

**By:** Oliver Mills, Managing Director, Kent Adult Social Services

**To:** Scrutiny Board, 08 September 2010

**Subject:** KCC Equality Strategy for consideration

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**Summary:** This paper seeks the views of the Scrutiny Board on the draft KCC Equality Strategy 2010-2013, along with the accompanying single equality scheme and action plan.

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## **Introduction**

- 1.0 The Equality Strategy 2010-2013 replaces a time expired document and embraces new requirements under the Equality Act. It has been developed as a result of consultation with community groups and organisations around the county and in conjunction with the Directorate Equality Lead officers and the Staff Groups. The revised version of the Equality Strategy is being recommended for adoption by KCC, subject to any necessary refinements. It is envisaged that the action plan will be refreshed regularly.
- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 may require KCC to produce equality schemes covering all protected characteristics i.e. age, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment in addition to our current duties to produce them for race, disability and gender. The revised scheme incorporates these in order to ensure that our approach to equality is consistent and integrated across the organisation, and that we are prepared for the changes that will occur as the act comes into force in phases from October 2010.
- 1.2 In order to comply with current equalities legislation there is an urgent need to publish an updated strategy (the obligatory equality schemes and action plans are included).

## **Key Issues**

- 2.0 Members should be aware that:
  - a. The Government Equalities Office (GEO) is now formally consulting on the single public sector Equality Duty. That duty will replace the three existing duties (Gender, Race and Disability) on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. The consultation document proposes a far more streamlined approach to Equalities than has previously been the case. This approach is based on measuring outcomes and using public transparency as the method of monitoring, evaluation and scrutiny.
  - b. Customer Impact Assessments should be carried out before every major policy, procedure or practice is put in place. Legal challenges have been brought against three English councils recently on this issue. The Government is currently facing criticism and potential lawsuits for failing to evidence these ahead of spending cuts.

## **Next Steps**

- 3.1 Subject to Scrutiny Board views, formal approval of the Equality Strategy is being sought throughout KCC Cabinet in October 2010. Action Plans to deliver the Single Equality Scheme are to be embedded in the business planning process, reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis.
- 3.2 It is recommended that performance monitoring against the Scheme be part of business plan half and full year reporting.

### **Recommendation**

The Scrutiny Board is asked to commend the revised Equality Strategy to Cabinet, allowing for further necessary refinements or to recommend changes which the Board feel are necessary.

Emkay Magba-Kamara, Improvement and Engagement Officer, 01622 221185

[Emkay.Magba-Kamara@Kent.gov.uk](mailto:Emkay.Magba-Kamara@Kent.gov.uk)

Background documents – The KCC Equality Strategy 2010-2013