

Motion for Time Limited Debate, County Council, 16 July 2026

The Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and Kent County Council's Approach

Proposer – Mr Spencer Dixon

Seconder – Mr Luke Evans

Motion

This Council resolves to agree the following principles:

The Council will;

- (a) comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the General and Specific Duties placed on it by that legislation, but shall not extend any activity(ies) whatsoever beyond the statutory duties.
- (b) not support any divisive 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion' agenda, which may penalise people without specific protected characteristics.
- (c) positively promote, encourage and support aspects of Kent life that unite people, rather than those that divide and not promote, encourage and support those that divide people.
- (d) strongly oppose discrimination of any type and on any grounds against all persons, take steps where appropriate to root it out and shall take firm action whenever it is found.
- (e) be a meritocracy, where opportunities are open to all persons based on ability, contribution and talent, and shall not pander to any difference, but shall treat all persons with equal care and consideration.
- (f) be an equal opportunities employer, welcoming and unprejudiced, responsive to the needs of the staff and the requirements of the Service.
- (g) ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are produced for all policies and key decisions in order to comply with current legislation.
- (h) not favour 'positive action' ever being taken to give advantage to any group(s) or individual(s).
- (i) ensure that its promotional and recruitment images and literature are proportionate and representative of the demography of Kent and are lawful so far as is reasonably possible.
- (j) Ask the Chief Executive to review the use of resources in pursuance of the principles identified by resolutions (a) – (i) of this Motion.

(k) Ask the Chief Executive, subsequent to the above review, to update the Leader of any related governance processes that may be required for policies or strategies so as to reflect the principles set out within this motion as may be appropriate to give effect to resolutions (a) – (h).

Background Information Provided by the Reform UK Kent Group

1. The Reform UK administration in Kent does not wish to go beyond the statutory minimum required to comply with the current legislation.
2. The Labour government's Equality Act 2010 was introduced with the best intentions of addressing real or perceived inequalities in society. However, through its permissive power of encouraging the promotion of 'positive action' intended to level the playing field, in our view it has resulted in dividing people and increasing separateness; two-tier treatment by police and the state; and allowing Americanisation of the equalities agenda to infiltrate UK institutions. All this does nothing for unity, coherence or perceived fairness under the law.
3. Although introduced by Labour, the negative impact of the legislation has been allowed to grow in society by the Conservatives. In our view, the negative implications of the Equality Act 2010 have gone too far and common sense and balance should be returned. The County Council must comply fully with the legislation but can attempt to bring balance, perspective and common sense into its response to the legislation, to the operation of the County Council for its own work and that with partner organisations in Kent.
4. DEI is not the same as equality. Equality means everyone has equal moral worth and is treated the same under the law. EDI divides people into groups and trying to engineer outcomes between them. We believe that is wrong and un-British, so we reject it.
5. Britain has a long and proud tradition of encouraging equality of opportunity. It didn't come from modern ideology. It came from centuries of constitutional development, common law, and the Christian belief that every person has equal value.
6. We are concerned about the issue of public sector over-reach in the wider diversity, equity and inclusion arena, in work that was developed and promoted widely as a response to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This motion reaffirms that the authority fully complies with relevant legislation, whilst ensuring merit, equality of opportunity and action to combat discrimination against all members of staff, service users and the public are at the forefront of KCC policy and action. However, the Administration is concerned that the authority should not be over-zealous in its wider equalities work to the detriment of fairness, merit and equality of opportunity for all.

7. As KCC is the largest employer in the County and operates as the largest local authority of its type in the UK, it is important to be clear about how it intends to function given the Strategic Statement brought forward by the administration and agreed by County Council.
8. The Leader of KCC has written to the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable seeking reassurance about the conduct of Kent Police; confirmation that Kent Police remains fully committed to ending any perception or practice of 'two-tier policing', and to championing the principle of equality before the law. High profile incidents have occurred in Southampton, Manchester, Southport and Nottingham where emphasis on some protected characteristics appear to have been considerations. Whilst realising that these incidents did not happen in Kent, she said that the issues raised are national issues and will affect public confidence in policing, knife crime and equal treatment under the law.
9. Our approach to equality is straightforward. Councils should treat everyone as an individual, respect their dignity, and focus on merit in terms of employment. We will follow the law sensibly, protect people's freedoms, and be transparent with the public. That's all. These principles are not extreme or complicated. The only people who object are those who are politically invested in DEI or who financially benefit from it.
10. This is not a culture war or an overreach. It is simply ensuring the council is focused on its proper job: treating everyone fairly, spending public money responsibly, and following the law.
11. The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty provide the legal framework within which the County Council must operate. In light of the Council's new Strategic Statement, the Motion stresses that in meeting its statutory obligations, KCC should ensure equality, fairness, merit and act lawfully against all discrimination at all times, but our strong view is that it does not need to go further beyond that which is mandated by current legislation.
12. The Administration of Kent County Council will work to make Kent a fair and meritocratic society, where achievement can be made irrespective of identities and backgrounds. We take the view that a clear message was given by the public during the May 2025 local elections in Kent that Kent County Council should no longer concentrate on differences between people, but instead upon the things that can unite them, such as the commonality of living in Kent, patriotism and the St George's, Kent and the Union flags. A clear message was given by the voters, who gave Reform UK such an overwhelming mandate in Kent, that 'common sense has to prevail'; that 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion' (DEI) is an 'industry' that has no place in Kent County Council, but that equality of opportunity, merit and fairness do! This approach is made clear in the Council's new Strategic Statement.

13. This Motion recommends that until there is a change of government and a resulting change in the law, the Council should continue to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010.
14. This motion argues that KCC should comply fully with its statutory equality duties, while reviewing wider DEI activity to ensure it is proportionate, absolutely necessary under the law, focused on fairness and merit, and does not create unnecessary bureaucracy or perceived preferential treatment.
15. The Council should also consider the opportunity cost of any DEI activity reflecting on the costs (including officer time, training budgets and management capacity) devoted to activity beyond statutory requirements. A proportionate review by the Chief Executive would help ensure that equality-related work is specifically mandated by law, necessary and efficient, with bureaucracy kept to a minimum and resources focused where they deliver clear public value in line with the strategic statement.
16. Commitment of Kent County Council to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty remains, ensuring that KCC fully complies with the law. However, in order to inform staff, the public and external organisations, the Motion clarifies the perspective of the Reform UK Administration at County Hall.
17. The Motion emphasises the Authority's commitment to compliance under the law and nothing more; emphasises the principles of fairness, equality of opportunity and merit, and states its opposition to discrimination of any type whatsoever.