

By: Kevin Lynes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development
Oliver Mills, Managing Director, Kent Adult Social Services

To: Cabinet, 11 October 2010

Subject: **KCC EQUALITY STRATEGY 2010-2013**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Following consultation, Cabinet adoption of the draft KCC Equality Strategy 2010-2013, along with the accompanying single equality scheme is sought, on behalf of the authority.

Introduction

1. (1) The Equality Strategy 2010-2013 replaces a time expired document and embraces new requirements under the Equality Act. It has been reviewed in consultation with community groups and organisations around the county and in conjunction with the KCC 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.

(2) The Equality Act 2010 which, 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.

(3) 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, a revised single scheme covering all characteristics accompanies the Equality Strategy.

(4) In order to comply with current equality legislation there is now an urgent need to publish an updated strategy which incorporates the current equality schemes.

(5) KCC's Equality and Diversity Policy Statement was approved in 2004. The Policy Statement has been amended to take into account subsequent changes (Annex 1).

Action plans

2. (1) A range of activity already takes place across the authority to address equality and diversity issues in terms of both employment and service provision to implement KCC's current Equality and Diversity Statement as set out in the previous 2007/10 Equality Strategy. Action plans to deliver the Scheme are already being reviewed and developed to ensure that the requirements of the Act are, over time, fully embedded in the everyday work of the authority.

(2) These action plans, reviewed and refreshed on an annual cycle, will be fully integrated into business planning. It is recommended that performance monitoring against the Scheme be part of business plan half and full year reporting.

Considerations

3. (1) The Equality Strategy and accompanying Scheme (Annex 2) was considered by Scrutiny Board on 8 September 2010. The Strategy was generally well received by the Board, who discussed it in depth and made a number of suggestions and comments. There were requests for additional clarification and inclusions. A concern raised at Scrutiny Board in relation to monitoring has been included in the recommendations of this paper. Further work will be undertaken to arrive at the breadth of information appropriate to meet Member and wider public needs.

(2) **Members should also be aware that:**

- a. The Government Equalities Office (GEO) is now formally consulting on the single public sector Equality Duty. This will replace the three existing duties (Gender, Race and Disability) on 1 April 2011. The new legislation expands the scope of the duty to cover Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion or Belief and Gender Identity in addition to the original three. Its consultation document proposes a far more streamlined approach to Equality than has previously been the case. This approach is based on measuring outcomes using public transparency as the method of monitoring, evaluation and scrutiny.
- b. Equality 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 budget savings. Internal organisational change is also subject to systematic impact assessment.
- c. The Equality Act 2010 also places a new, stronger emphasis on delivering equality and diversity outcomes through our procurement processes. Given the scale of procurement through this authority, this presents a significant challenge, as the policies and actions of contractors are effectively also ours.
- d. It would be timely to undertake a fundamental review of KCC's Equality and Diversity Policy Statement and Strategy once Bold Steps for Kent has been approved and the implications of the comprehensive spending review are known.

Recommendation

4. (1) Cabinet is asked to:
- a) APPROVE the Equality Strategy 2010-13 along with the accompanying single equality scheme on behalf of the authority, subject to any necessary refinements.
 - b) AGREE that performance monitoring against action plans to deliver the Single Equality Scheme be part of business plan half and full year reporting.

Contact

Emkay Magba-Kamara, Improvement and Engagement Officer

01622 221851

Emkay.Magba-Kamara@Kent.gov.uk