council has developed a number of areas in response:

- a. Reshaping grant support to the Voluntary Sector around OFC themes through the Community Fund- including supporting asset based community development securing over £6m funding over three years The Community Fund ensured the continued funding and development of the Croydon Volunteer Centre and prioritised support to encourage volunteers through the programme. £2.1m was committed to the Vibrant, Responsible and Connected Communities theme over 3 years.
- b. Positioning the Council's approach to Corporate Social Responsibility and promoting staff volunteering at the centre of staff development. Employees have two volunteer days a year which they are encouraged to use to support the Croydon community. The Council hosted, supported by sponsors, the Croydon Civic awards which celebrated the amazing volunteers within Croydon raising awareness of volunteering.

- c. Leveraging support to local communities and the Voluntary Sector through Social Value commissioning activity and using its substantial buying power. Community support provided by providers and suppliers have included funding for key events and community programmes, volunteering and the maintenance of community assets.
- d. Tackling digital inclusion through community empowerment programmes such as Go On Croydon which saw the Council work with over 60 partners to tackle digital inequality across the Borough and also recycling over 700 surplus ICT equipment within the Community. This saw the establishment of digital champions who helped residents to develop basic digital skills. Digital zones assisted 2,900 people with 94 % feeling their skills had improved and 100% feeling more confident.
- e. Extensive investment in district centre development to promote and support sustainable local communities and businesses such as £2.67m investment in Thornton Heath including shop front improvement, public art commissions the Legible London wayfinding programme to navigate people to key amenities and green spaces.
- f. Using our assets through Community Asset Transfers to promote wider community use and involvement in local areas examples include:
 - Stanley Halls – comprises of an art gallery, theatre and assembly halls and a café.
 - Selsdon Hall – let to Jubilee Church who have transformed the use of the halls including the opening of a community café, promoting cultural activities and events throughout the day supporting a wide range of age and interest groups from within Croydon
- g. Launching devolution pilots to further enhance opportunities to enable local community engagement and involvement in local decisions with:
 - South Norwood & Woodside -We Love SE25 focussing on physical regeneration
 - New Addington & Fieldway and focus on health and wellbeing
 - Purley focus around older people and social isolation
- h. Increasing investment in Community Ward Budgets to provide increased opportunity for local people to determine local priorities in consultation with ward councillors. Examples include Purley community ward budgets supporting Neighbourhood Watch Association to reduce crime and create safer neighbourhoods and Purley Festival to deliver Cinema in the Park.
- i. Don't Mess with Croydon (DMWC) campaign tackles fly-tipping and works towards making Croydon the cleanest and greenest borough in London. It raises awareness of environmental issues and gets people to take more responsibility for their local area through enforcement, encouragement and education. This has included encouraging 347 community street champions and working with schools to work with young people on taking pride in where they live.

- j. The Council will continue to develop its approach to CSR, Social Value, Community Asset transfer and devolution to ensure that local communities are empowered to tackle shared challenges and supported and enabled by the Council and other public sector organisations. The LSP have a unique role to facilitate community empowerment.

A TOWN CENTRE THAT LIFTS THE WHOLE BOROUGH

- 3.2 OFC recognised that regeneration and development opportunities for Croydon presented a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform the town centre. However the OFC wanted to ensure that these opportunities did not bypass local businesses and residents, that it made a difference to the whole borough. OFC asked for an inclusive job brokerage services for all including the most vulnerable within the Community and a Croydon Employment Charter promoting the London Living Wage and best business practices.
- 3.3 The Council has contributed significantly towards this challenge including the development, in partnership with Croydon College and Job Centre Plus of Croydon Works a job brokerage service supporting residents and employers. It provides local people with access to jobs, work experience, apprenticeships and volunteering to help some of our residents the furthest away from the world of work. In addition it offers comprehensive employers support connecting local business and the Council's own supplier and providers with local people. To date they have registered over 1200 residents, delivered work related training to 130 residents in various areas including childcare, customer service, construction, security and employability leading to the successful placement of 240 people in to sustainable employment. In addition to this, it has secured additional European Social Fund funding to deliver an in work progression contract supporting those on 0 hour contracts or minimum wage.
- 3.4 The Council has launched the Good Employer Charter for Croydon Businesses and Council suppliers and providers. Signatories to the charter are required to pay their employees the London Living Wage, create flexible hiring and create employment opportunities in the Borough, support the local economy by investing in local business and supply and implement best practice relating to equality and diversity. To support local business benefits of accreditation include business rates discount for local SMEs. To date organisations have obtained accreditation and a further 42 have pledged to work towards accreditation spreading the best employment practices throughout Croydon.
- 3.5 The number of SME's have significantly grown in the Borough and further support is offered to local businesses through the Croydon Enterprise fund and the implementation of the new discretionary business rate relief scheme to promote business growth. The work of the Small Business Commission will be used to shape further the support to SMEs.
- 3.6 Value Croydon (Croydon Council's brand for delivering social value) is being redeveloped to ensure it fully aligns with Croydon Works, the Good Employer Charter and the recommendations of the Small Business Commission. The aim of Value Croydon is to support the delivery of the corporate objectives to foster local economic growth and sustainability by providing a one-stop-shop for organisations to find out about business opportunities with the council and its

partners.

- 3.7 The new Value Croydon website will also provide clear information on how to do business with the council through social value. Value Croydon at its core focuses on how the council engages with the local market, contractors and wider partners to set up services and procure goods and works in a way that not only meets the needs and delivers core outcomes, but also produces added social, economic and environmental benefits to Croydon's communities.
- 3.8 The Growth Zone investment programme aims to improve infrastructure and the local economy including improving a pedestrian and cycle friendly centre. The Council continue to focus on supporting and strengthening culture which is seen as a key plank of regeneration. The new Fairfield Halls will be open in 2018.
- 3.9 The recent planning approval of the Croydon partnership redevelopment of the Whitgift shopping centre presents a new stage in the regeneration of Croydon which will bring up to 7000 jobs and 1000 new homes. The Council will continue its approach of ensuring all benefits from the opportunities it brings and this will be supported by a revigorate LSP.

LEAVING NO CHILD BEHIND

- 3.10 The OFC identified that during the pre-school years Croydon children are more likely to be left behind than their peers. The Youth Commission highlighted concerns about mental wellbeing of children and young adolescents. OFC wanted to see the earliest intervention with developmental and emotional challenges with a multi-agency approach across health, education and Council Services.
- 3.11 In light of the Ofsted review of Children Services in Croydon the Council has developed an extensive Improvement Plan which was agreed by Cabinet in November 2017 and will be submitted to the Department of Education by the 11th December 2017. This includes an action to completely refresh of Early Help Strategy to develop a cohesive all-age Early Help Offer which will build on what works in the best start approach and enhance the offer. This will test again whether the issues identified by OFC are embedded within the new approach. As the Improvement Plan is implemented there will be a complete review of Children Commissioning which will build on the issues identified by OFC in relation to an outcomes focus.
- 3.12 The LSP review is ensuring that children and young people are the main focus of the partnership –galvanizing all partner to drive the improvement of outcomes for Croydon young people. The recent Youth Congress and further engagement sessions with young people will shape this new focus. This will include stronger links with the Children's and Adults Safeguarding boards with the aim of ensuring that protecting and supporting the most vulnerable sits at the heart of LSP.

- 3.13 The Community Fund provides a strong constructed youth provision that is led by well established youth provider in the borough working in partnership with the Council's Youth Engagement Team. The Shrepsa programme supports unaccompanied Albanian young people from Albanian to access a range of services. The programme provides advice and support to facilitate positive lifestyles changes leading to greater physical and emotional well- being.
- 3.15 Play Place have worked with partner organisations to provide a strong community constructed youth offer using a number of delivery strands to target 14 of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Croydon. The Our Space scheme will harnesses the energy and social capital of each of these communities and use an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach; volunteers, under-used buildings and partnership working.

A CONNECTED BOROUGH WHERE NO ONE IS ISOLATED

- 3.16 The OFC identified that too many local residents can lead isolated and empty lives without their basic human needs fulfilled. Social isolation take a huge toll on peoples' mental and physical health and presents a significant cost to local services. OFC asked for place leadership from the CCG and Council and greater multi-agency working across all of the borough to tackle social isolation.
- 3.17 In June 2016 Croydon's Congress considered the borough's response to social isolation and loneliness which brought a wide range of stakeholders together to consider the issues. The themes and issues raised by Congress are being used by the Health and Wellbeing Board to develop a strategic response and social isolation action plan which will be finalised by the end of the year.
- 3.18 The Council has continued to strengthen its approach to social isolation. To raise awareness and inform the strategy going forward social isolation was the focus of the Director of Public Health Annual report 2016. The reduction of social isolation has been a key area of support for community capacity building including the approach to the Community Fund and Grants programme- £1.8m was allocated over three years to community groups working within the "A connected borough where no one is isolated" theme.
- 3.19 Tackling social isolation is central to the models of care developed within the Outcomes Based Commissioning programme for over 65s and a key driver of the Alliance Partnership –One Croydon. Key programmes to date include:
- Living Independently for Everyone (LIFE) programme has established an integrated Reablement and rehabilitation service across the borough, comprising services from across Adult Social Care, Croydon Health Services and Croydon University Hospital. This service ensures people are supported through a multi-disciplinary approach to reduce their length of stay in hospital, assess them in the best place to determine care and establish outcome focused care plans that aim to reable and maximise independence including reducing social isolation.
 - The Integrated Community Networks focus on preventing admissions and aims to enable individuals to support their own health and independence. Care is organised around the individual, breaking down the boundaries

between health and social care and the voluntary and community sector, and between formal and informal support. Reducing social isolation is a key consideration to ensure health and independence through personal independence co-ordinators

- 3.20 The work of the Health & Wellbeing Board in developing the Social Isolation Action Plan will further shape the Council and LSP wide response to this

FINDING HOMES FOR ALL

- 3.21 The OFC highlighted the lack of affordable secure housing and rising homelessness exacerbated by government changes to benefits as the greatest challenge the borough faced. OFC asked for a new focus on early intervention, advice for tenants, short term financial support and proactive approaches with landlords and agents. In addition a need to encourage and incentivise communities to offer shelter for homeless people was identified.
- 3.22 The Council has used innovative approaches to increasing housing supply and temporary accommodation. This has included programmes such as Real Lettings which have now been extended nationally, the establishment of Brick by Brick to deliver housing led development and the development of a limited liability partnership to purchase 250 street properties. The Council are piloting Fair BnB which seeks to find homeowners to provide lodgings to the homeless and have thus far placed homeless people within 10 households and are evaluating next steps.
- 3.23 A key focus of the Council's Gateway service has been to tackle insecurity in the housing market and prevent homelessness. This has included using the discretionary housing payments to help 1579 residents in 2016/17 at a cost of £1.3m. In addition 520 residents have been helped through Croydon Discretionary Fund. The Council will be launching a Social Letting Agency in March 2018
- 3.24 The Council has introduced compulsory landlord licensing scheme covering 29,000 properties with the purpose of improve housing conditions in the private sector, improving working relationships between the Council and private sector landlords and eliminating rogue landlords. A key outcome have been increased improvement notices and the enforcement of housing standards.
- 3.25 Croydon Choice the Council choice based letting service went live in May 2017. This has transformed the lettings process enabling housing register applicants to bid on properties that they are interested in, putting them at the heart of the process.
- 3.26 Croydon Council has committed to working with Croydon Citizens, and London Community Land Trust to explore opportunities for affordable housing delivery through a community land trust (CLT). As part of any scheme that comes forward the CLT would be responsible for building permanently affordable housing to meet local needs both now and in the future.

- 3.28 However housing costs continue to rise and many Croydon residents are finding it increasingly difficult to afford local homes due to falling incomes and ongoing benefit changes including the impact of Universal Credit. The Council will continue to work in this area to find homes for all against the national context of a crisis in affordable homes.

SUPPORTING RESIDENTS TO BETTER TIMES

- 3.29 The OFC vision for Croydon was to be of a high wage high skilled economy where people were paid the London Living wage, young people in our most deprived areas were offered work experience and the Council and other employer offered greater childcare options and flexible working. OFC recognised that financial inclusion and support and advice deeper within the Community were key to helping the most deprived residents grasp the opportunities of Croydon's regeneration.
- 3.30 The Council response to the London Living Wage, the objectives of the Good Employer Charter (GEC) and support to SME has been set out earlier in this report. The Council has obtained Timewise accreditation and is working towards becoming a Flexible working Borough. Signatories to the Good Employer Charter are also encouraged to adopt flexible working patterns as part of the Include All element as a means to encourage flexible working practices across the Borough.
- 3.31 The One Croydon approach through the Alliance partnership embraces using GP practices through the Integrated Care Network programme as community hubs to prevent social isolation. One Croydon is also developing an approach to health and social care which is person centric and community led.
- 3.32 The Gateway service has had a critical role in financial inclusion. For the first 7 months of 17/18, 5033 residents have been supported, with £6.6m extra income being awarded for these residents per year and £107k reduced in debt. Out of the 5033 residents supported, 440 were care leavers. In addition to these numbers, personal budgeting support has also been given to 1,141 residents on Universal Credit. The Council has continued to develop its work with Croydon's Credit Union. Over the last seven months we have continued to see an increase in membership with now over 4,750 members.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The OFC carried out 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 in preparing the detailed findings.

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Approved by: Ian Geary Head of Finance Department Head of Finance Resources

6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 The Solicitor to the Council comments that there are no specific legal considerations arising from the recommendations within the report.

Approved by: Sandra Herbert Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of the Director of Law and Monitoring Officer

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

7.1 There are no direct human resources impacts arising from this report

(Approved by: Gillian Bevan Acting HR Partner on behalf of the Director of Human Resources)

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 The OFC sought to understand the issues and challenges faced by the people of Croydon in order to build and create a fairer and better place to live for all. From the work of the OFC Council created the Council created Opportunity and Fairness Plan setting out the Council's Equality objectives 2016-2020. The impact of the Council's achieving of the plan actions are embedded within the Ambitious for Croydon performance framework.

CONTACT OFFICER: [Sarah Ireland, Director of Commissioning & Improvement]

Background documents: none