



# Social Mobility Commission

Commission Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday 16 December 2020  
1.45 – 4.15pm

**Attendees: Commissioners**

Sandra Wallace (Interim  
Co-chair)  
Steven Cooper (Interim  
Co-chair)  
Saeed Atcha  
Alistair Da Costa  
Pippa Dunn  
Sam Friedman  
Harvey Matthewson  
Farrah Storr  
Jody Walker  
Liz Williams  
Sammy Wright

**Members of the Secretariat**

**Apologies:** Jessica Oghenegweke

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Co-chairs began with a welcome and apologies.
- 1.2. The Co-chairs informed the meeting that Minister Liz Truss was making an Equalities speech on Thursday 17 December and as part of her speech she will be announcing that the Social Mobility Commission will be moving from

the Department for Education to the Cabinet Office under a machinery of government change. The move will take place on 1 April 2021.

- 1.3. The Commission will retain its independence and sit within the Equality Hub led by Marcus Bell. The Equality Hub will move to the North of England at some point in the future though the timescale was not confirmed. Marcus Bell had been invited to join the meeting to provide some context and take any questions. Sandra sought Commissioners' views/questions and Commissioners expressed a range of views/questions.
  - 1.4. Commissioners saw the move as positive since the Commission had been recommending for some time to be located at the centre of government. It presented the opportunity for the Commission to push the agenda and show that it can be part of the solution. It also gave us the opportunity to offer advice on where the government could move on this agenda.
2. Marcus Bell, Director, Equality Hub, Cabinet Office, joined the meeting.
- 2.1. The Co-chairs welcomed Marcus to the meeting and invited him to set out his perspective on the Commission's move to the Equality Hub.
  - 2.2. Marcus gave a brief overview of the groups sitting under the Equality Hub, he talked about the work of the different groups and spoke about his overall responsibility.
  - 2.3. Marcus highlighted that it was important for the Commission to build good relationships with key ministers and officials at No 10.
  - 2.4. He also said that it would be good to understand how the Commission will work with him/civil servants so that he can support us. He cited the arrangements he has with another ALB, EHRC, where he attends board meetings and has fortnightly meetings with the CEO.
  - 2.5. He confirmed that there will be a period of dual operation with DfE until the

Commission transfers on 1 April. Marcus offered to take questions and Commissioners had an interactive session with him.

2.6. Commissioners thanked Marcus for taking the time to attend the meeting and speaking to them directly. Marcus left the meeting.

### **3. Commissioners highlights for 2020**

3.1. Commissioners were asked for their highlights of the year. Commissioners listed the following:

- The monitoring report (Alastair, Liz, Sammy, Sandra)
- Employers' toolkit launch (Harvey, Alastair, Liz)
- The long shadow of deprivation report (Pippa, Sammy, Sandra, Liz)
- Persuading Greater Manchester Combined Authority to create a social mobility strategy (Saeed)
- Engagement with Ofqual/DfE on exams and suspension of performance tables. Sitting on Ofqual's exam board. (Sammy).

### **6. Forward look to 2021**

4.1 Commissioners were asked what they wanted to accomplish in 2021. Commissioners' suggestions will be fed into the Annual Review, due out in January 2021.

### **6. Plan on a page**

6.1 Secretariat presented the 'plan on a page' from Jan-March 2021 and emphasised the work that will be carried out later in 2021. Alongside this there will also be the logistics for the machinery of government change and the state of the nation report.

## **7. Conclusions and actions**

7.1 The Co-Chairs informed Commissioners that the Secretariat will be sending them a pack of papers before the Christmas break. The pack will include a draft of the Annual Review. Commissioners' comments were sought. The pack will also include a series of briefing papers on child poverty, housing, tax and welfare, with an overview paper on race and ethnicity.

## **8. Actions**

- a) Secretariat to send a pack of papers to Commissioners before Christmas**
- b) Commissioners to feedback comments on the Annual Review**