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| 20 March 2014 | | ITEM: 8 |
| Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee | | |
| Fairness in Thurrock Review | | |
| Report of: Councillor Richard Speight, Chair of the Fairness in Thurrock Review Panel. | | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | Key Decision: Key | |
| Accountable Head of Service: Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive | | |
| Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive | | |
| This report is Public | | |
| Purpose of Report: To inform the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the findings of the Fairness in Thurrock Review Panel. | | |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed on 12 September 2013 to establish a Task and Finish group to look at ways other local authorities deploy equality commissions within budgetary constraints and progress equality issues within their localities. The panel's overall aim was to make recommendations on the relevance of a commission for Thurrock, other alternatives, as well as any costs involved.

The Fairness in Thurrock Review Panel was subsequently established and undertook this investigation, finalising the report in March 2014. The attached Fairness in Thurrock Review report in Appendix 1 contains the findings for consideration by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 To note the Fairness in Thurrock Review Panel report attached at appendix 1.**
- 1.2 To agree the recommendations contained within the report at appendix 1, following which a report will be submitted to Cabinet.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 The Fairness in Thurrock review panel undertook an investigation into Fairness Commissions, examined best practice and explored how Commissions can be delivered within budgetary constraints.**

- 2.2 At the first meeting of the Fairness in Thurrock Review Panel on 12 November 2013 the panel were particularly interested in mapping the pathway of inequality for children and young people (from birth to age 21). As a result, an analysis of the current data available was undertaken so that an informed data comparison of children and young people's life chances by ward area could be made.
- 2.3 The panel engaged with officers across the Council to evaluate the current strategies, action plans, partnerships and boards that attempt to tackle inequality and to identify whether a Fairness Commission would add value to the equalities agenda in Thurrock.
- 2.4 The panel also held a Stakeholder Workshop on 30 January 2014 to consult with partners who could be involved in the work of any future Fairness Commission – potential future Commissioners – in order to seek their views and establish whether there was any support.
- 2.5 The full background, methods and activities of the Fairness in Thurrock Review Panel are attached at appendix 1.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

- 3.1 All issues and options are considered within the report and attached at appendix 1.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- 4.1 The Fairness in Thurrock Review Panel was established by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 September 2013. The panel has a duty to report back to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee with its findings.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 A stakeholder workshop was held and key partners from the voluntary and community sector invited in order to evaluate current policies that attempt to tackle inequality in Thurrock and to determine whether there would be any support for a Thurrock Fairness Commission.
- 5.2 Participants at the workshop included representatives from Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERRIC), Open Door, Thurrock Coalition, Thurrock CVS, Thurrock Centre for Independent Living, One Community Development Trust, TRUST, Ngage, Essex Police and a spokesperson from the Troubled Families Initiative.
- 5.3 An open discussion took place on Fairness Commissions and whether this would add value to the equalities agenda in Thurrock.

- 5.4 During the review the user-led organisation of Thurrock Coalition ran an engagement workshop with their partners – Thurrock Diversity Network (TDN). Thurrock Diversity Network has a broad membership base of 45 individuals and organisations with an interest in disability issues in connection to Thurrock. Through a series of group work, feedback and discussions they provided a report which informed the work of the Fairness in Thurrock Review. The full report is enclosed in full and summarised within the Fairness in Thurrock Report attached in appendix 1.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 6.1 This will have an important positive impact on a number of corporate priorities as outlined below:

- **Create** a great place for learning and opportunity
- **Encourage** and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- **Build** pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities
- **Improve** health and well-being

A Fairness Commission would also have a positive impact on a considerable number of other priorities, including:

- The Health and Well-being Strategy to ***reduce and mitigate the impact of child poverty.***
- The Community Strategy, of which one priority is to improve health and well-being and the specific objective to ***reduce inequalities in health and well-being.***

It would also support good policy and decision making by ensuring that any strategy, policy, plan or change initiative which is proposed by the council addresses inequality.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
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It is anticipated that if a Fairness Commission was agreed to be established and progressed within existing resources costs would be minimal. It is expected that a Thurrock Fairness Commission would be facilitated by existing staff and incorporated into current workloads and priorities.

This decision was supported by Directors Board in January 2014 where it was resolved that a lead contact be established in each service area to support the work of the Thurrock Fairness Commission and that this work would be coordinated by an officer from the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit.

By taking a partnership approach it is hoped that the Commission will share venue spaces and it would be expected that no venue hire charges will be incurred, alternatively internal committee rooms could be utilised within the Council Offices for free of charge.

Potential costs that may be incurred could include travel expenses for local Commissioners, refreshments and postage costs. Any work undertaken should support the Council's new ways of working and as a result it is not considered that there would be any significant additional costs.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Telephone and email: **01375 652087**
david.lawson@bdtlegal.org.uk

There are no legal implications arising from this report beyond the fact that this recommendation will contribute towards good and informed governance as to our equality duty.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Telephone and email: **01375 652186**
nwarren@thurrock.gov.uk

The Council is under a statutory duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations. The Fairness commission could provide a positive mechanism for review of progress in meeting the equality duty.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Details of background papers that were used in preparing this report are detailed in the Fairness in Thurrock Review Panel report attached at appendix 1.

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Appendix 1: Fairness in Thurrock Report (March 2014)

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