

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

REPORT OF HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Report prepared by Clare Wood
Date Issued: _5th August 2014

1. EQUALITY OBJECTIVE UPDATE 2013/14

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the 2013/14 update on the Corporate Equality Objectives set in 2011.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Policy & Communications

1.2.1 It is recommended that the Leader of the Council:

- i. Reviews the progress made towards achieving the Council's Equality Objectives;
- ii. Notes that a review of the Equality Objective will take place during 2014/15; and
- iii. Agrees further actions where appropriate.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Equalities Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which applies to all public bodies and any private and voluntary bodies carrying out public functions. The Duty places a legal requirement on the Council in carrying out its functions to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimization.
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups.
- c) Foster good relations between different groups.

1.3.2 The Duty covers people with the following protected characteristics - age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, sex (previously referred to as gender), gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity. The eliminating discrimination duty also covers marriage and civil partnership.

1.3.3 Advancing equality of opportunity between people who have a protected characteristic and persons who do not includes:

- § Removing or minimising disadvantage suffered by persons who have a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- § Taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- § Encouraging persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.3.4 The act also included the duty to set Equality Objectives to show how the Council is advancing equality of opportunity by 6th April 2012, and then every four years. The Council's Equality Objectives were agreed by Cabinet on 14 March 2012.

1.3.5 The Equalities Policy was reviewed and agreed in April 2013 and details that six monthly updates on the objectives would be reported to Corporate Leadership Team and the relevant portfolio holder.

1.4 Equality Objectives – Progress Update

1.4.1 The Council's three Equality Objectives are:

- Increase the proportion of men registering for the Healthy Weight programme;
- Increase the proportion of people aged 18-24 who feel that the Council keeps people 'well informed' or 'fairly well informed' about services and benefits.; and
- Improve the number of visitors to the museum aged 55+.

1.4.2 Below, set out under each objective, is a review of the actions and a summary of progress made to date, full action plans including progress comments and data out-turns are included at Appendix A.

1.4.3 A review of the equality objective is planned for 2014/15, with the aim that new equality objectives should be in place for April 2015.

Increase the proportion of men registering for the Healthy Weight programme to 30%

- 1.4.4 In 2013/14, 22.7% of all people registering on the Healthy Weight programme were male. This is a 10% decrease on the proportion that were registered in 2012/13. The annual target has not been met and will be carried forward to March 2015.
- 1.4.5 During 2013/14 a review of the Healthy Weight programme was undertaken which has resulted in several new/redesigned programmes that are designed specifically to appeal to men, including Fitstones which is a football based programme that is being delivered by Maidstone United Football Club.
- 1.4.6 A new referral form for getting referrals from GP's has been designed and is being rolled out with GP's across the borough. The new form and information provided should allow GP's to identify with their patients the most suitable programme for them.
- 1.4.7 The new and revised programmes were not running for the whole of 2013/14 and some are still due to commence so uptake by men on these programmes is still unknown. Therefore the current target of 30% has been rolled forward for 2014/15.

Increase the proportion of people aged 18-24 who feel that the Council keeps people 'well informed' or 'fairly well informed' about services and benefits to 58% over four years.

- 1.4.8 In 2013/14 the Council undertook its biennial Residents' Survey. This found that 67.4% of people aged 18-24 felt very or fairly well informed about the services and benefits provided by the Council. This is over a 10% increase in performance compared to 2012/13 when the last Residents' Survey was undertaken and means that the equality objective has been achieved. Further work is planned to assess areas of the borough where satisfaction is lower during 2014/15.
- 1.4.9 Although the objective has been achieved in 2014/15 the Communications Team plan to continue supporting and promoting community events and initiatives aimed at young people.
- 1.4.10 In addition the team have widened their online reach, doubling the number of twitter followers in the last year and now have a facebook reach of 10,000 views per week. In 2013/14 the Communications team reviewed the social media policy and the co-ordination of the council's social media has improved.

Improve the number of visitors to the museum aged 55 plus – 2013/14 target 30% (22,000)

1.4.11 The overall proportion of people aged 55 plus visiting the museum has declined compared to 2012/13, going from 28.5% (21,494) in 2012/13 to 23.3% (15,812) for 2013/14. This equates to a drop of 5,682 people aged 55 plus compared to the previous year and means that the annual target has not been achieved.

1.4.12 The Museum put in place a programme aimed at over 55's in 2012/13 which continues to be promoted and expanded. They are currently considering a Thursday late night opening and are developing links with St Faiths Adult Learning Centre.

1.4.13 Going forward the Museum identified two new actions to help improve the performance of this objective. First to improve their customer knowledge it has been noted that the data capture that currently feeds this objective is not a complete sample. It is suspected that if all the various groups that use the museum on a regular basis were to undertake the survey that currently captures this data that the out-turn would be significantly higher. Second, they are looking at access and engagement with people at the museum and those with mental health issues such as dementia, this links back to the Health and Wellbeing agenda.

1.5 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.5.1 Setting equality objectives is a statutory duty, failing to report progress against the agreed objectives could result in the relevant actions becoming unfocused and in turn the objective may not be achieved.

1.6 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.6.1 Equality is a core value for the organisation. Setting equality objectives can also help in moving towards the strategic outcome of ensuring that 'Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced'.

1.7 Risk Management

1.7.1 Monitoring progress on objectives will ensure that services have the best chance of meeting them by adjusting strategies where necessary.

1.8 Other Implications

1.8.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	X
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	X
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	

Financial

1.8.2 The financial implications of achieving these objectives will be assessed as part of the council's medium term financial strategy process.

Staffing

1.8.3 Staff will need to be made aware of the objectives to ensure they are embedded as part of their roles.

Legal

1.8.4 The Council has a statutory duty to set and publish, in an accessible format, equality objectives and publish these annually. The objectives need to be reviewed every four years. The public sector equality duty which came into force on 5 April 2011 requires public sector bodies to have due regard to the three aims of the equality duty when making decisions (see 1.3.1).

Equality Impact Needs Assessment

1.8.5 Whilst we are no longer required to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA), we do have a duty to ensure we consider the three aims above (see 1.3.1). The Council has agreed that wherever a policy/function or service is reviewed, changed or developed the two stage EqIA process should be applied to ensure we fulfill our duty.

1.9 Relevant Documents

1.9.1 Appendices

Appendix A – Equality Objectives Action Plans

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes No

If yes, this is a Key Decision because:

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Wards/Parishes affected:

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How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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