



STEVENAGE EQUALITIES COMMISSION

Community Voices Sub Group Information Pack

Chairs Introduction

I have lived in Stevenage for 47 years, my children and grandchildren were born here and this is where I began my social work career. “I’m really honoured to be in this role as chair of this commission at this extraordinary time, where Stevenage Borough Council, like many authorities around the country are looking at themselves and saying: ‘How can we be better?’ ‘How can we deliver services on a more equitable level and how can we be a beacon of good practice?’”

‘There are a range of things people can do’

We all have a role to play, be it male allies against sexism, white allies against racism or non-disabled people against inequality for disabled people.

There are a lot of things people can do, some might be big, and some might be small, but they all add up to something special.

“I believe that we owe it to future generations to try and change our world and make it a more equitable place so that everyone benefits from the same opportunities and outcomes in life. That is why I am so excited about heading the commission in Stevenage, I hope that we can play a small but significant part in shaping Stevenage to be one of the best places in the country to live in.”

I am encouraged by the spirit in which everyone has been approaching the commission’s work and the will to work together to make improvements.

I know that some of the things that we will be exploring will be uncomfortable, however being honest about uncomfortable truths and having a plan to put them right is a prerequisite for a successful commission.

How to get involved

The independent commission will be speaking not just to the council, but to a whole range of local organisations and groups, and to businesses. Members of the public will also be invited to share their views with the commission before it reports its initial findings to the council.

Errol John

*Errol John: MBA, Certificate in Qualified Social Work (CQSW)
Social Welfare, Charities and Community Sector Consultant
Independent Chair: Stevenage Equalities Commission*

SBC Executive Member for Communities, Community Safety and Equalities Introduction

I have represented the people of Stevenage as an elected member for over 20 years, more recently I have been honoured to take on the role as executive member for Communities, Community safety and Equalities. Following the brutal killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA in May 2020 and subsequent demonstrations exemplified through the Black Lives Matters movement globally, nationally and locally in Stevenage, Stevenage Borough Council agreed to establish an Equalities Commission. Along with other elected members I championed this motion, to provide the people of our town with an independent Equalities Commission, a body made up of community members and organisations, independently chaired, focusing on the disproportionate impact of inequalities on the lives of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals and communities in Stevenage.

Whilst there has been some progress on equalities issues in Stevenage over a number of years, there is clear recognition that more needs to be done. My hope is that The Equalities Commission will drive forward a number of recommendations in order to create lasting change for communities across the town and where all residents feel included.

The Equalities Commission has full backing of Stevenage Borough Council and over the next year will undertake a strategic assessment of the nature, extent, causes and impact of race inequality in Stevenage and make recommendations for tackling them to create lasting change for communities across the town and ensure all residents feel included.

The Stevenage motto “the heart of a town, lies in its people” is used far and wide across the borough but in this instance it could not be more relevant, this town belongs to all of us, it is our home, our community and our children’s future and that makes it all the more important to ensure that all voices are not just heard but listened to, respected, appreciated, understood and represented.

So please, if you can, get involved, give us your ideas and contributions, the good and the bad, hold us accountable to our promises and help us to make sure we live up to our motto.

Jackie Hollywell

Jackie Hollywell: SBC Executive Member for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities

Background & Purpose

Following the brutal killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA in May 2020 and subsequent demonstrations exemplified through the Black Lives Matters movement globally, nationally and locally in Stevenage, Stevenage Borough Council agreed to establish an Equalities Commission.

Whilst there has been some progress on equalities issues in Stevenage over a number of years, there is clear recognition that more needs to be done. The Equalities Commission will drive forward a number of recommendations in order to create lasting change for communities across the town and where all residents feel included.

The Equalities Commission is being established as a body that is independently chaired, focusing on the disproportionate impact of inequalities on the lives of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals and communities (BAME). The Commission will undertake a strategic assessment of the nature, extent, causes and impact of race inequality in Stevenage and make recommendations for tackling them.

The commission will also consider wider issues of inclusion for other sections of the community where inequalities are experienced and will maintain an effective dialogue with the town's Social Inclusion Partnership to tackle these.

Objectives

- To consider the nature, extent and impact of racial disparities on BAME individuals and communities in Stevenage, and the implications for the town as a whole.
- To invite written and verbal evidence from a wide range of interested parties across the town (and beyond it) particularly those with lived experience.
- To consider evidence on what has worked with regard to reducing racism and race inequalities within the town and elsewhere.
- To establish a wider community dialogue with the town's BAME communities to make further clear recommendations to the council and other public bodies on further actions required to tackle discrimination and reduce inequalities across the town.
- To ensure that Stevenage Borough Council's HR and management policies fully meet the requirements for equalities, diversity and inclusion in the recruitment and career progression of all staff and to promote best practices to all employers in the town.
- To stimulate and listen to debate amongst the people of Stevenage about inequality and inclusion.
- To work with our partners in Stevenage Together to ensure we are all listening and engaging with our BAME communities as we plan the future of our town together.
- To engage with Hertfordshire County Council to address systemic issues of racial inequality and disparities, and their impact on BAME communities across Hertfordshire.

Community Voices Group Role & Responsibilities

The Commission will operate as a team, draw on the skills and talents of each member, and work toward common goals to ensure success. It is important that the Commission is made up of people with a range of skills and expertise to support its objectives and those of the communities on which it is focussed. The Commission will look to the Community Voices group to help advice and inform its work within the community

Community Voice Members are expected to:

- Help to promote and contribute to the work of Stevenage Equalities Commission through their community contacts.
- Attend and contribute constructively to meetings when possible and have good communication and team-working skills.
- Use their background knowledge and experience to advise and assist with the Commission outcomes and recommendations.
- Use their knowledge, skills & understanding to help advice, guide and direct the work of Stevenage Equalities Commission to benefit the community.

What support will I get from The Equalities Commission & Stevenage Borough Council?

- As part of a team, you will be supported and guided by the chair, other commission members & Stevenage Borough Council Officers.
- All personal information and contact information will be kept secure in line with current GDPR guidelines and will not be disclosed to third parties.

What happens now?

If you are interested in joining the Stevenage Equalities Commission Community Voices Group or would like any further information please email us at, equalities.commission@stevenage.gov.uk.