

To: Communities Policy Overview Committee – 25 March 2009

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member and Amanda Honey, Managing Director, Communities

Subject: Equalities and Diversity

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

The Directorate's priorities for action relating to Equality and Diversity in 2009/11 are presented in the context of national and corporate changes.

Recommendation

Members are asked to NOTE this report.

FOR INFORMATION

Introduction

1. A corporate report arising from the external assessment against the Equality Standard for Local Government was received at the January meeting of this Committee and Members sought clarity on the impact of the proposed actions on the Communities Directorate. In answering this point, the opportunity has been taken to confirm the new national assessment framework; to advise members on the Member and officer management arrangements for equalities and diversity; and to note CMY priorities for action in 2009/11.

New National Assessment Framework

2. In 2008 KCC was assessed against the Equality Standard for Local Government and achieved level 3 out of a possible 5. Of the 388 authorities assessed, 25% achieved level 3, whilst the majority (54%) achieved level 2. 6% of the authorities assessed were rated above a level 3. .

3. The Equality Standard for Local Government will be replaced from April 2009 by the Equalities Framework for Local Government. It will be welcomed as a simpler, less process orientated judgement and will also broaden the definition of equality to cover not just those areas where there is legal protection against discrimination – race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age – but also other groups who may face disadvantage and discrimination, such as white working class boys, looked after children and Gypsies and Travellers.

4. The new Framework is constructed around five areas of change management, namely:

- (i) Knowing your community
- (ii) Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- (iii) Community engagement and satisfaction
- (iv) Responsive services and customer care
- (v) A modern and diverse workforce

5. The corporate report, received at the 13 January 2009 meeting of this Committee, identified the work which is required under each of these headings and Appendix A outlines this Directorate's priorities in each of these areas. Given the outward facing nature of services in Communities, and the large number of staff employed, particular attention will be given to points (iv) and (v) and an additional heading has been introduced relating to capacity building.

Management arrangements

6. There are two dimensions to ensuring that equality and diversity legislation and aspirations are integrated into service planning and delivery. These relate, with equal importance, to KCC's own workforce and to users of services,.

7. New corporate management arrangements are now in place to ensure that both elements have strong leadership. The recently appointed Improvement and Engagement Manager, based in the Corporate Policy Unit, leads on the service delivery aspects of Equality and Diversity (E&D) whilst the Personnel and Development function leads on E&D issues relating to employment. These strands come together at the Strategic Equalities Group, chaired by the Managing Director of Adult Social Services, at which all parties are also represented at Member level.

7. Within Communities, oversight is maintained by the Directorate Equality Group (DEG), chaired by a member of the senior management team and including a representative from each service unit. The DEG has a particular responsibility to build capacity in expertise across the Directorate, champion issues at Unit level, promote the take-up of training, and work with Service Unit managers to ensure Corporate and Directorate priorities are implemented at the front line.

Priorities for 2009/10

8. A significant recommendation in the inspection report was that the Equalities Impact Assessment process needed to be strengthened. In response to this, the Corporate Diversity Team has developed a new tool and set of procedures which are currently being piloted. The new process will be described as 'Customer Impact Assessment' to reflect the mainstreaming of equalities and diversity into everyday thinking about service users and how their needs can best be met. Communities Directorate staff will be participating in the first training session in this new approach and the Cultural Strategy, which is currently under development, will be the first piece of work within the Directorate to go through the new process. This recommendation is explicit within the Directorate priorities for 2009/10 which are attached at Appendix A.

9. A number of the rest of the actions arising from the inspection, as listed in the report to this Committee in January (paras 3.1-3.5), do not require separate action from Service Directorates. Those that do have been reflected in Appendix A or will be incorporated directly into mainstream business. .

Resource implications

10. Action to deliver the priorities for 2009/11 can be delivered within existing resources.

Recommendations

11. Members are asked to NOTE this report

Contact officer:

*Ruth Armstrong-Thompson
Senior Policy Officer*

ruth.armstrong-thompson@kent.gov.uk

01622 694079