

EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT

Legal and Democratic Advisory Committee – 2 July 2015

Report of: Chief Executive

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Council’s promise to provide value for money.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Anna Firth

Contact Officer(s) Lee Banks, Ext 7161 and Sarah Lavallie, Ext 7201

Recommendation to Legal and Democratic Advisory Committee:

Members note progress against the Council’s equality aims and commitments.

Reason for recommendation: to maintain a strong record of ensuring our services are responsive to the needs of our residents and customers, whilst taking a proportionate response to implementing equalities legislation.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The West Kent Equality Partnership aims and commitments 2012 to 2016 are within the Council’s Policy Framework and were approved by Cabinet on 8 March 2012.
- 2 The West Kent Equality Partnership was formed in 2010 between Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The work of the partnership enables each authority to maintain a strong record of ensuring its services are responsive to the needs of our residents and customers, whilst taking a proportionate response to implementing equalities legislation.
- 3 The Equality Act (2010) sets out a ‘Public Sector Equality Duty’ which requires public authorities to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. As part of the duty, the Council is required to prepare and publish one or more objectives and review these at least every four years. The West Kent Equality Partnership developed a joint response to the requirement to publish equality objectives which provides a framework for each authority to set its own action plan and review progress annually. Sevenoaks District Council develops an action plan each year based on assessments carried out by services.

Equalities update

- 4 The West Kent Equality Partnership's Aims and Commitments 2012 to 2016 set out the Council's commitments as a community leader, as a service provider and as an employer. This report highlights Sevenoaks District Council's progress against these commitments.
- 5 Examples of progress in 2014/15 include providing inclusive sports sessions, renewal of the Armed Forces Community Covenant and maintaining a low gender pay gap between male and female employees.
- 6 Examples of initiatives which commenced in 2014/15 and will continue into 2015-16 include continuing to investigate the housing needs for residents with learning disabilities and continuing to develop dementia friendly communities.
- 7 To assist with these initiatives it is proposed that the Council continues to strengthen its approach by:
 - working with the Sevenoaks District Access Group to develop priorities
 - taking a more evidence based approach to assist with targeting scarce resources
 - developing our action plan into a set of outcome focused equality objectives which focus on the biggest equality challenges and where we can achieve the greatest impact with the resources available to us.
- 8 Set out at Appendix A to this report is the Council's annual report of progress against its Equalities Commitments. Members are asked to consider the report, note the progress being made and highlight any further areas where they believe the Council should be seeking to improve equality in the delivery of its services.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 9 None.

Key Implications

Financial

Understanding the needs of people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010) will assist the Council in allocating resources to areas or services where it is considered to be a greater priority.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

This report provides an update against our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. This report presents a review of the

Council's progress under these duties in our roles of community leader, service provider and employer.

Conclusions

This report highlights the work that has been undertaken to ensure we comply with the Equality Act 2010 but also ensure our services meet with and are responsive to the needs of our residents and visitors.

Appendices

Appendix A – Progress against our equality aims and commitments in 2014-15.

Background Papers:

West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments – Report to Cabinet 8 March 2012.

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=120&MId=116&Ver=4>.

Dr. Pav Ramewal

Chief Executive