

**By:** Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment Highways & Waste (EHW)  
Mike Austerberry, Executive Director (EHW)  
Linda Davies, Chair, Equalities Group (EHW)

**To:** Environment Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010

**Subject:** Equalities in Environment Highways and Waste Annual Report

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** This report provides an update on progress with Environment Highways and Waste directorate's work on Equalities and Diversity since the previous report in January 2009, in support of Kent County Council's ambition to achieve level 'excellent' in the Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG) by March 2011.

**Recommendation:** That Members:

- a) Note the content of this report
  - b) Endorse the approach for embedding Equalities into the directorate's business, in support of KCC's corporate commitment to achieve level 'Excellent' in the new EFLG.
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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Legislative context**

A new Equality Bill, drawing together all previous Equalities and Diversity legislation is expected to receive Royal Assent early in 2010. This Bill aims to provide straightforward practical guidance for employers, service providers and public bodies.

Since the previous report to EHW POC, the Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG) which provides the detailed criteria for how local authorities should manage Equalities and Diversity issues has been published.

### **1.2 Corporate context**

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.

### **1.2.1 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.

### **1.2.2 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. The final draft Strategy will be considered by the Corporate POSC at its April 2010 meeting.

### **1.2.3 Consultation and External Scrutiny**

In identifying the scale and nature of existing consultation and involvement activities across KCC services it was clear that there are two important gaps in the current picture.

The first was that we have inconsistent levels of knowledge about exactly who takes part in some of our existing consultation and involvement activities.

The second relates to our consultation and involvement work with voluntary and community organisations (VCOs). Proposals for addressing both will be contained within the final draft Equality Strategy.

### **1.2.4 Service Delivery and Customer Care**

The major development 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. New Customer Impact Assessment training was introduced by KCC's Improvement and Engagement Team in autumn 2009, and will be rolled out more widely during 2010.

## **1.3 Directorate context and proposed approach**

At the time of the previous Equalities report to EHW POC in January 2009, the directorate had a full-time Equalities Officer. However with his departure in September 2009, the Directorate Management Team has decided not to

reappoint to the full-time post, but to integrate the work with the Public Involvement Manager's role as 20% of FTE.

There is common ground between Equalities and the Public Involvement function. However, a different approach is now needed mainly due to the reduction in officer time. DMT also regards this as an opportunity to mainstream Equalities further into day-to-day business which is consistent with the requirements of the Equalities Framework for Local Government.

## **2. Background**

**2.1** The new Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG) is based on a wider definition of equality that moves away from a purely legalistic interpretation to a concept of equal life chances. It aspires to be simpler, smarter, proportional and more relevant than the previous standard. It is outcome-based, and recognises that:

- equality is an issue for us all
- we don't all start from the same place
- to create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs

Local authorities will be audited on the following five performance areas:

- Knowing your community and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern reflective and diverse workforce

## **2.2 Customer Impact Assessments:**

From 6 April 2009, Customer Impact Assessments (CIAs) have replaced Equality Impact Assessments in KCC, to reflect the continuous mainstreaming of equalities and diversity into our everyday thinking about who our customers are and how we can best meet their needs.

A Customer Impact Assessment (CIA) is primarily a tool for improving council services. It enables policy and service managers to identify the potential impact of a policy, procedure, project or service on the residents of Kent and KCC's workforce. It can help KCC to provide and deliver excellent services to the people of Kent by making sure that these reflect the needs of all members of the community.

CIAs give KCC staff the opportunity to think about how their work impacts on local people or other staff, particularly those from diverse communities, and to take action to prevent unfair discrimination

### **3. Achievements and progress since the previous report**

#### **3.1** Whilst in post, the full-time Equalities and Diversity Officer:

- supported teams and units in their duty to screen new policies, projects, procedures and services for customer impact, and supported full Customer Impact Assessments where appropriate
- provided briefings to staff and teams on their responsibilities
- drafted briefing notes on the seven diversity strands and procurement, cross-referenced to the five EFLG performance areas
- built links with a range of minority or 'seldom heard' groups
- revised the Equalities section of EHW's KNet pages as a reference tool for staff
- adapted the Corporate Customer Impact Assessment screening tool for use in EHW

#### **3.2** Following the departure of the full-time Equalities and Diversity Officer, we have:

- realigned the way we address Equalities and Diversity in the directorate
- established a senior-level Equalities lead officer group, with representation from each team or unit, to ensure that Equalities issues are integrated with business planning
- planned workshops for managers and officers to enable them to understand their responsibilities with regard to the EFLG and the new directorate approach. These workshops are scheduled for delivery in February and March 2010
- Developed new ways of working to streamline the administrative burden on managers of producing evidence for standards such as EFLG and Customer Service Excellence (formerly Chartermark)

#### **3.3** In the January 2009 report, there were three main areas of weakness noted, which have been addressed as follows:

- We have drafted and published briefings on all seven Equality 'strands' for staff and managers
- Whilst in post, the Equalities Officer built strong relationships with several community groups. These contacts have been passed to the Corporate Diversity Team to take forward
- The third area of weakness, that of embedding impact assessments in business as usual was started, and will be taken forward in the new directorate approach

- 3.4** Additional information on achievements and progress is included in Appendix 1, extracted from the directorate's 2009/10 half-year business plan monitoring. A typical compliment following work to address particular customer needs is as follows:

*I am disabled and without the motorised trampers at Shornewoods Country Park my life would be very different. A big 'thank you' from my husband and I for giving us a lifeline. We cannot begin to even tell you how much it means to us. With sincere gratitude. (Mrs I Tumkins – Longfield)*

#### **4. The way ahead in 2010**

- 4.1** In November 2009, EHW's Directorate Management Team approved a project management approach to integrating Equalities into the day to day business, based on the business planning process.
- 4.2** The approach is a simple system based on the five performance areas of the EFLG structure to enable services and teams to self-assess. Services and teams will be trained and supported to carry this out as part of project development, via a combination of Customer Impact assessments (CIAs), benchmarking and monitoring of service Action Plans against the five EFLG 'Performance areas' and using standards such as the '**Customer Excellence Standard**' to guide us.
- 4.3** Each team and service area has nominated a senior-level lead officer or manager to champion this within their teams. Members of this group will receive training and support to implement these activities within their team, so that self-assessment rapidly becomes part of project or service planning or the policy development process.
- 4.4** In addition to this group, the directorate has 'Strand Champions' who are able to offer expertise and challenge on the seven Equality Strands. The role of Strand Champion is undertaken as a staff-member's 'Wider Contribution' to the work of the directorate, and is distinct from the core 'Equalities in business planning' function of the senior-level lead officers' group mentioned at 4.3

**4.5** The Directorate Management Team has agreed accountabilities within the directorate for the five EFLG areas as follows:

<b>EFLG performance areas</b>	<b>Accountability</b>
1. Knowing your communities and equality mapping	Directorate managers at all levels; team & project leads, with support from corporate KCC customer insight resources.
2. Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment	Directorate management team and SMT, in support of KCC's corporate commitment
3. Community engagement and satisfaction	Public Involvement & Equalities Manager, all managers & team leaders
4. Responsive services and customer care	Directorate managers at all levels & project leads; Public Involvement and Equalities Manager, Customer Standards Officer
5. A modern, reflective and diverse workforce	All staff & managers with recruitment responsibility; all staff to be aware of equalities & diversity issues;

## **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

**5.1** The directorate's revised approach will mean that we will have to make greater demands in future on the specialists and experts outside our directorate, in the wider KCC organisation than has been the case to date. However, we will work collaboratively with colleagues across KCC to ensure that we play our part in meeting our responsibilities with regard to the corporate commitment to achieve level 'Excellent' in the EFLG by March 2011.

### **5.2 We recommend that Members:**

- a) Note the content of this report
- b) Endorse the approach for embedding Equalities into the directorate's business, in support of KCC's corporate commitment to achieve level 'Excellent' in the new Equalities Framework for Local Government.

## **Appendix 1: EHW Half-year business plan Equalities monitoring**

Contact officers:

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**2009/10 Half Year Monitoring  
 September 2009**

**Units:** Environment & Waste, Integrated Strategy & Planning,  
 Kent Highway Services and Resources

**Directorate:** Environment, Highways & Waste

**Business Plans – Equality Monitoring**

Actions	Progress
Guidance to E&R staff on Equality legislation including embedding in Bus. Plans	<b>Amber:</b> Legislation and guidance is available to managers via KNet and is being reviewed and improved as changes come into force; also included in business plans 09/10 and 10/11. Some support and training have been provided to managers and staff and more is planned to understand how to integrate equalities into business as usual
Establish E&R Equalities Forum and co-ordinate and support directorate Equality Champions	<b>Green:</b> Equalities Forum is established as the Equalities Evidence Framework Group. This group will be the medium / resource for championing, challenging and providing expertise. With the departure of the Equalities Officer, (1 <sup>st</sup> Sept 2009), EHW intends to address Equalities using a project management approach: channelling information, ensuring managers and service teams understand their responsibilities and have the information to deliver this agenda as part of business as usual.
Update E&R Equalities Action Plan	<b>Amber:</b> Equalities Action Plan needs to be reviewed to take account of Equalities Framework for Local Government, and KCC's Equality Strategy (draft - Sept 09). Target completion date for this is February 2010.
Co-ordinate Best Equality Practice evidence for the new EFLG	<b>Amber:</b> Evidence is being collated, and Customer Impact Assessments undertaken where appropriate. Mechanisms for reporting and recording evidence are being developed. Twice yearly health-checks with service teams are designed to enable systematic co-ordination and reporting of evidence.
Ensure E&R (now EHW) representation on Kent Equality Network and other Kent forums across equality strands	<b>Amber:</b> With the departure of the Equalities Officer, (1 <sup>st</sup> September 2009), EHW directorate will not have the resource to attend the Kent Equalities Network on a regular basis, although champions will be supported to do so where possible. We rely on the KCC Corporate Diversity network to provide appropriate representation and cascade information.

<b>Reporting on top-line actions from Directorate Equalities and Diversity Action Plan 2007-10:</b>	
Diversity in Action training for staff	Not promoted during Jan-Sept 2009 as EHW had benefit of f/t Equalities Officer providing 121 sessions with managers and teams on Equality & Diversity, email guidance notes and Bridging Sessions on equalities strands. However, with departure of Equalities officer, Diversity in Action training will be promoted across EHW from Q3 onwards.
Complete online tool on "Diversity in the Workplace" (staff and managers)	45 Staff and managers undertook this during the period April to September 09. All staff and managers are encouraged to undertake this course. To date over 300 staff and managers have completed it. Email promoting course sent to all staff in Aug 09. Promotion by email again in Q3.
Divisional Business Plan	The 2009/10 directorate business plan was published in summary format as ' <b>The Year Ahead</b> '. Limited numbers of hard copies were produced and provided to all members following June 09 election, and also to Senior Managers Forum to cascade throughout their teams. Electronic copy was published to KNet and a link to all staff emailed.
Diversity in Action training for managers	As above comment re: Diversity in Action training for staff.
Ways to Success behaviour related to equalities and	W2S 'Equalities behaviour' incorporated into revised appraisal paperwork, and is a requirement for all managers.
Assess the impact of new policies, projects and practices on different equality groups	Customer Impact Assessment training is being rolled out to all managers; a summary flow-chart is being developed for managers to decide when to assess.
Positive Action recruitment training	All recruitment interviews will have at least one interviewer who has been PA recruitment trained.
Raise equality and diversity topics during team meetings	Pilot team meeting agenda to incorporate equalities information for attendees; AOB – team to identify any agenda items requiring CIA assessment
Training undertaken in the directorate since April 09 based on Equality & Diversity	Positive recruitment: 4 Equality Briefing for staff group chairs: 2. With the installation of OLM in April 2009, monitoring of participation can be more systematic.