

Southampton Fairness Commission

Draft Introduction and Terms of Reference:

A Vision of Fairness for Southampton

1. The Southampton Fairness Commission will look into how to make the City a fairer and more equal place to live and work. Its aim is to set forward a vision for Southampton that could inform, influence and inspire the council, its partners and others, including the public and local employers. It will lead by example and work for change that will improve the quality of life for everyone in Southampton.

Background

2. The proposal for establishing a Southampton Fairness Commission is set against a context of economic austerity. The City's overall future prosperity will be best assured where all local citizens are able to share in any benefits of this.
3. To make Southampton fairer means reducing poverty and inequality in the areas that matter most to people's life chances. The gap between some areas within the City, when compared with the local, regional and national average is significant, on a range of poverty and life chance indicators.
4. Based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010, Southampton is the 81st most deprived local authority in England:
 - In total, 23% of our residents live in the some of most deprived Local Super Output Areas in England.
 - More than a quarter of children (26.1%) live in poverty compared to a region average of 15% and a national average of 20.6%.
 - Disability free life expectancy is lower than the national average at 60.9 years for men and 63.4 years for women compared with 61.7 years and 64.2 years respectively
 - Men living in deprived areas of the city can expect to live 7.7 years less than the city average.¹
5. The current economic climate, coupled with the impact of wide reaching Welfare Reforms and reductions in public sector funding, increase the risk of inequality. Addressing poverty and low incomes is therefore one of the central concerns of the council.

¹ The Southampton Profile: An Analysis of Gaps and Needs.
http://www.southampton-connect.com/images/Where%20are%20we%20now%20-%20all_tcm23-323566.pdf

The Role of the Commission

6. The Commission has been established to:
 - Identify inequalities and challenges in the City and develop a strategic approach to fairness and equality.
 - Improve understanding of fairness and equality, through the examination of the key thematic priorities of:
 - An aspirational and prosperous City: education, employment and pay.
 - Communities working together: access to a better local environment and services.
 - Local democratic representation and Influence: increasing citizen, community and voluntary sector involvement.
 - Set forward a vision for fairness - that will inform, influence and inspire the Council and partners.
 - Identify and examine ways partners can work together to develop innovative responses.
 - Develop evidence based, policy recommendations and responses to promote equality and fairness through the work of the council and partners.
 - Inform and influence budgetary decisions proposed by the Council.
 - Influence corporate and civic behaviour of others in the city.

Scope and Boundaries

7. The Commission will work within the following boundaries:
 - An extensive body of evidence exists about the nature and extent of inequality in the UK and the damaging effects of inequality on wider society. The work of the Southampton Fairness Commission will build on this and not seek to replicate research that has already been done in this area.
 - 'Fairness' should be the guiding principle which underpins the way that we plan budgets and deliver services. The Commission will consider how the Localism Agenda can deliver fairer outcomes for people in Southampton, in particular looking at how we can make the best use of our powers, duties, and resources to get the best and fairest outcomes for residents.
 - The work and recommendations of the Commission should help us to build consensus in the city when we have to make difficult decisions so that these decisions, and the way in which we make them are seen as fair and do not lead to greater inequality.
 - The Commission will focus on areas in which there is the greatest potential for the council and its partners to influence outcomes, either through the use of local powers and resources or by using our voice to campaign regionally and nationally for better outcomes for Southampton residents.
 - Perceptions of unfairness are important because they can fuel tensions, distrust and conflict, even when the perception is not an accurate reflection of real inequalities. The Commission will consider ways to effectively challenge perceptions of unfairness, in order to

foster greater cohesion in communities and greater trust between the City's residents and its institutions.

Structure and Membership

8. Chair: The Commission will be chaired by an independent person who will provide strong leadership and set the strategic direction.
9. Vice Chair: The Commission will also have a Vice Chair. This will be an elected Member of Southampton City Council.
10. Recruitment to the Commission will be open and by application. It is proposed there should be a broad mix of expertise amongst Commissioners.
11. Commissioners: The Commission will comprise representatives from the public, private and voluntary sector. They will be 'Ambassadors for Fairness' within their own organisation and will be responsible for taking recommendations back to their own organisations whilst using spheres of influence to implement recommendations. They will help to shape and promote the work of the Fairness Commission; identifying practical ways of making Southampton a fairer place and working collaboratively across different sectors to reduce inequalities.
12. The role of the Commissioners:
 - To agree and shape the aims and methodology of the Commission including the consultation approach and the information and research requirements
 - To attend and participate in a series of public meetings to hear the views of Southampton residents and other stakeholders
 - To review the analysis of the evidence, submissions and other feedback received from residents and groups
 - To agree final findings and recommendations and report these in early 2014.
13. Supporters: Supporters can decide how they wish to be involved. This may involve taking part in surveys, consultation activity, attending meetings or themed events, making pledges, or simply giving us their contact details so we can keep them informed with what is happening. They will be able to commit as much or as little time as they wish.

Engagement and Inclusion

14. In its public engagement and development of the recommendations and Final Report, the Southampton Fairness Commission will have regard to:
 - Timescales: the report to council will be submitted in early 2014.
 - Council Data: the council will supply a synthesis of data and any existing analysis about the City, its residents and characteristics as context.

- Council Plans - the council will supply information about its existing strategies and plans including budget information as context for the Southampton Fairness Commission's recommendations.
 - Inclusion - The Southampton Fairness Commission will encourage and empower neighbourhoods as well as communities of interest and expertise to put forward their views about Council priorities and budgets and to influence any decisions about allocation of resources.
15. The Southampton Fairness Commission will work with Southampton's community and voluntary sector organisations that advocate for improvements in the quality of life of residents and visitors, especially those who face disadvantage because of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, age, gender re-assignment, or because they are carers of older or disabled people.
16. The Southampton Fairness Commission will make particular effort to reach out to people with multiple needs who often find it hard to make their voices heard, so that they have every opportunity to be engaged in its work and to influence Council priorities.
17. Accessibility - the Southampton Commission will ensure that all public meetings are accessible and that a range of alternative channels are made available to ensure the Commission is accessible to all residents.
18. Communication - the Council will maintain an open channel of communication with the Southampton Fairness Commission.

Timeframe

19. The Southampton Fairness Commission is focused on inspiring change that is deliverable in the period of the current Comprehensive Spending Review (i.e. until 2015) but will provide a sound platform for reversing current negative trends and achieving lasting change by the year 2020. The Commission will be time-limited and meet up to 6 times during 2013/14. A final report will be submitted to Southampton City Council's Cabinet in early 2014.

Reporting and Monitoring

20. Once the Commission has reported its recommendations, Cabinet can formally consider them with a view of adopting the proposals and a mechanism for monitoring progress against each agreed recommendation will be established.