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To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 17 September 2014

Subject: Annual Equality and Diversity Report

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Growth, Economic Development & Communities Cabinet Committee

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All divisions

Summary: This report sets out a position statement for services within the Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) Directorate regarding equality and diversity work and progress on KCC Equality objectives for 2013/14.

Recommendations:

- a) Note current performance.
- b) Continue to ensure that equality governance is observed in relation to decision making.
- c) Note the proposed changes to Equality Objectives and agree to receive revised objectives.
- d) Agree to receive this report annually in order to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

1. Introduction

Publication of equality information is compulsory in England for all public authorities. Proactive publication of equality information ensures not only compliance with the legal requirements, but also greater understanding by the public of the difficult decisions an authority faces, and why it takes those decisions. Gathering equality information and using it to inform decision-making can also enable authorities to achieve greater value for money in the services they deliver through better targeting of services.

2. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications in producing an annual report.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1 Advancing equality and reducing socio-economic inequalities in Kent contributes towards the Council's Medium Term Plan. Objectives correspond

with existing council priorities and supports the aims of, helping the Kent economy to grow, putting the citizen in control and tackling disadvantage.

- 3.2 The council published its equality objectives in 2011/12. Each service was asked to provide equality information and to demonstrate how they complied with equality legislation between 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014, and what performance measures they have in place to achieve the KCC Equality Objectives.

4. Key Achievements

- 4.1 The GET Directorate has a good equality record with Equality Impact Assessments (EqlAs) and is used as good practice examples across the authority.
- 4.2 The Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) service has asked contractors to deliver a 'meet and greet' service, with assistance available to customers for the lifting and carrying of waste. Contractors running the HWRCs are also required to comply with the access scheme for customers. In addition, service information is made accessible to customers through a range of formats for example Easyread, Braille, alternative languages when requested.
- 4.3 Over the last year adults with learning disabilities have made 1,529 visits to Libraries to attend activities. A key aim of the service is to ensure that they feel comfortable and secure in attending regular library activities. For example they attend events such as Talk Times, author events, Knit and Natter sessions, Time2Give volunteering, IT session and the Six Book Challenge -over 80 adults with learning disabilities received a certificate after completing the challenge (50 adults in 2012-2013.)
- 4.4 Meet and Practice English Conversation groups are held in 7 libraries for people who English is not their first language. People meet up once a week to practise English in an informal and relaxed setting. The marriage script has been rewritten to be totally inclusive of all couples. In the Jewish and Muslim faiths, burial has to take place within 24 hours of death. A duty registrar is available 24 hours a day to register the death to issue appropriate paperwork for a funeral to take place.
- 4.5 Economic Development identified and evidenced spatial inequalities across the county to inform the distribution of economic development activities. Examples of this in 2013/14 include the preparation of the Kent and Medway Economic Review, which provided the basis for Kent's contribution to the Strategic Economic Plan. This evidence has helped KCC to identify areas where investment is required to overcome economic disparities at sub-county level, and to ensure that KCC enables growth in locations where the market will not deliver alone. In practical terms, this means a particular focus on East Kent and North Kent.
- 4.6 Kent Highways work closely with Highway contractor Amey to run an apprenticeship scheme which encourages greater numbers of young people into work. Working with Kent Police KCC ensures that our Driver Diversion Courses are accessible with reasonable adjustments made on request.

4.7 In Environment Planning and Enforcement the Country Parks service maintains easy access paths and provides *trampers* at several of its sites to allow greater physical access in the parks. It also provides engagement activities for schools which are accessible for all children including those with Special Educational Needs. In Thanet partnership work with the District Council delivered the "Footprints in the Sand" Project. This project focused on encouraging disadvantaged children to use and understand the beach. Again partnership with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and contractors work was undertaken to enlarge and improve the Coldharbour Caravan Site. This has resulted in a site that been welcomed by residents and the Gypsy and Traveller communities. A key feature of the development was to ensure disability access in utility blocks and communal spaces.

4.8 A report on what has been achieved in 2013/14 can be seen in Appendix 1.

5. Governance

5.1 In 2012 governance arrangements were agreed to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) following an internal audit. Governance is based on decisions having an EqlA at both Departmental Management Team and Member levels. If decisions are taken without full equality analysis the authority is open to potential Judicial Review

5.2 KCC continues to use EqlAs to capture and evidence our analysis on the impact of our decisions and policies on the People of Kent. The Equality Act abolished the need for EqlAs but is clear on the need to undertake equality analysis in order to demonstrate that due regard has been paid to our Equality duties and KCC evidences this by way of an EqlA. EqlAs assess the impacts and or needs of policies, procedures and services on staff, Members and customers.

5.3 It has also been noted that there is no process in place regarding Officer decisions under delegated authority to ensure that Officers making decisions can evidence compliance with the Equality Act and the PSED. Arrangements are now being reviewed to ensure that all decisions have the outcomes of an equality analysis as part of the reports

6. Future reporting

6.1 It is proposed that KCC revises and consults on its equality objectives during 2014/2015. The objectives will be incorporated in to the new Strategic Commissioning Plan and the accompanying Outcomes Framework so that KCC can embed equality monitoring in to the core performance framework.

6.2 This will result in greater compliance in relation to the delivery of organisational priorities and core services. Critically outcomes will be monitored through core performance management frameworks which will result in greater efficiency and accountability in relation to the delivery and outcomes of the objectives and services to customers. Performance monitoring is to be reported to the relevant Committees and this will meet the statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010.

6.3 Duplication will be reduced through streamlining KCC's equality duty by including public information within other published reports.

7. Legal Implications and Risk Management.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the Council to publish its Equality Annual Report each year.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

There is no requirement to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment because this paper reports performance monitoring on the previous year's work and internal governance arrangements.

9. Conclusion

The annual report has been able to identify progress on the relevant equality objectives. The Directorate can demonstrate that it provides accessible and usable services but it needs to continue to improve its governance arrangements and review how it communicates and provides information with service users.

10. Recommendations

The Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- a) Note current performance.
- b) Continue to ensure that equality governance is observed in relation to decision making.
- c) Note the proposed changes to Equality Objectives and agree to receive revised objectives.
- d) Agree to receive this report annually in order to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

11. Background Documents

Kent County Council Equality Objectives

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/equality-and-diversity/equality-and-diversity-objectives>

12. Contact details

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