



**Executive**  
6 April 2009

**Report from the Director of  
Environment and Culture**

Wards Affected:  
None

**Achieving Fairtrade Borough Status for Brent**

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-08/09-41

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report outlines the work undertaken to date within the Council and through the voluntary Brent Fairtrade Network to promote Fairtrade in the borough and to achieve Fairtrade borough status. It also seeks Executive approval to agree a new Fairtrade resolution to support the application for Fairtrade Borough status.

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Members of the Executive are recommended to:

- (a) Agree to support the application for Fairtrade Borough status by Brent, thereby supporting the Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade Towns Initiative.
- (b) Agree to continue to serve Fairtrade tea and coffee products at Council and Executive meetings and to encourage this arrangement in other meetings organised by the Council where the public is involved.
- (c) Agree to encourage the wide use of other Fairtrade products at meetings of the Council, Executive and other meetings organised by the Council where the public is involved.
- (d) Note that a range of Fairtrade products will be provided in Council refreshment areas and where appropriate support for the promotion of the Fairtrade Borough initiative will be provided in internal and external communications.

(e) Agree to continue to support the work of the Brent Fairtrade Network.

### **3.0 Detail**

#### Introduction

- 3.1 Fair trade is trade which promotes sustainable development by improving market access for disadvantaged producers. It seeks to overcome poverty and provide decent livelihoods for producers through a partnership between all those involved in the trading process; producers / workers, traders and consumers. This is in line with the Executive's commitment to promote sustainability as one of its four key priority objectives.
- 3.2 To enable consumers to make informed decisions on a range of products, a number of certified "marks" or "labels" have emerged which producers can use under license providing they sign a legal agreement committing them to achieve certain fair trade standards. To this end, the Fairtrade Foundation's "Fairtrade Mark" is the label used in the UK to denote fair trade goods.
- 3.3 Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO) is the umbrella organisation uniting the national initiatives including the Fairtrade Foundation. FLO acts as a certification body, setting fair trade standards and monitoring producers to ensure that they meet the standards and that individual producers are benefiting from the fair trade arrangements.
- 3.4 In November 2004 the Executive considered a previous report on supporting the achievement of Fairtrade Borough status for Brent. At the time the Executive resolved:
- (i) that the work undertaken to date by the Brent Fairtrade Network in support of achieving Fairtrade Borough status for Brent be noted;
  - (ii) that it be agreed at future Council and Executive meetings fair trade tea and coffee products will be served;
  - (iii) that it be agreed where appropriate, and within existing resources and relevant legislation, Officers investigate and seek to implement opportunities for taking further action in support of the uptake of Fairtrade products (as detailed in paragraphs 7.10 – 7.12 of the report).
- 3.5 The Council's support for Fairtrade now needs to be updated in order to strengthen the application for Fairtrade borough status due to be submitted to the Fairtrade Foundation by the end of April 2009.

#### Fairtrade Towns Initiative

- 3.6 In addition to product certification, the Fairtrade Foundation, through its 'Fairtrade Towns Initiative', encourages local action to promote the sale and purchase of fair trade goods at a local level. This initiative began in the UK in 1999 and there are now over 400 authority areas confirmed as having Fairtrade Town/Borough/City status, with a further 200 or more working towards meeting the necessary criteria laid down. In London, 20 boroughs

have achieved Fairtrade Borough status to date whilst the remaining boroughs, including Brent, are working towards meeting the criteria.

- 3.7 To achieve Fairtrade Borough status the area must realise five goals set down by the Fairtrade Foundation. These are:
- The local council resolves to support Fairtrade, and agrees to serve Fairtrade coffee and tea at its meetings and in its offices and canteens.
  - A range of (at least two) Fairtrade products are readily available in the area's shops.
  - Fairtrade products are served in local cafés/catering establishments.
  - Fairtrade products are used by a number of local work places and community organisations (estate agents, hairdressers, churches, schools etc)
  - Media coverage and popular support for the campaign is achieved.
  - A local Fairtrade steering group is convened to ensure continued commitment to its Fairtrade Town status.
- 3.8 Target numbers of retail and catering outlets are based on the local population size. In Brent, this means that there needs to be 28 retail and 14 catering outlets serving a range of (at least two) Fairtrade products. This criterion has taken some time to achieve. So far 15 workplaces and 10 cafes have been identified. Other voluntary actions are also detailed as being recommended but not required to achieve a declaration; the Brent Fairtrade Network has developed an extensive portfolio of voluntary actions to support the borough's application.
- 3.9 Furthermore, in March 2003, the Mayor of London launched the Fairtrade London campaign aimed at making London a Fairtrade City, primarily by encouraging boroughs to take action themselves. A steering group was established to monitor and sustain this move towards achieving Fairtrade City status. Having met the criteria to apply for Fairtrade City status, which required a minimum of 17 Greater London Fairtrade boroughs, London was declared the world's largest Fairtrade City in October 2008.

### Brent Fairtrade Network

- 3.10 At the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2003, the then mayor Cllr Peter Lemmon expressed a desire, as part of his mayoral term, to progress Fairtrade issues in Brent. To that end a voluntary group was established and the Brent Fairtrade Network (BFN) was launched in April 2004 to work towards achieving Fairtrade Borough status for Brent.
- 3.11 The BFN now has 85 members and has worked closely with the Council over the last 5 years to promote Fairtrade in the borough through events, stalls and publicity. It has also formed sub-groups to promote action in areas such as schools, churches, shops and at community events. Council officers attend BFN meetings to assist the group and contribute where appropriate to external community-based action and inform on internal Council action.
- 3.12 BFN has now assembled the data needed to apply for recognition for Brent as a Fairtrade Borough. However, BFN has been advised by the Fairtrade

Foundation that a new resolution passed by the Council will strengthen the application.

### Brent Council and Fairtrade

- 3.13 Brent Council recognises that, as an important consumer and opinion leader, it should support a strategy to facilitate the promotion and purchase of foods and other products with the FAIRTRADE Mark and become a Fairtrade Borough in order to:
- Demonstrate its commitment to sustainability
  - Support a fair deal for marginalised producers in poor countries
  - Reflect Brent's multiple links with countries that produce Fairtrade products
  - Be recognised by the residents and business community of Brent, suppliers, employees and other local authorities, as a Borough that actively supports and promotes Fairtrade
- 3.14 The Council has consistently supported the BFN and its activities since its inception in 2004. Council officers have demonstrated the Council's commitment by:
- Attending meetings, following up actions, taking minutes for the Network and arranging venues for activities
  - Organising and staffing Fairtrade events throughout the year
  - Creating and managing Brent Fairtrade webpages
  - Managing the Fairtrade email account
  - Promoting Fairtrade through several of the Council's different forums and initiatives (e.g. Brent Sustainability Forum)
  - Preparing articles and adverts to publicise Brent Fairtrade Network's work in the media
  - Collating information and working with the Network to write the Fairtrade borough application.
- 3.15 As part of the 2004 resolution, and to meet the first goal set out in paragraph 3.5 above, the Council agreed to serve Fairtrade tea and coffee at Council and Executive meetings. The Corporate Support service unit currently provides such products as options on the refreshments ordering list for Town Hall meeting room users and in the Town Hall canteen area.
- 3.16 Other Council services have been encouraged to adopt a similar approach including arrangements for meeting room refreshments services. The Environment and Culture Directorate has been using Fairtrade coffee, tea and sugar over the past 4 years.
- 3.17 Annually, a series of internal and external activities are organised as part of Fairtrade Fortnight; recently a varied programme of events were held between 23 February and 8 March 2009 to mark Fairtrade Fortnight.
- 3.18 Although it will be dependent on the success of the BFN in meeting the remaining goals of the Fairtrade Borough initiative, it is hoped such an accreditation status can be achieved towards summer 2009.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 National data on the price differential between Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade products has shown that the former are currently not necessarily more expensive. Any financial implications will depend on the specific products chosen and the volumes purchased. The current supply of such products at the limited number of Council and Executive meetings has not entailed any significant additional costs and has been contained within existing budgets. This is also the case in the supply of Fairtrade products in the Environment & Culture Department.

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 Fair trade is aimed at helping producers and workers in developing countries, including helping them achieve a fair price for their products on the international market. The Fairtrade Foundation is the UK body which awards a certified consumer label to identify items which are considered by them to meet agreed standards of fair trade. There are other certified bodies and marks used in other countries (see paragraphs 3.2 – 3.3 above).

5.2 In making purchases of goods, including tea and coffee supplies, the Council is subject to a number of statutory requirements, in particular the European Procurement Regulations, the Local Government Act 1999 (Best Value) and section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988 (exclusion of non-commercial considerations in local authority contracts).

5.3 The limited additional cost that may be incurred in implementing the specific proposals in this report concerning the supply of Fairtrade products for Council and Executive meetings is considered to be de minimus for the purposes of these statutory requirements, although officers should ensure that cost and quality issues are properly taken into account when purchasing these products. However, it will be important that in developing any further initiatives in this area the implications of the statutory requirements are carefully considered by officers with support from Legal Services.

5.4 Under section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988, local authorities are prohibited from taking into account “non-commercial” considerations in the award of contracts. Non-commercial considerations include taking into account the country or territory of origin of a contractor’s supplies. Arguably this would apply to the Council’s requirement that its catering suppliers have to supply fair trade tea and coffee. However it is considered that in light of the overall size of the annual purchase of tea and coffee compared with the overall size of the Council’s total requirement for catering supplies, and the fact that fair trade is seen as an initiative to be supported by most companies within the catering industry, the likelihood of a challenge is extremely low.

## **6.0 Diversity Implications**

6.1 Whilst there are no direct local diversity implications arising from this report, the Fairtrade Foundation and the purchasing of fair trade products enables

“better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. By requiring companies to pay above market prices (to producers), fair trade addresses the injustices of conventional trade, which traditionally discriminates against the poorest, weakest producers”.

- 6.2 Fair trade promotes equality and goes a long way in promoting diversity issues. Achieving Fairtrade borough status and having the Council recognised as an active fair trade supporter is one opportunity to project the Council’s position on equalities and strengthen Brent’s multiple links with countries that produce Fairtrade products

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications**

- 7.1 We will continue to allocate staff time as we have done in the recent past to the promotion and progression of Fairtrade within the Council’s activities, requiring some level of commitment from Heads of Service and the Procurement Team. Some time within the existing allocation of resources will also be required to complete the Fairtrade borough application working with the BFN.

### **Background Papers**

- 1. 2004 Council Executive Fairtrade resolution**  
<http://intranet.brent.gov.uk/commins.nsf/603d903f15b2571d80256dd9006a0886/f53d7bd729c13be980256f4700686e37!OpenDocument>
- 2. The Fairtrade Town Action Guide**  
[http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/includes/documents/cm\\_docs/2009/a/action\\_guide\\_final\\_1208.pdf](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/a/action_guide_final_1208.pdf)
- 3. Oxfam Guide for Local Authorities**  
<http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/fairtradeoxfamguidance>
- 4. List of London Fairtrade Boroughs**  
[http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get\\_involved/campaigns/fairtrade\\_towns/towns\\_list.aspx](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get_involved/campaigns/fairtrade_towns/towns_list.aspx)

### **Contact Officers**

Jeff Bartley – Environmental Projects & Policy Manager  
Email: [Jeff.bartley@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Jeff.bartley@brent.gov.uk)  
Tel: 020 8937 5535

Ines Carvalho – Environmental Projects & Policy Officer  
[Ines.carvalho@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Ines.carvalho@brent.gov.uk)  
Tel: 020 8937 5326

Richard Saunders  
Director of Environment & Culture