



Cabinet
7 September 2020

Report from the Assistant Chief Executive

A Fairer Future – Ending Poverty in Brent
Report and Recommendations from the Brent Poverty Commission

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt	Open
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Report and Recommendations Appendix 2: Comments from the Joint Scrutiny Briefing
Background Papers	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 Brent's Poverty Commission was established at the end of January 2020. This report sets out the Commission's report and recommendations. It seeks agreement on acceptance of the recommendations and the steps to be taken to start putting these into effect by the Cabinet.

2.0 Recommendations for Cabinet

2.1 To consider the Commission's report and recommendations attached as Appendix 1.

2.2 To agree that the recommendations should be accepted and the steps to be taken to implement these. For any recommendations that are not accepted it is suggested that the Cabinet should agree on the reasons to be given.

- 2.3 To agree publication of a council response to the Commission's report and a delivery plan for implementation of agreed recommendations.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Poverty Commission was commissioned by the council's Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, Cllr Eleanor Southwood in January 2020. It was independently chaired by Lord Richard Best. The terms of reference for the work are included in the attached report.
- 3.2 In addition to the Chair, the Poverty Commission was comprised of experts across a range of sectors and policy areas at local, regional and national levels. Although established and with officer support provided by the council, the Commission itself was fully independent and non-party political. The work of the Chair and Commissioners has focused on four work streams, housing, economy and jobs, tackling financial exclusion, and local welfare. The Commission found that these issues are frequently inter-related and that those in poverty often face challenges across these areas. The Commission's work was carried out against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic; which highlighted the inter-related impacts of poor housing, low incomes and health has reinforced the key themes of the Commission's report and informed many of its recommendations.
- 3.3 The Commission has taken an evidence based approach. Between January and June 2020 it has heard about the experiences of and challenges facing people in poverty in the Borough, from residents experiencing poverty, community groups supporting residents in poverty and from councillors, and council officers working in services addressing the causes and consequences of poverty. The lived experience of poverty in Brent – and of actions taken by organisations to tackle it – is illustrated by a number of case studies, some collected by the Smith Institute, others provided by organisations represented on the Commission. A Member Engagement session on 19 May 2020 provided all councillors with an opportunity to feed into the Commission's work. The findings from these form the basis of the report and the recommendations.
- 3.4 The report and recommendations were scrutinised on 18 August at a Joint Scrutiny Briefing chaired by Cllr Ketan Sheth and attended by members of both the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. Comments from that meeting are attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.5 The Poverty Commission's report, "A Fairer Future - Ending Poverty in Brent" is attached as Appendix 1. It makes 43 recommendations – six overarching "Overall" recommendations and 37 more detailed ones for the council. These focus on the areas of housing, economy and jobs, financial inclusion and welfare.
- 3.6 Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations set out in paragraph 2 above. Once agreed, this work will move into the implementation stage that will be

underpinned by a delivery plan with key milestones and outcomes. Cabinet will be kept updated on progress of this work on a regular basis. For any recommendations that are not accepted it is suggested that the Cabinet should agree on reasons to be given. It is suggested that a formal response should be prepared and published, setting out next steps.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The financial implications from the report and recommendations will need to be developed and considered as the council's detailed response to the issues raised is developed.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Legal advice will be required in respect of the implementation of a number of the recommendations should they be accepted by the council.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 Brent is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion; the council is determined to be an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and human rights and it is our policy to treat everyone fairly and with respect. We aim to ensure that all our current and future residents, staff and stakeholders are treated fairly and receive appropriate, accessible services, and fair and equal opportunities.

- 6.2 This commitment requires that equality considerations play a key role in our decision-making processes and that our policies are fully compliant with the duties placed on us as a public sector body by the Equality Act 2010. Our Equality Analyses (EAs) ensure that we follow through on our commitment to equality and they provide a method for clearly demonstrating the necessary legal compliance.

- 6.3 The Equality Act 2010 replaced the pre-existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The legislation covers the exercise of public functions, employment and work, goods and services, premises, associations, transport and education. The act prohibits victimisation and harassment, and all of the following forms of discrimination: direct; indirect; by association; by perception; or discrimination arising from disability. When considering the Public Sector Equality Duty pursuant to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,

- 6.4 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The purpose of the duty is to enquire into whether a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision. Due regard is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances.

6.5 The Poverty Commission's work will support Brent Council in ensuring it continues to meet both its declared commitments and its public sector equality duties. Detailed equalities assessments will be carried out as details of the steps to be taken to address those of the Commission's recommendations the council decides to accept are drawn up and taken forward.

7.0 Any Other Implications (HR, Property etc. - if necessary)

7.1 There are no other implications at this stage.

8.0 Proposed Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

8.1 The Lead Member Cllr Southwood has been consulted throughout the process. Ward Members are represented on the Commission and feedback from stakeholders form part of the Poverty Commission's findings. A Member engagement session for all councillors was held on 19 May 2020 led by Cllr Southwood and attended by the Chair Lord Richard Best.

Report sign off:

Shazia Hussain
Assistant Chief Executive