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To: Corporate Policy Overview Committee 14th January 2010
Subject: Equality and Diversity Update

1. Summary

The approach being taken across KCC is to ensure that we not only meet our statutory obligations, but to seek to ensure that in all aspects of understanding our communities, assessing customer needs and in shaping and delivering excellent services, we take account of the needs of individuals from all backgrounds. This is in addition to our role as an employer recruiting, retaining and developing a workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

As a consequence, there is considerably less time being spent generating separate Equality & Diversity monitoring, but it can make it harder for Members, the public and external assessors to find evidence of progress when this is to be found within wider monitoring reports.

At the January 2009 meeting of this Committee I presented an update report on KCC's achievement of Level 3 of the then Equalities Standard for Local Government and set out the key areas for action to achieve the 'Excellent' standard under the new Equality Framework by 2011.

This report provides an update on work completed and underway in relation to those key areas for action.

2 Updates

2.1 Diversity Mapping

This element of the new Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) is designed to ensure that an accurate picture is created of the differing needs and backgrounds of people in Kent.

Excellent work has been in place across KCC for many years - in service-specific work such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments between PCTs and KCC, in the work that underpins the Gateway multi-channel approach relying on customer models developed using the *MOSAIC* data sets and in the use of ongoing information such as the widely-respected *We are the People Of Kent* and the more recent *We are the Older People of Kent*.

Understanding our communities, assessing their needs and meeting customer expectations are all core business for KCC.

The only specific action over the last year to add to our existing good practice has been to add the use of *MOSAIC Origins* to the tools available to give us a more up to date picture than the 2001 Census information on different racial or ethnic backgrounds and of people of other nationalities living in Kent.

The use of 'Diversity Mapping' is a key new element of the EFLG 'Excellent' standard and KCC is well-placed to meet this standard.

2.2 Leadership and Corporate Commitment

The most important work under this heading is the redrafting and updating of the KCC Equality Strategy, to take account of progress within KCC since 2006 and to reflect the new EFLG standards.

The internal and consultation period closed at the end of December 2009 and the final draft will be brought to this Committee for comment and amendment at its next meeting

2.3 Consultation and External Scrutiny

In identifying the scale and nature of existing consultation and involvement activities across KCC services (as reported to the November meeting of this Committee) it was clear that there were some key gaps in the current picture.

The first was that we have inconsistent levels of knowledge about exactly who takes part in some of our consultation and involvement activities. We couldn't therefore assure ourselves that people of all ages were involved or that we made it both possible and welcoming for adults with disabilities to play a full part. We are therefore looking to collect more accurate information on a more consistent basis, without making that too bureaucratic or burdensome.

The second gap relates to our consultation and involvement work with voluntary and community organisations (VCOs). We have undertaken a specific project during 2009 to work with VCOs working with or comprised of individuals from across the range of diversity backgrounds on the most effective ways that KCC could seek and act on their views in the way we do for other VCOs in Kent.

Proposals for this aspect of consultation and involvement will be contained within the draft Equality Strategy.

2.4 Service Delivery and Customer Care

KCC's work as a commissioner of services from private and voluntary sector providers gives us robust monitoring systems for those services delivered by other organisations on behalf of the Authority to enable us to be aware of and record the involvement of and take-up by diversity groups. Since April 2009,

this also applies to monitoring of complaints/compliments to better understand the experiences of customers from different backgrounds, as reported to the November meeting of this Committee.

The major change under this heading in 2009 was the introduction in April 2009 of a new approach to assessing the impact of policy, procedure and service changes, called Customer Impact Assessment. This meets all the requirements of the previous Equality Impact Assessment process, but has been designed to be simpler to use and to be a key element of what managers should consider not a 'specialised subject' which service and policy managers leave to others.

As with a number of current corporate approaches the aim is to ensure that there are fewer better impact assessments looking at issue on a more strategic scale, not a constant drip of small-scale assessments. For example, past practice will have been to impact assess each separate publication produced by a service. The new approach emphasises assessing the policy or service outcome and trusting that the publicity will adapt to match.

The new system has been accompanied by training developed in consultation with service Directorates and an internal peer support/challenge mechanism. All completed assessments are published on the KCC website.

2.5 Employment and Training

Progress on the standards under this part of the framework is reported elsewhere on this agenda in the HR update report.

3 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the content of this report and to agree to receive the draft revised Equality Strategy at the next meeting of this Committee.