

EQUALITIES UPDATE

Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee – 7 October 2014

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. Fleming

Contact Officer(s) Lee Banks, Ext 7161, Sarah Lavallie, Ext 7224.

Recommendation to Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee:

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 2012-16 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 their 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 2012-2016 set out our commitments as a community leader, as a service provider and as an employer across the three local authorities. This report highlights Sevenoaks District Council's progress against these commitments.
- 5 Examples of progress in 2013-14 include providing better access to polling stations, providing housing information in an accessible format for people with learning disabilities and maintaining a low gender pay gap between male and female employees at 0.3%.
- 6 However, the review of the Council's commitments also highlighted a lack of provision of accessible off-road cycling routes in the District, a slight increase in reports of hate crime and a decrease in the numbers of people with a disability attending health initiatives.
- 7 Examples of initiatives which commenced in 2013-14 and will continue into 2014-15 include improving the provision of access to information (relating to parking and tourist attractions, for example) and to identify the housing needs for residents with learning disabilities.
- 8 To assist with delivering these initiatives it is proposed that the Council further strengthens 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 for the authority which focus on the biggest equality challenges and where we can achieve the greatest impact, as determined by our current evidence base.
- 9 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

- 10 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 Impacts

| Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty: | | |
|---|--------|---|
| Question | Answer | Explanation / Evidence |
| a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community? | N/A | This report presents a review of the Council's progress to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity as a community leader, service provider and employer. |
| b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity? | N/A | |
| c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above? | | |

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 2013-14.

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