

12 September 2013		ITEM: 9
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Fairness in Thurrock		
Report of: Councillor Lynn Worrall, Portfolio Holder for Communities		
Wards and communities affected: ALL	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Accountable Head of Service: Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy		
Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: This report explores what information the Council has on fairness within Thurrock, what work is already being undertaken, options regarding joining up this work and what other work we need to undertake to further understand and better address issues of local inequality.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee has asked for a report to be given to the Committee exploring the evidence and issues relating to fairness across Thurrock including what work is already being undertaken, options regarding joining up this work and what other work we need to undertake to further understand and better address issues of local inequality.

The purpose of the report is to provide Corporate Overview and Scrutiny members with an overview of the current situation and initiatives and put forward some recommendations/options for moving the agenda forward.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- 1.1 Agree to set up a Task and Finish group to explore a corporate approach including consideration of best practice examples, including the potential for a Fairness Commission**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 The current economic context is having a significant impact on equality and fairness. Significant demographic changes highlighted in the census data, major policy shifts in terms of the welfare reform agenda and the major**

economic challenges facing the public sector risk making communities unequal and unfair. In this difficult economic context the issue of equality and fairness will become more important and increasingly fundamental to both our moral and legal duty to promote equal life chances for all our residents.

2.2 The issue of data is an important theme in terms of understanding inequalities and at present the council has a range of data held in different places. Some of the headline inequalities highlighted from the demographic analysis from the Census and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) are:

2.2.1 Age profile

Thurrock's overall age population profile is broadly similar to statistical partners however the profiles of each ward are significantly different. For instance, the highest percentage of under 15s in Thurrock is heavily clustered around the south of the Borough in the areas of Tilbury St Chads, Chafford and North Stifford, South Chafford and Thurrock West and South Stifford. Conversely, the highest rate of over 65s reside in the north of the Borough in areas such as Orsett, Corringham and Fobbing. By 2033, the population group aged 50-64 in Thurrock is projected to have increased by 50%, and the population group aged 85 plus is projected to double.

2.2.2 Mortality Rates

Wards in the south of the Borough such as Tilbury St. Chads, Grays Riverside, Belhus and Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park have premature death rates that are much greater than wards in the north of the Borough.

2.2.3 Education

Thurrock has some of the best and worst levels of education affluence/deprivation in England, depending on the area of the borough

2.2.4 Physical Activity/Obesity

Thurrock has a higher prevalence of obese adults (16+) than most comparators. Obesity prevalence across Thurrock is largely, although not exclusively, linked to deprivation with nearly a third of people in the areas of Tilbury and in the East of Thurrock being classified as being obese. Again there is a strong link between deprivation and childhood obesity. Compared with CIPFA areas, Thurrock has the highest prevalence of childhood obesity, which is again linked to areas of high deprivation.

2.2.5 Smoking

Smoking prevalence is not distributed evenly within Thurrock but largely linked to deprivation levels. The greatest prevalence of smoking is in Grays, Tilbury St.Chads, Tilbury Riverside and parts of Stanford East and Corringham Town.

2.2.6 Housing

Nearly half of people in Corringham and Fobbing own their property outright, whilst three quarters of people in Chafford and North Stifford own their own home with a mortgage. This compares to Grays Riverside and Tilbury St. Chads where the majority of residents rent their property.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

For communities to thrive people must feel they are being treated fairly and have equal changes to enjoy a good quality of life. Whilst data can help us understand the prevalence of inequality, community engagement and partnership working is needed to understand the impact and to build capacity within communities to tackle inequalities.

What do we already have in place?

3.1 Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA)

An EqIA is carried out whenever the council is planning, changing or removing a service, or developing a policy, plan, strategy or function. The requirement to carry out an appropriate analysis of equalities is established by the Equality Act 2010. The process aims to support good policy and decision making by ensuring that any strategy, policy, plan or change initiative which is proposed by the council (proposed step) addresses inequality.

3.2 Community Strategy

The Community Strategy is the long term vision and overarching direction for Thurrock to realise opportunities and potential across the borough and to address local needs. It sets the overall strategy and ambition to deliver change over the next decade. The Community Strategy was agreed unanimously by Council in September 2012.

The Community Strategy has 5 priorities one of which is:

- Improve health and well-being

This priority has 3 objectives, one of which is specifically

- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being

Although this priority/objective is the primary medium for initiatives regarding inequalities, all 5 of the corporate priorities link into the various areas where inequalities may impact on the lives of Thurrock residents. Another specific link is priority 3, **Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities**, which aims to build strong communities as a commitment to tackling inequality.

3.3 Health & Well-being Board (HWB)

The HWB brings partners together to lead the integration of health and well-being services across the NHS and local government; to assess the community's assets and needs; and has developed a Health & Well-being Strategy to improve the health and well-being of the community and to reduce inequalities. As such, the HWB is the lead body for Community Strategy priority "*Improve health and well-being*".

The Board's vision is for "Resourceful and resilient people in resourceful and resilient communities". The Board has four aims:-

- Every child has the best possible start in life
- People stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Inequalities in health and well-being are reduced; and
- Communities are empowered to take responsibility for their own health and well-being

The Strategy has a number of clear priorities and objectives and spans both adults' and children's issues. The children's element of the strategy is managed by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, arrangements – but with reporting to the Health and Well-being Board.

3.3.1 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

One of the key pieces of intelligence used by the HWB in developing its priorities is the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The JSNA aims to provide a 'big picture' description of health and well-being in its widest sense. Where data sources are available, it focuses down to ward and Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) to describe and highlight differences in the health and wellbeing status of populations living in different areas within Thurrock.

3.3.2 Building Positive Futures

The *Building Positive Futures* (BPF) programme was launched in March 2012 as Thurrock's response to the Ageing Well agenda, and to take forward the initiatives approved by Cabinet in December 2011 aimed at improving cooperation between housing, health and adult social care, in order to meet the needs of an ageing population.

BPF also encompasses the council's transformation of adult social care. The BPF programme is a key element of the Health and Well-being Strategy.

Building Positive Futures centres on three main themes:

- Better health and wellbeing: to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and residential care and to reduce length of stay where admission is needed

- Improved housing and neighbourhoods: to give people more - and better - choice over how and where they live as they grow older
- Stronger local networks: to create more hospitable, age-friendly communities

Each of these themes is linked: high-quality homes, in towns and villages, with services and support to build resourceful, resilient, self-reliant communities.

A progress report on Building Positive Futures was presented to HWB O&S on 11 June 2013 and progress reports are regularly taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

3.3.3 Child Poverty

One of the aims within part 2 of the Health and Well-being Strategy (focused on children and young people) is to **reduce and mitigate the impact of child poverty**. A lot of work is undertaken within Children's Services to help reduce the inequalities within our young population. As well as the overriding HWB action plan, the council has adopted a specific Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan, supported by needs analysis.

There are also some new focussed initiatives such as

- the "Early Offer of Support Strategy" and "Troubled Families Initiative" which assist parents who are struggling to bring up families
- "Wishes Project" which secures adult learners on the pathway to work, thereby taking them and their families out of poverty
- Raising attainment of children who receive free school meals (FSM). In Thurrock, children on FSM now do well in education terms, indeed Ofsted specifically noted good progress on eliminating the gap in attainment for pupils in FSM.

3.3.4 Public Health

Public Health came under the responsibility of the council formally from 1st April 2013. This puts the council in a strong position to set the strategy and actions to combat some key health inequalities issues facing the borough, including the two key issues of smoking and obesity.

The Annual Public Health Report is being taken to Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee and onwards to Full Council in October 2013 which includes details about the work being undertaken in this area. Report available via CMIS.

- 3.3.5 The HWB Strategy has a very clear action plan and performance framework which is monitored closely and reported to the HWB and to the **Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee**, and for issues relating to children and families to the **Children and Young People's Partnership**, then onto HWB Board.

3.4 Community Safety Partnership

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) is central to delivering Thurrock Council's strategic objective to ensure a safe, clean and green environment. It aims to reduce crime, disorder, antisocial behaviour and other behaviour affecting the local environment, as well as reducing the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and reducing the fear of crime.

The TCSP Plan outlines some of the risk factors and areas of focus which have been identified through undertaking a strategic assessment about the scale and scope of crime, disorder and community safety issues within Thurrock including understanding the patterns, trends and shifts relating to crime and disorder and substance misuse.

This strategic assessment has identified where there was a prevalence of crime-related issues in certain areas of Thurrock and amongst certain diversity groups and has plans in place to combat this.

The TCSP Strategy has a very clear action plan and performance framework which is monitored closely and reported to the TCSP and the **Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee**.

3.5 Work with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Groups

Thurrock Council has a good record of positive engagement with the voluntary, community and faith sector. The council works closely with Thurrock CVS and has refreshed the **Thurrock Joint Compact** during 2012-13 which is a framework to support and inform joint working across sectors for the benefit of residents and communities in Thurrock. The five key principles reflect commitments in the National Compact. One of the 5 principles is specifically "*an equal and fair society*".

This is key to service delivery strategies when looking at how, at a local level and with specific groups, we can reduce the impact/ improve levels of inequalities. How we work with our voluntary, community and faith group partners is also crucial in building the capacity and resilience to sustain initiatives.

3.5.1 Community Hubs

Within the context of the Corporate Plan, the development and roll-out of community hubs will facilitate a new relationship and way of working between the Council and communities. It will also enable, under the umbrella of the Community Engagement Strategy, a consolidated approach to a range of 'localism' initiatives, including; Asset Based Community Development, Local Area Co-ordination, Community Led Planning and Community Councils. These, alongside an increased focus on volunteering, build an ambitious vision of shared leadership between communities and public services to realise and deploy all of a community's resources to build resilience and strength within neighbourhoods.

3.5.2 The Community Hub programme seeks to empower stronger communities that are resilient to any future reduction in public funding. In doing so the ambition for Council services for Community Hubs include:

- Opportunities to realise integration of health and social care budgets.
- A focus for Local Area Co-ordinations and citizens engaged with Asset Based Community Development to explore ideas and connect people so they are better supported in the community, by the community.
- The development of community plans to prioritise local improvements.
- The place where people think of first if they cannot find what they are looking for via the web.
- Where a community solution is the first consideration with traditional services sought where specific needs are required.

3.5.3 This will allow for a genuine co-production approach, greater empowerment and say from within communities on where and how effort and resources should be focused, and the shape and identity of services available. It will enable each hub to be designed and operated in a way that best suits local needs and circumstances.

3.6 Annual Equality Report

The Annual Equality Report was presented to Council in March and highlighted some of the equality challenges ahead for Thurrock including the recruitment of a more diverse range of foster carers to meet the needs of children in care, tackling health inequalities, improving educational attainment, working with partners to create more employment opportunities for young people, and tackling hate crime in the borough. The report concluded that *“the equality challenge is now more complex but also more important than ever before. Meeting this challenge will require both strong corporate leadership and a real commitment from all sections of the Council”*.

3.7 Ward Profiles

Demographic profiles for most of the wards in Thurrock were developed during 2012-13 which provide detailed data on the population, deprivation levels, income and employment, housing, health, employment and education. These profiles provide a ranking of each ward in the analytical field.

3.8 Public Sector Social Values Act (PSSVA)

Since 31 January 2013, the Public Service Social Value Act 2012 establishes responsibilities for all public authorities to:

- consider not only how to improve the economic, social and environmental, well-being of the area served by them through their procurement activities, but also to
- undertake the process of procurement with a view to securing that improvement and measuring its attainment during the life of the contract

The advent of the PSSVA provides a catalyst for the Council to develop a bespoke approach to measuring the impact for communities gained not just through commissioned activity, but also through the design, development and delivery of our services, strategies, policies and programmes (a commitment from the Council also outlined in the Thurrock Joint Compact).

The Social Values Framework for Thurrock is still in development stage, however already has support in principle from Leadership Group, Joint Strategic Forum and the Thurrock Business Forum.

3.9 Welfare Reform

The changes brought about by the recent welfare reform legislation is already starting to have an impact on people's lives and will continue to do so in the short-medium term.

The council has set up a Welfare Benefits Reforms task and finish group whose remit is to examine and review the different aspects of the Welfare Benefits Reforms that the council is tasked with implementing.

The aim is to ensure that a wide range of views, inputs and experiences from different people in the council and local community is received and represented when developing and implementing new local welfare support schemes and initiatives.

This focussed approach ensures that the welfare support services / provision delivered by the council takes into account and, best meets the needs of all residents that are impacted by the current and future welfare benefits reforms.

The group meets monthly comprises the Director of Adults, Health & Commissioning (chair), portfolio holder, senior representatives from Job Centre Plus (part of Department for Work and Pensions), Thurrock Coalition (a local community and user led organisation), Citizens Advice Bureau and council services.

3.10 Local Living Wage (LLW)

The implementation of the LLW was initiated by a Council motion in July 2012 and considered and supported by Corporate O&S in September 2012. Adopting the LLW is entirely voluntary. The LLW differs from the national minimum wage in that it is set by law and is at present below the levels of a LLW. The LLW can have a positive impact on the income of lower paid staff. Council agreed the implementation of the LLW (£7.48 per hour) for Council employees effective from 1 April 2013.

It is anticipated that the introduction of a higher pay floor for council employees, who are 75 – 80% Thurrock residents, will provide an economic boost to the community which will be enhanced if the concept is extended to contractors and other businesses in Thurrock who can be persuaded to follow the example.

3.11 Example of best practice from other authorities

3.11.1 Fairness Commission

Fairness Commissions have been set up by a number of local authorities including Islington, Liverpool, Newcastle, York and Tower Hamlets Councils. These Fairness Commissions differ in their scope and approach but all are looking at ways to narrow the gap between the “disadvantaged” and the “advantaged” within their areas. They have aimed to build a stronger social contract between residents; they have also been used to demonstrate a stronger commitment to the wider equality and human rights duties. The remit of the Fairness Commission is to gather evidence, and with cross party support, make recommendations about action plans, and practical steps to tackle inequality and make sure that equality and fairness underpins the decisions which affect communities.

The starting point for most of these Commissions has been to look at the data first. Information such as life expectancy, infant mortality, obesity, crime rates, anti-social behaviour, bullying, qualifications, recycling, transport, accessibility, teenage pregnancy, littering, owner occupation, voting turnout, unemployment, average wage, fuel poverty.

Examples of Fairness Commissions
<p>Islington Fairness Commission - the first local area to establish a Fairness Commission and publish a report. The Commission launched in June 2010 and was chaired by Professor Richard Wilkinson and Cllr Andy Hull. http://www.islington.gov.uk/about/fairness-commission</p>
<p>Liverpool Fairness Commission - chaired by Claire Dove MBE DL, Chief Executive of Blackburne House, Women's Technology and Education Centre. http://liverpoolfairnesscommission.com/downloads/Fairness_Report.pdf</p>
<p>Newcastle Fairness Commission - launched in the summer of 2011 and published their report in July 2012. The Commission was Chaired by Professor Chris Brink of Newcastle University. http://www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal/fairnesscommission</p>
<p>York Fairness Commission - sponsored by the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, and Chaired by Ruth Redfearn. http://www.yorkfairnesscommission.org.uk/report-download.html</p>

3.11.2 Local Government Information Unity (LGIU) have produced a briefing paper on Fairness Commissions. This has been attached as Appendix 1

3.12 How do we join it up?

The issues and initiatives around reducing inequalities are cross council, cross theme and cross partners. As highlighted above, there is already significant work and progress taking place. The issue is so wide ranging that it is too vast for one individual governance process, and indeed there are already governance and performance management frameworks in place for some areas eg HWBB/HWB O&S and TCSB/ CGS O&S.

It is therefore recommended that Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee set up a Task and Finish group to explore a corporate approach to reducing inequalities. This will include further exploration of what is already in place, what is being developed, analysis of the need and liaison with other O&S committee colleagues (eg HWB and CGS). It could also include reviewing of best practice examples, including the experiences of Fairness Commissions in other areas of the country.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- 4.1 The Health & Well-being and the Cleaner Green Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committees are already monitoring the progress and impact of the HWB/TCSP Strategies and Plans. Currently the council has a Single Equality Scheme which sets out the way the authority plans to tackle equality issues. However, the formation of the Task and Finish group is a good opportunity to consider other ways of bringing together a diverse set of partners to explore the cumulative effect of these challenges and inequalities within Thurrock.

Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee has the constitutional remit to lead on and coordinate cross cutting issues.

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

- 5.1 There has been no consultation on the issues explored in this report.

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 in particular the objectives around health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
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There are no financial costs associated with these proposals. However, any initiatives commissioned as a result of this may well entail future financial implications, which will need to be considered as appropriate.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
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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: **Samson DeAlyn**
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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 may provide a positive mechanism for review of progress in meeting the equality duty.

7.4 **Other implications (where significant)** – i.e. **Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

There are no other relevant implications.

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

All reports below available on the council's Committee Management Information System (CMIS) <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock/Home.aspx>

- *Annual Equality Report* – Council, 27 March 2013
- *Community Hubs – Implementation Phasing* – Cabinet, 10 July 2013
- *Census 2011 Release Update* - Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 25 June 2013
- *Health & Well Being Strategy* – Council, 27 March 2013
- *Single Equality Scheme* – Council, 24 April 2013
- *Pay: 1% Pay increase for 2013/14 and becoming a local Living Wage Employer* - Council, 24 April 2013
- *Pay: Becoming a Local Living Wage Employer* – Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 11 September 2012

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Appendix 1 – LGIU Fairness Commissions briefing paper

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