

## Fairness Commission Update from Sally Polanski 28/09/15

So the B&H Fairness Commission kicked off last week. As a member of the Commission, I'll endeavour to update CW members as things progress. Here goes for now:

- The inaugural meeting involved lots of presentations from senior officers and politicians at BHCC, providing important context for the 12 Fairness Commissioners (remember many come from outside the city). We heard about the new Labour Administration's hopes for the Fairness Commission, the challenges and opportunities facing the city, the financial context, the geography of Greater Brighton and the current picture around inequalities.
- We had a brief but promising discussion with the senior leadership at BHCC. There is a genuine appetite for the Commission to be 'disruptive'; we will be asking questions around why things are done in a certain way and how can they be done differently.
- When officers had left, we reflected on what we'd heard and began planning the task ahead, led by our chair, Vic Rainer (CEO of SITRA). While the task is big, the Commissioners bring an impressive range of skills and experiences (I don't count myself in that!). I am hopeful that we will work well together to come up with some recommendations for change, which will make a difference in our city.
- We touched on the challenges around engaging people in the Commission process. There is already a lot of evidence around inequalities in the city and people have said to me that more of this isn't needed. Similarly, inviting the community to put forward ideas for change is commendable, but suggesting solutions without contextual knowledge and understanding can sometimes be difficult. Notwithstanding these challenges, it is important that there is an opportunity for local people to share their experiences and that the Fairness Commission listens. More thought will be given to this when our focus becomes clearer and we know what we're asking people to engage with.
- Commissioners began to consider the themes which the 5 public meetings (Nov-March) will focus. No firm decisions were reached. We agreed that we can't possibly cover all areas. Between now and the next meeting in October, we will clarify our rationale for deciding on which areas we will focus – which are most important to our city and those where we can have greatest impact.

So, not masses more to share as yet. But if you'd like to discuss the Fairness Commission, please do get in touch, especially if you want to suggest a theme/focus which should be prioritised above all others.

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