

# Summary of Stevenage Equalities Commission Recommendations

## Introduction

The Stevenage Equalities Commission was set up in April 2021 following a motion carried by the Council; to address the inequalities for Ethnically diverse communities in Stevenage. The purpose of the Commission was to assess the nature, extent, and impact of racism and racial disparities in the town and to make recommendations for tackling them. This was prompted by the death of George Floyd and the disparities highlighted through the Black Lives Matters movement.

Following the successful recruitment of 18 commissioners, the Commission held its inaugural meeting in August 2021. The membership consists of 10 people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities along with 8 members representing organisations providing county-wide and local services.

The independently chaired commission has been supported by Stevenage Borough Council through initial funding and the provision of officer support. Since December 2021, the Commission has secured £40,000 of external funding to deliver on its recommendations, including making training available for SBC elected members and direct delivery officers in areas such as racial literacy and cultural competence as part of the legacy group work.

The objectives of the Commission as laid out in its terms of reference are as follows.

- 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 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 engage with Hertfordshire County Council to address systemic issues of racial inequality and disparities and their impact on BAME communities across Hertfordshire.

At the outset, 5 major areas were identified for exploration:

- Health
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Business and Employment (SBC & Town Wide)
- Sports, Arts, Leisure and Culture

Statutory representatives from each of the five areas were sought to sit on the commission, with positive responses from all. These representatives have engaged fully with the process, driving forward the conversation around inequality for ethnically diverse communities as well as in the case of Health representatives, providing extensive funding for ongoing initiatives.

The engagement of these organisations alongside the continuing dialogue with other service providers who the Commission wish to engage with in the future is essential in the delivery of the recommendations as laid out below. The driving force behind this will be the SEC legacy group with continued support and associations provided by SBC. The ongoing work of the commission alongside the support of Stevenage Borough Council has meant that much of the groundwork towards the delivery of the recommendations is already underway.

Following review, an appendix to this document will outline the methods in which the research for each area was conducted alongside the rationale behind each recommendation.

## Recommendations

### Stevenage Borough Council Specific Recommendations: Leadership – A Call to Action

Recommendation	Details	Partners	Officer	Status
Legacy Working Group	<p>The council with its partners should make a commitment to establishing, and supporting an Independent Legacy Group that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Council and its partners in sharing the Commission’s findings with Stevenage residents, key stakeholders, community groups, businesses, and wider audiences.</li> <li>• Keep the fire in the bellies of stakeholders burning to maintain the passion, energy, and momentum for change.</li> <li>• Provide external scrutiny, community accountability, and support to key stakeholders with the implementation of the recommendations</li> <li>• Facilitate the creation and constitution of a sustainable Legacy Body that will be able to attract its own funding and resources to build community assets and develop more effective mechanisms for community engagement so that they are empowered to play an equal part in co-producing culturally appropriate solutions to major issues that blight their lives.</li> </ul>	SEC Commissioners	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	Funding obtained to support legacy group for 12 months

Recommendation	Details	Partners	Officer	Status
Political Representation	Political leaders in Stevenage provide support for developing a plan to increase the numbers of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic people in political representation. The main parties to look at clear action plans with measurable targets and take proactive steps to achieve diversity in selection and election.	Elected Members	Gemma Maret coordinating with Member Services C&N Policy	Partnership work with relevant departments and the opportunity to be built into members training programme
Civic Leadership Programme	The Council and its partners to take the lead and Launch a Civic Leadership Programme targeting underrepresented communities who are interested in standing for public roles. They can be assisted in this endeavour by local organisations and tapping into established schemes run by Operation Black Vote to develop people's skills and interest in participation and standing for civic and public roles. This recommendation is relevant across the Commissions 5 priority areas where there is under representation on boards, governors, magistrates, and other leadership roles.	Elected Members County Councillors Youth Parliament & Youth Council	Gemma Maret coordinating with Member Services C&N Policy	Work with youth parliament and youth council as well as the development of an engagement vehicle for young people
Strengthening Community Development	Work in partnership to help communities develop as assets to help shape solutions: The Council should work with its partners to develop strategies and plans to ensure that more grassroots minority-led and specialist, voluntary or community sector organisations are able to access the resources they need to deliver restorative services and provide support to the Council and other agencies to fulfil their obligations under The Equality Act.	Community Centres CDA Herts	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N and Estates	Development of existing partnership work for town events as well as representation from legacy group in SIP
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan 23/24	Integrate these recommendations Into SBC EDI Action Plans and ensure that they are reflected in the relevant portfolio holders' plans.	SEC Commissioners	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N Policy	EDI Action Plan 23/24 includes relevant SBC recommendations, particularly the establishment of a Legacy Group which will oversee the work with partners

## Recommendations for Commissioners and Funders

Recommendation	Details	Partners	Officer	Status
Review and monitor funding and distribution strategies	<p>Commissioners/Funders should ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The design of funding criteria reflects the requirements of the communities they serve.</li> <li>Consultation and co-production are built in to ensure partnership and ownership.</li> <li>Long-term funding for community development, capacity building, and innovation.</li> <li>Funding applications and procurement processes are as accessible and inclusive as possible.</li> <li>Support is provided to overcome barriers that may exist.</li> <li>Bid writing and Fundraising support is available to community organisations.</li> </ul>	<p>SEC Commissioners Stevenage Community Trust Social Inclusion Partnership</p>	<p>Gemma Maret coordinating with C&amp;N</p>	<p>Social Inclusion Partnership collaborative funding vehicle</p>

## Recommendations for the Criminal Justice System: Ensure Justice is fair for all

Recommendation	Details	Partners	Officer	Status
The Commissions Legacy Group:	The Commissions Legacy Group: should share the Commissions work with agencies working within the Criminal Justice System, to build a level of expectation and challenge.	<p>SEC Commissioners</p>	<p>Gemma Maret coordinating with C&amp;N</p>	<p>Funding obtained to support legacy group for 12 months</p>
Tackle Racial Inequalities in the Criminal Justice System	Agencies working within the Criminal Justice System, in the administration of their duties and powers, should take action to eliminate differential treatment and processes, that result in continued discriminatory outcomes for individuals and communities of different ethnicities.	<p>Police Probation Judiciary System</p>	<p>Gemma Maret coordinating with C&amp;N, Community Safety</p>	<p>Take advice from community safety around delivery of forum/focus group</p>
Build Trust and Confidence with communities	Make use of local advisory groups and ensure they are made up of diverse community groups/ individuals and representatives from all relevant organisations. In this way local issues can be discussed and data such as stop and search, sentencing trends, hate crime	<p>Police Probation Judiciary System</p>	<p>Gemma Maret coordinating with C&amp;N, Community Safety</p>	<p>Take advice from community safety around delivery of forum/focus group</p>

Recommendation	Details	Partners	Officer	Status
	and implementation of the police race action plan can be scrutinised, and action plans created implemented and monitored.			
Training	Develop a training program for relevant organisations within the criminal justice sector encompassing racial literacy and cultural competence that is created and delivered in partnership with people from impacted communities that can be delivered throughout agencies and organisations working within the criminal justice system across the town.	SEC Police Probation Judiciary System	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N, Community Safety	Funding in place for training
Outreach work	Engage with communities to listen to concerns and develop joint solutions to address trust and confidence gaps.	SEC Police Probation Judiciary System	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N and Community Safety	Take advice from community safety around delivery of forum/focus group
Recruitment	Community campaigns to increase workforce diversity at different levels	SEC Police Probation Judiciary System	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N and Community Safety	Take advice from community safety around delivery of forum/focus group

### Recommendations for Education: Ensure that no child is left behind

Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
The Commissions Legacy Group:	The Commissions Legacy Group: should share the Commissions work with governors to build a level of expectation and challenge to schools via governor input.	SEC Commissioners	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	Funding obtained to support legacy group for 12 months
Collect and forensically analyse data at a local level	Relevant education organisations and services should make a concerted effort to collect and forensically analyse data at a local level that will give better insight into the nature of racial disparities in Stevenage schools and support the development of comprehensive strategies to address expressed areas of concern. The following areas should be given attention:	HCC Stevenage Education Trust	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	Stevenage Education Trust represented on SEC and working with commissioners.  STEM project and youth engagement vehicle

Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are racist incidents reported and handled in schools - numbers, and locations?</li> <li>• Emotional support for pupils and families affected by racial incidents?</li> <li>• What is the level and types of exclusions for different ethnic groups of pupils?</li> <li>• What are the patterns for managed moves and home schooling?</li> <li>• Make up of pupil referral units?</li> <li>• Who monitors trends, patterns, and facilitates sharing of good practice?</li> <li>• What is the make-up of staff and governors in our schools?</li> <li>• Inclusion and progression</li> <li>• Curriculum diversity - consider how the curriculum reflects and embeds Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities' histories.</li> <li>• The level of engagement of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic parents and carers in school forums?</li> </ul>			
Event for Stevenage schools	Relevant education organisations and services: should also create a workstream to give a longer-term focus to tackling racial disparities and be actively involved in the data collection, analysis, and strategy development.	HCC Stevenage Education Trust	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	STEM project and youth engagement vehicle
Increase the diversity of staff in leadership roles and as governors.	Relevant education organisations and services: should make concerted efforts to increase the diversity of staff in leadership roles and as governors.	HCC Stevenage Education Trust	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	Stevenage Education Trust represented on SEC and working with commissioners
Leaders and teachers undertake training on race equality and racial literacy	Training: Relevant education organisations and services - should ensure that leaders and teachers undertake training on race equality and racial literacy to equip them with the understanding about the ways in which race and racism work in society, and to	SEC Stevenage Education Trust	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	Funding in place for training

Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
	have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to implement that understanding in teaching practice.			

### Recommendations for Sports Arts and Culture:

Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
The Legacy Group	Continue engagement with relevant leisure, sport, culture, and arts organisations to develop action plans to increase the participation at all levels of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities in the Sporting, Artistic, and Cultural life of the Town.	SEC	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	Funding obtained to support legacy group for 12 months  SEC to work with SFCF on increasing attendance of minority groups at matches and barriers to inclusion
Heritage project	A project that will document the contributions of the diverse communities of Stevenage since its inception. The work can be developed in partnership with local community organisations.	Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre	Heritage project	A project that will document the contributions of the diverse communities of Stevenage since its inception. The work can be developed in partnership with local community organisations.

## Recommendations for Business and Employment

### Employment SBC:

Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
The Commissions Legacy Group:	To share the Commission's work with relevant SBC Business Units to collect race and ethnicity data.	SEC Commissioners	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	Funding obtained to support legacy group for 12 months
Workforce data: Relevant SBC Business Units:	SBC to continue drilling down into workforce data to tease out BAME specific issues.		Gemma Maret coordinating with HR C&N Policy	Meeting with HR to discuss
Independently Review	Relevant SBC Business Units should; enable the independent review of Equality impact Assessments on a regular basis.		Policy	Recommendation incorporated into the EDI Action Plan 23/24
Undertake an audit of current race equalities data	SBC and the Legacy Group in conjunction with strategic public sector bodies and third sector organisations: Undertake an audit of current race equalities data, internal and external from partners to collect and share complete and robust data on ethnicity and other intersecting characteristics across social, health, economic and environmental factors.	SEC HCC	Gemma Maret coordinating with Policy C&N	Linked to the review of the HR workforce data, and existing action in the SBC EDI Action Plan for Corporate Policy to share/promote the demographic data of the E&D Annual Report to help shape services

### Business Recommendations:

Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
The Legacy Group	The Legacy Group Compile: a register of minority owned business to include in business directories and share the findings and recommendations of the Commission's report with SBC and its relevant business and economic support partners.	SEC, WENTA, LEP Business Technology Centre	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N Business Relationship Manager	Funding obtained to support legacy group for 12 months



Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
Launch a Race Equality Charter for Businesses.	SBC and partners should: Launch a Race Equality Charter for Businesses. The Council should sign up to The Race at Work Charter or create a bespoke charter to utilise the calls for action within, to take practical steps to ensure workplaces are tackling barriers minoritised people face in, recruitment, progression, and workplace experiences. They should lead by example and promote the charter to businesses, statutory and third sector organisations, contractors and suppliers of services encouraging them to sign up. This could also provide a mechanism for bringing people together to report and share good practice.	WENTA LEP Business Technology Centre	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N Business Relationship Manager	To be aimed at businesses and to encompass all protected characteristics
Build opportunities specifically designed to bolster Black Asian and Minority Ethnic businesses	SBC in conjunction with relevant business and economic support partners should: Build opportunities specifically designed to bolster Black Asian and Minority Ethnic businesses who are under the local radar, including: creating spaces for local businesses and entrepreneurs to connect, networking and support groups, educational resources, mentorship programs, and financing — These activities will contribute to a supportive and healthy business ecosystem.	WENTA LEP Business Technology Centre	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N Business Relationship Manager	Take advice form business relationship manager around delivery of forum/focus group

#### Recommendations for Health:

Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
The Commissions Legacy Group:	The Commissions Legacy Group: should share the Commissions work with agencies working within the Health System, to build a level of expectation and challenge.	SEC Commissioners	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	Funding obtained to support legacy group for 12 months
Review and analysis of the local and	SBC and Health partners should carry out a thorough review and analysis of the local and countywide health inequalities outcomes data amassed since Covid and the	NHS Trusts HCC	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N	SEC working with NHS Trusts and Mind around mental

Recommendation	Details	Partners	SBC BU	Comments
countywide health inequalities outcomes data	death of George Floyd to gain a more accurate picture of the extent to which racial health disparities exist in Stevenage.	Mind Healthy Hubs Everyone Active	Leisure	health aspects with funding obtained for this
Develop strategies and action plans to address Health inequalities for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities	SBC and its Healthy Stevenage Partners: should continue to develop strategies and action plans to address Health inequalities for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities in partnership with those communities. The commission heard evidence that racism is a public health issue that requires a public health response, this dimension should be factored into the development of strategies.	NHS Trusts HCC Mind Healthy Hubs Everyone Active	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N  Leisure	SEC working with NHS Trusts and Mind around mental health aspects with funding obtained for this
Review of funding priorities	SBC and health agencies should carry out a review of funding priorities for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and obtain funding to develop innovative and sustainable projects to tackle inequalities.	NHS Trusts HCC Mind Healthy Hubs Everyone Active	Gemma Maret coordinating with C&N  Leisure	SEC working with NHS Trusts and Mind around mental health aspects with funding obtained for this