

**Poverty and Worklessness Commission meeting minutes**  
**8:30am, Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016**  
**Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith**

**Present:**

**Commissioners:**

William Atkinson  
Paul Doe  
Alison Inglis-Jones  
Joanna Kerrison  
Henry Peterson  
Howard Sinclair  
Christina Smyth  
Alex Tambourides

**LBHF:**

Cllr Sue Fennimore  
Tom Conniffe  
Lee Fitzjohn  
Ulrich Morin-Medjiako  
Rob Rix  
Helen Rowbottom

**Apologies:**

Shani Lee

The following summarises the discussion of the Hammersmith & Fulham Poverty and Worklessness Commission's second meeting. Please contact [tom.conniffe@lbhf.gov.uk](mailto:tom.conniffe@lbhf.gov.uk) for more information.

**1. Data assessment: emerging themes**

The report provides an economic perspective, with the potential for a deeper exploration of the data.

**Improving business survival and resilience**

The borough has a high business density and a strong economy, based on services and small businesses. The growth of businesses is very good. However, there is high business churn in the borough, and business survival is a major issue, unlike in other boroughs of a similar economic makeup.

**Strengthen the economic base of the borough with stronger sectors**

The borough is losing high value industries for low value industries; there is a depleting communications sector after losing the BBC and a growing retail sector after the expansion of Westfield. This is the first year the major impact of the BBC leaving is known but the hypothesis from the council's Insight and Analytics team is

that the industry mix will still be an issue and priority in 5 years' time. This is leading to an increasing reliance on smaller and micro-businesses.

#### Understand and address skills shortages from local business

There is a mismatch between available jobs and skills; lots of businesses across the borough report vacancies and skills gaps.

#### Improve employment opportunities for those aged 35+

The borough has a primarily young population, but there is not an unemployment issue for younger people (NEETs). The 35+ cohort is where the concern begins, which could be due to a skills gap. Long-term worklessness and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) employment are major issues.

#### Improve the attractiveness of part time work and elementary occupations

The majority of unemployed people are not doing apprenticeships (only 614 people in borough are). Local, unemployed people (2500 in total) are not applying for the available part-time jobs, so the borough imports 3000 people to do these jobs.

The north of the borough has significantly higher numbers of people on JSA than the south of the borough, and the density of these claimants is clustered around estates. Due to the borough's diverse mix of housing tenure and value the area mapping does not reflect the scattered residencies of many unemployed people across this borough, which is invisible from the data. Invisible cohorts include poorer people in the private rented sector, who are hidden from the map of averaged figures.

#### Focus on mental health; improve employment opportunities for those with long term conditions (LTC's)

The borough's biggest health issues are mental health and behavioural disorders. More people are claiming employment support allowance (ESA) due to mental health issues than are claiming job seeker's allowance (JSA) overall. There is a national trend of more people claiming ESA due to mental health reasons, but the borough has higher than national average rates, and this is increasing.

The highest concentration is for 35+ year olds living in single units on the Edward Woods estate. Since the Homelessness Act, vulnerable people, often with mental health issues, are given a one bed flat on these premises, which could explain the concentration of mental health issues on the Edward Woods Estate.

In order to strengthen the borough's economy, the Commission needs to focus on the economically inactive – those who are unwilling or unable to work – not just people who are unemployed.

#### Improve the employment rates for people from BAME backgrounds

There are low employment rates for BAME communities.

#### Improve wellbeing for -vulnerable older people

There is a lack of informal care, and many people are isolated.

### Address the affordability of local housing

Very few people both work and live in the borough, with the most basic flats now costing over £600,000. The average monthly rent is over £1000. There is growing income inequality in the borough, with more areas become deprived while richer areas are getting much richer, which is skewing the data.

According to a questionnaire currently on the Shepherds Bush Housing Association website, 50% of people applying for the Right to Buy are on full housing benefit.

The Commission should look to the development in the north of the borough surrounding HS2 at Old Oak. The big influx of construction workers in the next ten years will put pressure on prices in the private sector. The Olympic Park provides a useful comparative area.

### Data and information sharing as a barrier to success

To crack this problem, the Commission must move away from an averaged geographic understanding of borough data to a granular understanding of household membership.

Information-sharing between departments, local authorities and partner agencies is key to this shift away from prioritising areas to prioritising households.

It would be then be useful to map local estimates of wellbeing data by area, rather than the current borough-wide statistic.

## **2. Forty Years On – Earlier programmes and interventions in H&F (Paper 2)**

The council has a history of ambitious intervention with a huge range of government initiatives. Despite this, interventions haven't been effective, and weren't monitored properly. Housing affordability has always been key to what happens in the borough. Poverty and income inequality is getting worse. It feels like people have become 'stuck' in the borough, and are still struggling to find work.

## **3. Lessons from other Commissions**

Other existing commissions had a range of suggested interventions but no evaluation measures. The Commission's work will include an evaluative framework to provide evidence for the efficacy of interventions.

## **4. Commission partners**

Job Centre Plus is assisting the 'harder to help' in the borough – those who are unemployed for over a year. As part of Spending Review, the government has announced a different approach on Work Programmes, and the Commission could influence this. A devolution versus localism conversation is happening across Whitehall, with a paper due from the Department for Work and Pensions in early 2016 about ESA.

## 5. Commission priorities and further analysis

The 11 priorities provided by Insight and Analytics and driven by borough-wide data will be the focus of the Commission's "deep dives". Another useful source of data and analysis is the London Poverty Profile, with three of its top four priorities focussing on housing. The Commission will focus on sustainable solutions for the long-term.

Conclusions and further analysis:

- A spatial area or geographic focus has not worked well in the borough due to the mix of tenure from street to street.
- More detailed information about cohorts, such as the BAME community or households and families, would be useful to identify which groups within these cohorts need support.
- Self-employed people are some of highest earning people in the borough, so including them in the poverty and worklessness statistics could be misleading.
- Qualitative information would open up another level of detail and insight.
- Employment opportunities related to the infrastructure of Old Oak has both potential and high risks.
- The borough has good performance around education and skills, which could mean that it is 'losing talent' in an economic life cycle as people increase their earning agency and leave.
- The Commission should analyse data about what people actually earn to understand what 'poor' means in the borough, and look into the Living Wage.
- Longitudinal mapping of common mental health problems alongside JSA would show whether there has been any change in that ESA population over the last 10 years, and could pinpoint where preventative intervention has stopped people becoming unemployed, homeless etc.

Subject specialists from the council, such as Housing colleagues, can add to the Commission's work. The Housing Commission and the new Business Commission (looking into business start-ups and deaths) are also relevant, and this Commission can collaborate with them on areas of mutual interest. The Commission will issue a call for written evidence and qualitative data.

### **ACTIONS**

LF: Investigate further areas of research identified by the Commission.

SF: Identify the Leader's Public Health contact, who could be a Commissioner.

AIJ: Contact Martin Lewis to gauge his interest in becoming a Commissioner.

TC/HR: Scope the qualitative research requirements.

LF: Scope the quantitative research requirements.

TC: Issue a call for written evidence.