

**Equalities Annual Update**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service/Lead Director</b>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer & Policy and Information Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update on the progress made against the equalities objectives set in 2017 and to set the action plan for the forthcoming year.

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the progress made on the equalities objectives as set out in paragraph 1.7 of the report is noted.
2. That the new action plan, as included in Appendix 1 to the report, is agreed.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
CLT	4 September 2018
Policy and Resources Committee	19 September 2018

# Equalities Annual Update

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Equalities Policy was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee in 2017. The policy sets the Council's commitments under the Equalities Act 2010 and the way in which it fulfils its public sector equality duty.
- 1.2 Our Equalities Policy and objectives are reviewed every three years and progress with regards to the objectives set is reported on an annual basis.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress made against the objectives set in 2017 and outline new actions for the forthcoming year.

### Equalities Objectives

- 1.4 The current equalities objectives were agreed by the committee in 2017. The objectives are structured around three defined roles:
  - Community Leader
  - Service provider
  - Employer
- 1.5 These are set out in our Equalities Policy and add structure and transparency to the way in which we develop and report on our objectives.
- 1.6 To ensure delivery of the objectives set, an action plan was developed which has been monitored throughout the course of the year.

### Summary of achievements

- 1.7 This is a summary of some of the achievements from the past year:

#### As a Community Leader

- We now have a single point of contact in place with Involve. Involve are a key community based organisation who deliver a number of community forums for the council with a particular focus on seldom heard groups. Our single point of contact ensures there is consistent engagement with Involve, facilitating a two-way conversation between the Council and all its communities.
- We now have a Community Section established in the Borough Insight. It is used to inform our residents on the dates of the community forums we support via Involve. It will be used to showcase community groups and training and volunteering opportunities on offer.
- Consultations are now successfully being delivered in-house and a toolkit and guidelines have been developed to support this. This has improved consistency of consultation across the council with collection of demographics improving analysis of how decisions affect customers.

- An organisation wide review identified the lack of consistency and knowledge in how we approach providing information in accessible formats. A toolkit has been developed which will improve understanding and raise standards in this area and will be rolled out before the end of the year.

#### As a Service Provider

- The Equalities Impact Assessment process has been redesigned with a new guidance document to make it more intuitive to complete. This assessment should be carried out for all proposed new or reviews to council policies and service delivery. A training plan has been devised and will be delivered to all departments by the end of the year.
- GDPR Audits have been completed for departments across the Council for sensitive personal data (which includes equalities data). Recommendations have been given to services and action plans are under development

#### As an Employer

- Equalities are now considered as part of Service Planning. Unit Managers are required to consider equalities alongside their business planning for the forthcoming year ensuring that due regard is given.
- The standards of EIAs have been raised. Support and guidance to officers is now provided and as a result EIAs are now considered at an earlier stage in the decision making process and the supporting evidenced being provided demonstrates a more considered and informed approach is being taken. A system is now in place to monitor EIAs via modern.gov, to ensure that Equalities is being considered in all reports
- Democratic Services team now take a proactive approach with new members in terms of ensuring their needs are considered from an equalities perspective. For example by providing reports in large print.
- Information on equalities is now included in all new member training packs.
- A quarterly update on forthcoming community forums facilitated by Involve is included in the Member newsletter to enable members' in their role within their communities.

1.8 Appendix 1 (Equalities Objectives & Action Plan) shows the updated action plan for the coming year. It identifies new actions we will undertake over the next year to ensure that we continue to move forward in achieving the existing objectives set; many of the actions are natural 'next steps'.

#### **Armed Forces Covenant**

1.9 The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces and their families are treated fairly.

- 1.10 Two of the squadrons at Maidstone's Invicta Barracks are Gurkha Engineers who play a key part in operations around the world. As a result, Maidstone has an established Nepalese community.
- 1.11 Maidstone Borough Council have to date had prominent involvement in the work involved in the Armed Forces Covenant in Maidstone.
- 1.12 The Leader and Deputy Leader recently renewed this commitment, attending the 5<sup>th</sup> Kent and Medway Civilian Military Covenant Conference at Brompton Barracks in June this year.
- 1.13 To raise the profile of the Military Covenant and the work that we are doing in this area, work streams will be incorporated into the Equalities Objectives & Action Plan. It will be monitored and reported on as part of this annual report.

## **Dementia**

- 1.14 Dementia has also been included as a new action within the Equalities Objectives & Action Plan to raise its profile within the organisation and to ensure there is consistent approach across the organisation to increase the impact of what we do. .
- 1.15 Awareness of Dementia and the importance of Councils increasing their understanding and engaging more with this agenda is gaining momentum nationally. For example, making public spaces more intuitive to use, ensuring the right support is in place for residents as we move forward in a digital age and ensuring our communications from signage to letters are widely accessible.
- 1.16 This month staff across the Council have been involved in events to inform and raise awareness of Dementia. On 8 September a team took part in the Alzheimer's Society's Memory Walk in aid of Dementia awareness at Mote Park. On 9 September, National Dementia Carer's Day was promoted across the organisation with information provided to staff, including the Dementia Friend video and on 10 September, Dementia awareness sessions led by a Dementia Friends Champion were run for staff to find out more about dementia and the support available. Further training may be rolled out more widely to staff and members as members have expressed an interest in Dementia awareness training
- 1.17 The Council is engaged with the Aging Well Health and Wellbeing Sub Group and is already taking steps to becoming a Dementia Friendly organisation. A member of staff has been designated to attend the Maidstone area information seminar and further actions to achieve this status have been included in the action plan at Appendix 1 and will be monitored over the course of the year.

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## **2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Keep the current the Equalities Objectives & Action Plan. Whilst there have been no legislative changes the current actions have been achieved, not

updating the plan would mean that the Council has identified that no further actions or improvement is required.

- 2.2 Approve the action plan (as detailed in Appendix 1) to enable the organisation to continue to improve on the way in which it fulfils the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

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### **3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 As set out at paragraph 2.2. to approve the new objectives and actions as detailed in Appendix 1. The action plan has been closely monitored to ensure it is delivered. The new action plan has been identified via a strategic overview exercise and therefore on an informed basis. This continued approach and correlation with the strategic planning process provides parity of esteem which in itself improves the organisations awareness and understanding of equalities.

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### **4. RISK**

- 4.1 The report is an information report, providing an update on the progress made on actions agreed by Committee. The recommendations made are either actions which are natural next steps to those already agreed or in terms of the new objectives – raising the profile and complimenting streams of work that have already been agreed.

### **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 The Equalities Objectives and Action Plan were agreed by the Committee in 2017. This report provides an update on the progress made to date and an opportunity for the Committee to have an input into the new action plan.

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### **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 If agreed the updates proposed to the Equalities Objectives and Action Plan will be made and the document will be made available on the intranet and internet for staff and residents.
- 6.2 The action plan will continue to be monitored by the Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer.

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### **7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The Equalities Policy and Objectives are key documents that underpin our Corporate Priorities and support the Council's ongoing commitment to the residents of Maidstone, ensuring that the Council is accountable, transparent and involving residents in its decision making.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Risk Management</b>	Already covered in the risk section – if your risk section is more than just a paragraph in this box then you can state 'refer to paragraph ... of the report'	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Financial</b>	The Equalities Policy supports decisions made by the Council in this area of business.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Staffing</b>	The Policy, objectives and actions will be monitored and reported on by the Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Legal</b>	An annual report is required as part of the Council's adherence to the Public Sector Equalities Duty.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	There are a number of works streaks referenced in the action plan around public consultation which involve the collection of data. The appropriate privacy statement is in place.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Equalities</b>	The Equalities Policy defines and supports the actions the Council takes to ensure that equalities implications are considered as part of the decision making process. EIAs are a key part of this process.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The policy will support decisions made by the Council in this area of business.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer

<b>Procurement</b>	EIAs are a key, supporting part of the commissioning and procurement process.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

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

- Appendix 1: Equalities Objectives & Action Plan
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None