

WEST KENT EQUALITY PARTNERSHIP – AIMS AND COMMITMENTS FOR 2012-16

SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE – 27TH MARCH 2012

Report of the: Chief Executive

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Cabinet – 8 March 2012

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary: A document setting out aims and commitments for the West Kent Equality Partnership has been prepared and is being presented for approval. It will replace the Council's current Comprehensive Equality Policy and Scheme.

This report supports the Key Aim of the Community Plan.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Bracken

Head of Service Chief Executive – Robin Hales

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- (a) It be resolved that Cabinet adopt the West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments for 2012-16.
- (b) It be resolved that Cabinet delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Safe and Caring Communities to respond to any comments by the Social Affairs Select Committee, in order to comply with the statutory timescale.

Recommendation to Social Affairs Select Committee:

- (c) It be resolved that Social Affairs Select Committee receive the West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments for 2012-16
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Reason for recommendation: To ensure the Council complies with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Introduction

- 1 The approval of the equality aims and commitments are within the Council's Policy Framework and a matter for the Cabinet.

Equality Act 2010

- 2 Equality legislation changed in 2010, requiring the Council to take specific actions to ensure its legal obligations are met. The Act 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 by 6th April 2012 and at least every four years thereafter. A statutory code of practice for the Public Sector Equality Duty is not due to be published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission until Spring 2012 but in the meantime we are required to comply with the statutory deadline and have taken non-statutory guidance into account.

West Kent Equality Partnership

- 3 The West Kent Equality Partnership was formed in 2010 between Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The partnership has developed a joint response to the requirement to publish equality objectives intended to support improved partnership working and to allow authorities to report shared outcomes against common objectives.

Aims and Commitments

- 4 The West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments 2012-16 are attached at Appendix A. These have been informed and developed by officers from all three authorities. This will replace the Council's existing Comprehensive Equality Policy and Scheme. The aims and commitments are set out in a more concise document which takes a proportionate approach in responding to the duty reflecting the demographic profile of our communities and current resource constraints. It also aims to support and strengthen the corporate priorities within each authority.

Key Implications

Financial

The implementation of actions to achieve the aims and commitments will need to be incorporated into appropriate service planning and service budgets.

Community Impact and Outcomes

The West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments are intended to have a positive impact on our communities and people who use our services. Outcomes will be reported on annually.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

The Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Failure to do so may result in action being taken by the Equality and Human Right Commission, including issuing a formal 'compliance notice' and possible court action.

Resource (non-financial)

Within existing resources.

Value For Money and Asset Management

The West Kent Equality Partnership is supported by a shared officer. Production of shared aims and commitments are also intended to streamline future progress reports.

Equality Impacts

Does the activity have the potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?

No. The aims and commitments are designed to address key areas of discrimination or disadvantage.

Does the activity make a positive contribution to promoting equality?

Yes. The aims and commitments are designed to deliver outcomes that will make a positive difference to our communities. These will be monitored and reported on annually.

Sustainability Checklist

The aims and commitments set out outcomes that support the Council's commitment to equitable access and services.

Conclusions

The West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments for 2012-16 set out the future direction for the partnership and demonstrates our compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Risk Assessment Statement

If the aims and commitments are not adopted, the Council will not be able to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and action may be taken against the Council by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Appendices Appendix A – West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments for 2012-16.

Background Papers: None

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