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To: Corporate Policy, Overview & Scrutiny Committee
11 January 2012

Subject: Annual Equalities Report 2010/11

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report provides Corporate Policy, Overview & Scrutiny Committee with an update on equalities & diversity in structure within KCC's and Equalities and Diversity Annual Report for 2010/11

Recommendations:

Note the contents of the report and the Annual 2010/11 Equality & Diversity Report

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Equality Act came into effect on 1 October 2010. The Act uses one common language and puts all of equality law into one place. It also sets out to give people from different groups, consistent rights and protection. This is with the exception for disabled people, who have been given additional protection. By simplifying and streamlining the law, the Act makes it easier to understand, easier to comply with and easier to enforce.

1.2 In simple terms, the Equality Act 2010 sets out the things that different organisations and individuals must do to avoid unfair discrimination. The Act applies:

- to all organisations that provide a service to the public or a section of the public (service providers),
- to anyone who sells goods or provides facilities,
- to all services, whether or not a charge is made for them.

1.3 The Act also contains provisions that build on public bodies' previous duties, combining these (relating to race, gender, and disability), into one overarching equality duty and expanding the scope to include age, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

1.4 The Act requires public bodies to assess the impact of their decisions on people of many different backgrounds and to consider whether there might be ways to promote equality and good relations between them.

1.5 To comply with the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010, we produce an annual Equality and Diversity report that provides information on the Council's performance in promoting equality and tackling disadvantage over the period from April 2010 to March 2011. The report highlights some of the key issues, gives monitoring information on its performance over the last year and includes statistical information on our workforce.

1.6 The report covers our progress on:

- effective leadership, partnership with the community
- responsive and accessible services
- equal and appropriate treatment in employment
- fair and inclusive procurement.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRUCTURE FOR EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY

2.1 KCC is a dynamic organisation that needs to respond to change in order to maintain the quality of its services and relevance of its activities. The Council is currently undergoing a major restructure called 'Change to Keep Succeeding'.

2.1 The following changes have been made in 2011 regarding equality & diversity management in KCC.

2.3 Equality is to be embedded as part of core performance management. Performance targets for KCC will be set through the organisational equality objectives. Targets will be communicated as part of the business planning cycle and will be owned by teams and units.

2.4 The Cabinet has collective Member responsibility to provide a constructive framework to ensure that this policy is successfully applied across all KCC services and within the organisation as an employer. A Cabinet Member holds the Portfolio for Equality and Diversity.

2.5 The Corporate Management Team has a nominated Lead for equality and diversity. The Lead will act as a Champion for Equalities at a senior level for all matters brought before the organisation.

2.6 Equality & diversity will be embedded into every Standard of Required Practice (SORP). This will serve to integrate equality & diversity within the

business and organisation and will demonstrate clear standards for the work going forward.

2.7 Each Directorate Management Team will be responsible for ensuring that directorate equality & diversity actions are planned, linked to core delivery and demonstrate the difference these objectives have made to the people of Kent.

2.8 Accountability and delivery against these equality & diversity actions, rests with teams and services in the directorates. Monitoring of performance is carried out through KCC's wider performance management framework and will be reported via the quarterly performance report. These reports are published on kent.gov.uk and more detail is available in Chapter 6 Performance and Review.

2.9 The Diversity & Equality Team (DET) in Customer and Communities Directorate will:

- provide operational level support and advice. Additional advice may be provided by the professional specialists embedded in service areas (e.g. sensory services) and from KCC staff groups.
- advise on the quality assurance aspects of performance monitoring, ensuring that the processes carried out are robust and proportionate,
- scrutinise all Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) undertaken within the organisation,
- work closely with the Human Resources and the Learning and Development teams in the Business Strategy and Support Directorate, to ensure that all aspects of equality & diversity are managed to the same high standard and broader equalities expertise,
- work with Equality Champions to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with each of the specified protected characteristics.

2.10 The Employment Policy Team, in the HR Division, is responsible for promoting and ensuring the promulgation of equality and diversity issues in employment in KCC. The team ensures that these issues are integrated into the Authority's policies and they work with HR colleagues and management to ensure they are understood, considered and respected in employment practice.

2.11 KCC has an established network of Equalities Champions who, by way of their 'wider contribution', make it their business to equip themselves with information and knowledge about Equalities and 'protected characteristics' and then actively champion that characteristic in the workplace. The DET will work

alongside exiting Champions in order to understand and establish how this work is taken forward.

3. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 The Council has been reviewing and updating its equality impact assessment process to comply with the new protected characteristics included in the Act. The new protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

3.2 In KCC our approach to equality & diversity, as expressed within our current Equality and Diversity Strategy is to carry out equality impact assessments (EqIAs) where there are proposed changes to services and employment policy and practice, so that the implications of decisions are fully understood as they affect specific groups and communities. In addition, it is vital to understand cumulative impacts on any budget reductions. While the picture is not clear the process will allow such clarity to be achieved over time.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 In the last four years, Kent County Council has made a real difference to the lives of Kent residents with it's 'Towards 2010 programme'. We are very proud of those achievements. Now we are facing very different challenges and Bold Steps for Kent is a very different approach. Hard and difficult choices lie ahead and an absolute focus on the real priorities for Kent will be needed.

4.2 Members and Officers of KCC firmly believe that everyone who lives or works in the County should be able to fulfil their potential and deliver solutions for themselves, regardless of social circumstance or background, gender, gender identity, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, or religion or belief.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Members of the Corporate Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to **NOTE** the contents of this report and the attached draft Annual Equalities & Diversity Report

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