

## EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

### Legal & Democratic Services Advisory Committee - 28 June 2018

Report of	Chief Executive
Status	For Consideration
Key Decision	No

---

**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 in the policy over the last year and seeks Members views on priorities for the coming year.

---

Portfolio Holder	Cllr. Anna Firth
Contact Officer	Lee Banks, Ext 7161

---

#### Recommendation to Legal and Democratic Services Advisory Committee:

- (a) Note the progress made against the Council's Equality Objectives in 2017-18; and
  - (b) Advise officers on any priorities for action in 2018-19.
- 

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

---

#### 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.

### **Equality Policy Statement and Objectives 2016-2020**

- 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.
- 5 Public authorities are required to consider what they can do to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. The Equality Act (2010) sets out the nine protected characteristics of age, disability<sup>1</sup>, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
- 6 The 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. These are:
  - i. To advance equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers to people with disabilities, and their carers, to participate in community life.
  - ii. To foster good relations by promoting understanding of issues affecting people with disabilities and older people.
  - iii. To advance equality of opportunity by improving access to leisure facilities, health activities and other services for people with disabilities, younger and older age groups and men and women.
  - iv. To advance equality of opportunity by investigating whether we can improve access to information about our services for people with disabilities and across different age groups.
  - v. To advance equality of opportunity by encouraging a broader range of people to apply for Council vacancies including apprenticeships and increase transparency around pay, including the living wage and gender pay gap.

---

<sup>1</sup> You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

- 7 Information gathered through the Community Plan consultation and Member workshop did not identify any specific measurable outcomes relating to the protected characteristics of gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation. However, the Community Plan includes an equality and inclusion statement in relation to all protected characteristics and we will continue to consider the impact of our decisions on all relevant protected characteristics.
- 8 In addition to the proposed objectives, the Council has continued to monitor the services it provides and keeps projects under review to determine if further equality objectives need to be set.

### **Progress 2017-2018**

- 9 In response to the Equality Policy Statement and Objectives 2016-2020 published in April 2016 the Council set out an action plan to deliver on its objectives. Examples of progress over the last year, are provided below.
- 10 As a community leader:
  - Continued to support Dementia Friendly Communities and raise awareness of dementia on local families. In addition to training staff and taxi drivers to be dementia friends the Council organised the very first Run, Walk, Push for Dementia event in Knole Park. In 2017-18 the event raised £4,500 for the Sevenoaks Area Dementia Friendly Community and the Council provided its support to the second Run, Walk, Push event which took place in May 2018.
  - In 2017/18, the voluntary organisations funded by the Council's Community Grant scheme supported 215,666 volunteer hours, which represented an economic benefit to the District of £2.69million.
  - In March 2018 the Council approved grant awards totalling £153k to support organisations that provide services across the District. In 2018-19 this will support activities including services maintaining independent living and elderly support, a weekly youth club, sporting activities, volunteer development, skills development and support for young people that are not employed, in education or training and community transport services.
  - Through the Better Care Fund the Council has awarded over £18,000 to a project for new mums who need extra support with breastfeeding and funded Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge have been given almost £40,000 to fund their 'Pop-Up Pop-Ins' project, helping older people across the District facing loneliness and isolation.
  - Through the Local Plan process undertaken an assessment of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and commenced an Open Space, Sports and Leisure Study.

- In July 2017 the Council adopted its new Housing Strategy, based on the evidence compiled from the local housing need study. The Housing Strategy, entitled ‘Wellbeing Starts at Home’ sets three strategic housing priorities for the District. These are to provide a good mix of decent and affordable housing across tenures; to improve the quality and use of the existing housing stock; and to meet the needs of vulnerable and low-income households.
- Continued to provide for health walks from eight locations across the District and offered support to two new health walks. The first ‘Every Step Counts’ walk in begun 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 2018.
- Provided family fun days in locations across the District with almost 2,000 attendances by young people.
- Supported the launch of the Digital Sunset Challenge, taking it to 18 schools across the District.
- Presented award to recognise the fantastic contribution made to the Sevenoaks District by volunteers and community groups. For the third year the Council’s ‘Making it Happen’ Awards recognised the achievements of 10 winners, with Sevenoaks Community First Responders named Charity of the Year. Our next Community Awards will also recognise Carer of the Year and Equalities Champion of the Year for the very first time.

11 As a service provider:

- Introduced the ‘One You’ service. ‘One You’ support adults, particularly those aged between 40 and 60, to take control of their health to enjoy the benefits both now and in later life. Services include exercise classes, healthy eating courses, courses to help reduce alcohol intake, support to quit smoking, weight loss courses, local health walks and personalised health trainers.
- Extending the service, the ‘One You, Your Home’ Adviser works with older people identified by a GP Surgery in Edenbridge. The service provides a holistic assessment for home adaptations, and access to Better Care Fund resources to assist with housing needs.
- Introduced the HandyHERO service, providing a fast response to make straightforward adaptations in residents’ homes to enable them to be discharged from hospital more quickly.
- The Council has continued to successfully support families across the District with disabled facilities grants to the value of £700k, supporting people to adapt their homes and live more independently.

The scheme has been reviewed this year to make access to grant funding more accessible to more families in need.

- The new Housing Assistance Policy places an emphasis on speeding up the Disabled Facility Grant process, making the scheme more accessible and assisting in accelerated hospital discharge because of housing issues and providing financial assistance in preventive measures.
- Incorporated an Affordable Housing Company to enable the development of affordable homes in the District.
- Consulted on a review of the Housing Allocations Policy, with the findings to be reported during 2018.
- Adopted a new Homelessness Strategy and implemented new procedures to provide more support to those faced with homelessness in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Taken measures within our taxi licensing policy to improve the proportion of licensed vehicles that are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Made improvements to our polling stations for disabled people and for people who have visual impairments.
- Reviewed our local council tax support scheme, ensuring protections remain for those in most need and increased the level of support provided through discretionary housing payments.

## 12 As an employer:

- Reviewed our policies, including lone working, safeguarding and dignity at work, and assessed them to ensure they are implemented consistently and fairly.
- Adopted a policy in response to the Apprenticeship Levy and appointed two new apprentices during the year.
- Calculated and evaluated the Council's performance in respect of the gender pay gap, in accordance with the Government's Gender Pay Gap Reporting regulations.
- Our mean pay gap shows that male employees are paid on average 6.5% more than female employees. This is explained by the greater proportion of male employees that currently hold posts in the upper and middle upper quartiles of the pay bands.
- Our median pay gap shows that female employees are paid on average 1% more than male employees. This is explained by the greater

proportion of male employees that currently hold posts in the lower quartile of the pay bands.

- All employees are paid in accordance with the National Joint Council terms, conditions and pay scales. This means that every job role at the Council is subject to job evaluation to ensure the pay for that role is fair, regardless of the gender of the post holder.

### **Actions for 2018-2019**

- 13 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 and information and data we will collect in the coming year. This may include reviewing, amending or adding objectives to reflect any change in local priorities since the Policy was adopted in April 2016.
- 14 In 2018-19 the Council is seeking to:
  - Complete a review of its polling places.
  - Encourage increased voter registration.
  - Deliver a new Housing Allocations Policy.
  - Consult on the Draft Local Plan and progress to examination.
  - Undertake a comprehensive review of the local council tax support scheme.
  - To review its approach to service delivery, with a greater focus on the customer, resulting in more queries answered at the first point of contact.
  - Improve and develop new online services for those customers that wish to self-serve.
  - To work more closely with the Access Group to improve Council services and access to information.
- 15 Members' views are welcome on their priorities for the Council to address in its action plan for the coming year.

### **Other Options Considered and/or Rejected**

- 16 All public authorities are required to comply with the Equality Act 2010. If we do not publish equality objectives we will not be able to demonstrate what steps we are taking to tackle the inequalities faced by our residents and action may be taken against the Council by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

- 17 Adoption of a policy statement and objectives ensures we focus our resources on tackling inequalities within the context of our local priorities and demographics of our population. The Equality Policy Statement and Objectives document can be reviewed annually, in line with annual performance reporting, to amend or add any objectives as required and to reflect any changes in local priorities

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

- 18 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.

- 19 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

- 20 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 our objectives for addressing key areas of discrimination and disadvantage from 2016 to 2020.

## **Conclusions**

- 21 This report sets out the progress the Council has made in delivering actions against its Equality Policy and Objectives during 2017-18 and sets out some of the Council's priorities for addressing areas of discrimination and disadvantage over the year, to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Act (2010).

**Appendices**                      None.

**Background Papers**                      **Equality Policy Statement and Objectives**  
[https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/753/our\\_equality\\_policy\\_statement\\_and\\_objectives\\_for\\_2016-2020](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/753/our_equality_policy_statement_and_objectives_for_2016-2020)

**Community Grant Scheme awards for 2018-19**

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s33657/06%20Appendix%20C.pdf?J=1>

**Dr. Pav Ramewal  
Chief Executive**