

Appendix A

Reaching agreement on what we mean by “Fairness” and how to make it work for our community: A Fairness Square

We all have an intuitive sense of what we know as being fair or unfair. “Fairness” is therefore a fundamental principle on which our social morality is based.

Our sense of what is fair or unfair is for most, formed in childhood, and provides the intuitive guide as to how we treat others and how we wish to be treated in accessing the material and cultural assets for a rewarding life.

In plain language the basic proposition we are socialised to ask is:

“Are we all getting a fair share of the cake?”

The economic crash of 2008, the formation of the Coalition government in 2010, and this administrations response to the long-wave cycle, particularly the proposed reforms of the welfare system has brought the “fairness” debate into sharp relief.

“Fairness” is a contested concept and hence it’s importance. It is a challenge to local government to arrive at a working definition, which can inform and test decision-making in hard times and beyond. A fair Hastings will be a successful Hastings equipped for the post-austerity future.

It is therefore imperative to ensure that our corporate approach towards the potential impacts of Welfare Reform is objectified within a common “Fairness Framework. The judgements made by one section of society applying their understanding of fairness at the expense of another’s access to what is considered their fair share endangers community cohesion.

Widening disparities of wealth, opportunity and life expectancy have the potential to drive increasing social conflict: The concept of “Fairness” can, if misapplied, exacerbate rather than ameliorate these tensions.

Therefore it is necessary to lift the concept of “Fairness” out of personal value systems and find a methodology that can be readily applied to the choices facing Hastings and St Leonards.

To progress it is necessary to agree a conceptual framework for a Borough wide understanding of “Fairness” to be used objectively to test the decisions and choices we make against a set of “Fairness Principles”

“Fairness Square”

The “Fairness Square” is designed to meet this need; building a consensus around the concept of fairness which can be easily and rigorously applied to help inform the choices we make, as a community, and as a conceptual toolkit for improving the quality of life for all.

The “Fairness Square” is about a fair process to reach fair outcomes within and between our diverse and overlapping communities; we hope for and engage in seeking our fair share of the common wealth.

The potential impact of Welfare Reform on our Borough makes the duty of defining “Fairness” compelling and urgent. This review provides us with an opportunity to explore how we can define the concept of fairness in a way that can have a practical effect, informing our understanding of welfare reform, our future choices, and endorsed by the widest cross-section of the citizens of our Borough.

This review does not exist in isolation by definition this review operates across all aspects of the work of Hastings Borough Council and such our model of “fairness” has the potential to lend coherency and a clear story to the separated aspects of our work informed by the anti-poverty strategy and cutting across the different the corporate plan and budgetary considerations.

Can we make Hastings famous for “Fairness”?
Using a Fairness Square

<p>Principle 1: Fair Outcomes (Fair Share)</p> <p>1a – Those who need more should get more...</p> <p>1b – Privilege should not bring priority but need might deserve it...</p>	<p>Principle 2: Fair Process (Fair Play)</p> <p>2a – There is nothing inherently unfair about making choices...</p> <p>2b – It is fair to balance current need against future benefit, including to future generations...</p>
<p>Principle 3: Fair Opportunity (Fair Go)</p> <p>3a – Ability should be able to access opportunity regardless of circumstances</p> <p>3b – Benefit for all should be contributed to by all and hardship caused by none should be shared by all, according to their ability and resources...</p>	<p>Principle 4: Fair participation (Fair Say)</p> <p>4a – Perception of fairness is as important as the substance of it...</p> <p>4b - It is fair to expect civic responsibility from all....</p>

Using the Fairness Square

The OS Welfare Reform Review is part of this process of applying the concept of “Fairness” to the hard decisions Hastings Borough Council will have to make.