

Policy & Resources Committee

29th July 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Equality Objectives

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse
Report Author	Clare Wood
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. Note the progress made on the Equalities Objectives that were set in 2012 at Appendix A
2. Agree new Equality Objectives and actions (Appendix B), with evidence at Appendix C.
3. Agree that an annual report on the objectives be reported to the Policy & Resources Committee in April 2016.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Corporate Leadership Team	21/07/2015
Policy & Resources Committee	29/07/2015

Equality Objectives

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To agree Equality Objectives for the period 2015 to 2019.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimization.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between different groups.
 - Foster good relations between different groups.
- 2.2 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 element also covers marriage and civil partnership.
- 3.3 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. Cabinet agreed the Council's Equality objectives on 14 March 2012. In May 2013 it was agreed by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services to bring forward the review of the Equality Objectives to April 2015.
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3. UPDATE ON CURRENT OBJECTIVES

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

Increase the proportion of men registering for the Healthy Weight programme to 28%

- 3.2 The Healthy Weight Programme is targeted at adults with a BMI of 28 or over, referred by health professionals or by themselves. In 2012 it was estimated that just under 24% of all participants on the Healthy Weight Programme were men. The annual data for 2014/15 shows that the target has not been achieved and performance currently stands at 26.73%.
- 3.3 Over the last three years the team have proactively been looking at ways to increase the number of men participating in this programme including holding focus groups with male staff members and looking at the way these

programmes are marketed. Several programmes specifically aimed at men were designed in Summer 2014, however at a late stage the original provider pulled out.

- 3.4 The team have since commissioned the Wellbeing People to deliver a new weight programme 'Match Fit' that focuses on weight management for men. Currently 60 adults are on track to complete the 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

- 3.5 The 2011/12 Resident Survey showed that 53% of people aged 18-24 felt that the Council keeps people 'well informed' or 'fairly well informed' about services and benefits, compared to 63% of the whole survey population. Following work undertaken by the Communications Team when the survey was repeated in 2013/14, 61.7% of young people (aged 18 -24 years old) said they felt 'very informed' or 'fairly well' informed about services and benefits the Council provides.
- 3.6 Over the last three years, the team have reviewed and updated the tools they use to monitor social media and conversations to identify where Maidstone is being talked about online. The team continues to support and promote community events including those aimed at young people such as SNAP discos, Safety in Action and Uprockin. Last year the team put in place a performance indicator to monitor social media engagement, which shows that each social media post by the Council was shared or re-tweeted by at least two people. In the last year the team have also updated the Communication and Engagement Strategy which includes actions around ensuring that there are appropriate listening and feedback mechanisms in place for younger people.

Improve the number of visitors to the museum aged 55+

- 3.7 In 2014/15 it was assessed, using survey data, that 42% of visitors to the museum were aged 55 years and over, exceeding the 30% target.
- 3.8 Over the last three years the museum have held events and designed programmes aimed at the over 55's. In 2013/14, the museum increased the number of behind the scene tours and promoted these with the Rotary Clubs, Women's Institutes and other local history groups in the area. In addition, museum staff have given talks and lectures to local groups including residential homes as well as the interest groups already outlined. Following a lecture the audience is encouraged to visit the museum.
- 3.9 The mechanism for collecting data for this equality objective is the Museum Survey. This is an optional survey and is not completed by the members of the various clubs that the museum plays host to. The members of these groups are predominantly over 55 years old. Therefore, a new set of surveys have been designed to capture their views in addition to the general visitor. These will be rolled out during 2014/15. Over the last three years, the museum has

also reviewed how it advertises. Spend on advertising has increased and they have looked at the type of publications that they are featuring in, in order to encourage the over 55's to visit.

4. EQUALITY DATA REVIEW

- 4.1 In order to assess inequality in service provision or policy each service area was asked to provide details of their customer profiles against the protected characteristics. The data returned varied from service to service with some services such as Parking Services not collecting any equality data to the Housing Register where data is collected for almost every protected characteristic. Equally, there were services such as complaints where equality data is not formally captured but gleaned from information within the actual complaint. Ultimately, the data collection exercise showed that equality questions are rarely asked and when they are the question formats are not applied consistently.
- 4.2 The data collection exercise highlighted that many services still focus on age, gender and sometimes ethnicity and disability. The only data that was available in relation to religion and sexual orientation was workforce data and housing register data. From discussions with Officers it was apparent that there was no 'one size fits all' approach that could be undertaken as in some circumstances asking someone about all of the protected characteristics they have would be inappropriate.
- 4.3 There are some areas where it would be easy to collect equality information about our service users that are not currently collected. Such as when someone calls the contact centre to log a complaint or request service. However, tools would need to be put in place to capture this data in a consistent manner. For example, the complaints system does not have the facility to record details of the protected characteristics for each complainant.
- 4.4 A Member Workshop was organised as a result of a recommendation made by the Strategic Leadership and Corporate services Overview & Scrutiny Committee. At this workshop members were given a brief presentation on the Equality Duty for Local Government and were presented with the data from the data collection exercise (Appendix C) as well as equality ward profiles. Members considered the data that we currently collect and agreed that there were gaps in the information and that it was hard to assess inequality without quality data.
- 4.5 Research was also undertaken across a number of councils to look at what objectives they have. A number of other councils that were researched seem to take a higher level approach to their equality objectives in comparison to Maidstone. Some are much less specific and performance orientated.

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	None	[Head of Service or Manager]
Risk Management	None	[Head of Service or Manager]
Financial	None	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	Staff will need to be made aware of the objectives and the impact on their roles and the service to ensure they are embedded as part of their roles.	[Head of Service]
Legal	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.	[Legal Team]
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	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.	Anna Collier
Environmental/Sustainable Development	None	[Head of Service or Manager]
Community Safety	None	[Head of Service or Manager]
Human Rights Act	None	[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement	None	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
Asset Management	None	[Head of Service & Manager]

6. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Update on Equality Objectives
 - Appendix II: Proposed Equality Objectives 2015-19
 - Appendix III: Equality Data
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