

## EQUALITIES ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Legal and Democratic Advisory Committee - 20 March 2018

Report of                      Chief Executive

Status:                        For Consideration

Key Decision:                No

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**Executive Summary:** Public authorities are required to prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years. The Council's current equality policy statement and objectives for 2016-2020, which reflects priorities identified from a Members' Equality Action Plan workshop, was adopted by Cabinet in April 2016. This report provides a summary of progress against the actions set out by Members at their meeting in June 2017.

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

Portfolio Holder      Cllr. Anna Firth

Contact Officers      Lee Banks, Ext 7161.

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### Recommendations to Legal and Democratic Advisory Committee:

Note the progress made against the Council's Equalities actions in 2017-18.

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**Reason for recommendation:** To comply with our obligations under the Equality Act (2010), based on Members' priorities.

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### Introduction and Background

- 1      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.
- 2      As part of the duty, public authorities are required to prepare and publish one or more objectives and review these at least every four years. Public authorities are also required to publish information to demonstrate how they are complying with the duty.
- 3      The approval of an equality policy statement and objectives is within the Council's policy framework and is a matter for Cabinet. The Council has a strong record of ensuring its services are responsive to the needs of residents

and customers, whilst taking a proportionate response to implementing equalities legislation. The Council's current equality policy statement and objectives for 2016-2020, which reflects priorities identified from a Members' Equality Action Plan workshop, was adopted by Cabinet in April 2016.

### **Equalities Action Plan 2017-18**

- 4 The Council continues to take a proportionate approach to responding to its duties under the Equality Act (2010), reflecting the demographics of its communities and within current resource constraints.
- 5 There Council's Equality Policy Statement sets out five equality objectives relating to its roles as a community leader, service provider and employer. The objectives relate to the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex (gender) to reflect the priorities identified in a Member workshop and broadly focus on catering for the needs an ageing population.
- 6 The Council is determined to continue to meet the objectives it has set out in its Equality Policy and Objectives. To this end it is important that there is clarity about the actions we will take each year. At its meeting on 19 June 2017 Members set out additional actions they would wish to see the Council take. These are set out below with a corresponding update from services on the progress to date.
- 7 **To deliver a Trusted Friend engagement scheme.**

**Action:** The Council would work with the Accessibility Group to deliver a new Sevenoaks Trusted Friend engagement scheme aimed at "helping the helpers" to better help residents who need help to access our services. The aim is to provide a contact point for those who are currently acting as trusted friends for those with physical or educational disabilities so that they can get information and/or support about what we currently provide and, secondly, to enable us through the trusted friend to better understand the access needs of our residents and thereby improve our services.

**Update:** The principles of the trusted friend scheme have been built in to the Council's work to redesign its services around the customer. Central to this is working to create a single customer database that can be accessible to multiple departments to enable them to understand the individual needs of customers. Work with the Accessibility Group has unfortunately been delayed as the member of the group with a keen interest in accessible information standards has been unable to attend recent meetings. Work continues to progress, but it is unlikely that the new scheme will be able to be delivered until later in 2018.

**8 Increase the number of carers assessments and respite placements offered in our District.**

**Action:** Through actions in our Community Plan and Health Action Plan we will increase the number of carers assessments and respite placements offered.

**Update:** Kent County Council are responsible for the commissioning of carers assessments and respite placements across the County, including in Sevenoaks District. Data on the level of provision was not available at the time of writing this report. However, Imago, who are commissioned by the County Council for respite for young carers are now providing workshops in Sevenoaks and Swanley focused on 'improving life at home' and provide six respite activities in the District each year, for groups of carers. Imago's current active case load in the Sevenoaks district is 489 Young Carers who are accessing their services at present.

**9 Deliver a new health walk aimed at those recovering from illness and those that through age or fitness are unable to tackle more strenuous exercise.**

**Action:** Work with the Communities and Business team to deliver a new free health walk aimed at those who due to illness (chronic or recent), age, lack of opportunity are too unfit for one of our existing health walks (up to 2 miles and up to an hour) but who whose physical and mental health would benefit enormously from getting out in the fresh air and walking, talking and moving over a shorter distance (up to 1 mile and up to half an hour)

**Update:** Two new health walks have been delivered in the District. The Council supported the creation of the first 'Every Step Counts' walk in Otford in September 2017, with walk leaders Cllr Anna Firth, Jo Kingston and Irene Collins. The second new walk takes place in West Kingsdown and was launched in January 2017.

**10 Increase access to health activities by implementing a multi-agency signposting service for older and vulnerable people.**

**Action:** Work with the Health Board to increase access to our health activities by implementing a multi-agency signposting service (including GP's) for older and vulnerable people.

**Update:** Through the Councils HandyHERO service and the launch of the One You service that arose from the Council's West Kent Devolution deal there is significantly new resource being dedicated to ensuring people, including older and vulnerable people have access to the support they need. The Council's achievements in Health and Social Care have also been recognised with a Gold Award in the national iESE Awards, with the Council's work being competing alongside the work of two large Scottish Unitary Councils.

**11 Recognise equalities achievements in our District through the Making it Happen awards.**

Action: Introduce two new Making It Happen awards; Carer of the Year and Equalities Champion of the Year (for a business or organisation that has really pushed the envelope to advance equality or eliminate discrimination or prejudice in their line of work).

**Update:** Each of the two new categories has been agreed for inclusion in the next Making it Happen Awards. These are scheduled to take place in 2019.

**Other Options Considered and/or Rejected**

12 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

The Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Failure to do so may result in the Council not being able to demonstrate what steps it is taking to tackle inequalities and action being taken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

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 sets out some of the action the Council has taken in 2017/18 to address key areas of discrimination and disadvantage.

Community Impact and Outcomes

The equality actions are intended to have a positive impact on our communities and people who use our services.

**Conclusions**

This report sets out the progress the Council has made in delivering actions against its Equality Policy and Objectives in 2017. A further report will be provided in June this year setting out all of the Council's actions in the year and to agree its priorities for 2018/19.

**Appendices** None.

**Background Papers:** None.

**Dr. Pav Ramewal**  
**Chief Executive**