

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2012**

**REPORT OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGER**

**Report prepared by Catherine Negus**

**1. Setting Equality Objectives**

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To agree the equality objectives to be set by the Council for up to the next four years according to the Council's equality duty.

1.2 Recommendation of the Policy and Performance Manager

1.2.1 That the Council adopt the equality objectives suggested for the Museum, the Healthy Weight Programme, and improving the level to which young people feel informed about the Council, as laid out at 1.3.6 – 1.3.8 below.

1.2.2 That the objectives, as well as progress on the objectives and details of any engagement with stakeholders, be published in an accessible format.

1.2.3 That progress on achieving objectives be reported to CLT and the relevant portfolio holder on a 6-monthly basis.

1.2.4 That when conducting future surveys and collecting data on customers, services ask questions about more of the protected characteristics where possible.

1.2.5 New or revised objectives must be set by 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016 but it is recommended that further objectives be set before this date as data becomes available, preferably in accordance with the normal business planning and performance monitoring cycle.

1.2.6 That any recommendations made by the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012 be considered.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Local authorities must set, by 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012 then at least every four years, one or more equality objectives that they think they need to achieve to further the aims of the general equality duty. The three aims of the duty must be considered: to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between different people. Authorities must consider whatever data is available on all of the protected characteristics. These are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. For those aged 18 years and over, age is also a protected characteristic. The new equality duty also covers marriage and civil partnership but only with regard to eliminating discrimination. Equality objectives may cover both staff and service users.

1.3.2 Statutory and non-statutory guidance recommends that when authorities are deciding which issues to focus on in setting objectives:

- Objectives should be **specific** (this does not mean that they must all be quantitative rather than qualitative) and **measurable**.
- Objectives should be **achievable**, but authorities should show they have considered different ways of achieving an objective before deciding it is unachievable.
- Authorities should focus on the issues causing the most disadvantage to protected groups – even if the protected group suffering a significant disadvantage is small.
- Objectives should reflect the priorities of the organisation as a whole, that can be delivered and monitored through mainstream operations.
- Objectives should be about change and improvement, not about continuing something that is already happening.
- Objectives should be expressed in terms of outcomes for people, not in terms of setting new strategies, policies, processes, funding etc.
- Authorities should not just focus on whether proportionate numbers of people are participating, but also their quality of experience and the outcome for that group. (It should be noted that for some services takeup can be compared in a straightforward way with the population as a whole, whereas for others (eg housing) analyzing the match of need and takeup is more complex.)
- There is no set number of objectives required. Public authorities should take a proportionate approach. This means that the number of objectives they set, and their level of ambition, will be different depending on the size and role of the public authority – so a government department will set several objectives and a school might set just one.
- Authorities can set important objectives even if they will take a long time to achieve, and continue to address them in the next cycle. Conversely, new objectives can be set at any time as new

data and analysis becomes available. Details of areas where this may happen are given at 1.5 below.

1.3.3 It is obligatory for authorities to publish details of objectives, and any engagement with stakeholders, in an accessible format. This could be on the website or within workplans or another document. Objectives should be clearly signposted. Authorities should consider publishing in formats other than on the website where proportionate (particularly formats which might be accessible to people with the different protected characteristics).

#### 1.3.4 **Data issues**

When collecting data, many services still focus on age, gender and sometimes ethnicity and disability, and data can be limited. Therefore more reliance than would be ideal has been placed on data from the Place Survey 2009, which surveyed a sample of the Borough's residents and included information on age, gender, race and disability status. The report on the Place Survey data highlighted issues where there was a significant disparity between groups, and these disparities have been included here where relevant. Data is included in **Appendix B**. A new Residents' Survey is currently being analysed, though this included fewer questions than the Place Survey.

Work is already underway to improve the data available on equalities in Revenues and Benefits, Transport Services, Parks and the Council's workforce, and further analysis will take place when data is available. The potential for gathering data on equalities for Parking and the Theatre, and more up-to-date data on equalities among Sports and Leisure facilities users, should be investigated. New data can be compared against improved baseline data when the results of the 2011 Census become available. The baseline population data used as a reference point for this report can be found in **Appendix A**.

Where it is not possible to collect data directly, the Council should engage with stakeholder groups, perhaps particularly for newer protected characteristics.

In Maidstone, small groups of people with certain protected characteristics sometimes have more positive experiences than the average for the borough's population, but this does not necessarily mean that people with the opposite characteristic do significantly worse than average. This is probably because there is more intra-group inequality within certain large groups, such as white residents, than there is inter-group inequality.

#### 1.3.5 **Economic and educational inequalities**

Some of the most reliable data available concerns the economic and educational inequalities faced by certain protected groups. Issues in Maidstone include disparities in qualifications according to gender, religion and ethnicity, higher unemployment among female than male lone parents, lower weekly wages among women, and a slightly greater propensity among disabled people with a Work Limiting Disability to be unemployed in Maidstone than nationwide. These are not issues which can be addressed by MBC, a lower-tier authority, on its own, but should be considered as work on education and worklessness progresses. The Locality Board, of which MBC is a member, is currently focusing its efforts in this area on the Community Budgets programme, which targets the most troubled families. Future topics will include youth services, libraries and school exclusions. Golding Homes is also undertaking Priorities Focus Group work with its tenants on the subject of worklessness.

### 1.3.6 Maidstone Museum

A study in 2007 found that the age profile of visitors to the Museum was biased towards teenagers, probably due to school visits. There were also generally fewer visitors aged 45+, and non-visitors were less likely to have young children than visitors. This reflects the effectiveness of marketing aimed at local primary schoolchildren and their families.

Surveys of visitors to Maidstone Museum and the Bentrif Art Gallery include questions about gender and age. According to the survey results in the first quarter of 2011/12, people aged over 55 are still underrepresented among visitors (20.5% of visitors were aged over 55, compared to 30.4% of people in Maidstone). The oldest people within this band are the least represented. (In fact there may be even more younger visitors than revealed in the survey, due to school parties visiting). Data is included in **Appendix C**.

The Place Survey 2009 likewise found that the older population was underrepresented among museum visitors: all age groups above age 55 were all less likely than average (10.3%) to visit at least monthly, (55-64 (9.5%), 65-74 (9.2%), 75+ (9.4%)).

The gender balance of visitors should be kept under review in case it falls further and becomes significant again. The Place Survey 2009 did not highlight significant inequalities due to ethnicity or disability.

**Possible objective (RECOMMENDED): Improve the number of visitors to the museum aged 55+ by 5% over the next year. This target would then be expected to recur but this should be assessed after the first year.** This target would fit into the Council's priority of making Maidstone a decent place to live by maximizing the

enjoyment and educational benefit obtained from a resource which has recently received significant funds for regeneration work. There will be opportunities for promotional work around the launch of the new Museum facilities. Work is already underway or planned on several projects to attract and cater to older visitors.

The Museums and Heritage Manager has concerns about how to measure use by different age groups accurately, given reduced staff resources, and this is being looked into.

### 1.3.7 **Community Partnerships: Healthy Weight Programme**

Though sometimes recorded, insufficient data is available to analyse the ethnicity or age of participants in the programme. From the limited data available it seems possible that the number of disabled participants is representative.

The Healthy Weight Programme is targeted at adults with a BMI of 28 or over, referred by health professionals or by themselves. A large majority of people taking part in the Healthy Weight programme are female. Of the people whose gender was recorded, 80.12% of participants were female. Using first names it was possible to estimate more accurately that 76.18% of participants were female (though such assumptions are uncertain and might wrongly categorise a small number of people who do not fit into male/female gender categories). It is very unlikely that this reflects the proportions of Maidstone men and women who are overweight: the Department of Health Survey for England 2003 found that in the South East as a whole, men were more likely than women to be overweight (BMI over 25) (65.2% of men versus 51.8% of women) or obese (BMI over 30) (19.9% of men versus 19.3% of women). As the gender breakdown of the surveyed population was almost the same as that in Maidstone, it is possible to estimate that around 55.3% of overweight people and 52.9% of obese people will be male. Data is available in **Appendix D**.

**Possible objective (RECOMMENDED): Increase the proportion of men registering for the Healthy Weight from 24% to 28% over the next year. Subject to review, targets would then be set for each of the next three years leading to a probable target of 40% by the end of the fourth year.** This depends on the programme being granted PCT funding to continue for the next year and Clinical Commissioning Group funding in subsequent years. This target would fit into the council's priority 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', particularly because male mortality is disproportionately high in the borough's more deprived wards. The Maidstone Health Profile (2008) found that while the health of people in Maidstone is better than the England average, there are health inequalities within Maidstone which

need to be addressed - for example, men from the most deprived areas have over 5 years shorter life expectancy than those from the least deprived areas. The imbalance of men and women is a problem across West Kent. The programme delivery officer for Tunbridge Wells is currently studying the issue. It is also useful to consider the uptake by men of different programmes – the weight management programme at Zeroth, which includes exercise, is more popular among men than others.

### 1.3.8 Information about council services

In the Place Survey 2009, the youngest age group (16-24) were most likely to feel poorly informed about the Council and its services. (See also 1.3.9 below). In the new Residents' Survey 2011/12 the age group 18-24 was used instead of 16-24 to reflect the people who were asked to complete the survey. The Survey found that 47% of people aged 18-24 felt that the Council told people 'not much at all' or 'only a limited amount of information' about services and benefits, compared to 37% of the whole survey population. 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. (All age groups below the age of 55 were less likely than average to feel well informed and more likely than average to feel poorly informed, but the difference is most striking for the age group 18-24.)

In the Place Survey 2009, 19% of 16-24 year olds felt they could influence decisions in their local area (the mean was 25%). 70% of 16-24 year olds felt they had been treated with respect and consideration by local public services (the mean was 76%). These questions were not asked in the Residents' Survey 2011/12 but they reinforce the fact that more attention should be paid to involving and informing this age group.

The Place Survey did not highlight significant disadvantages in terms of feeling informed according to gender, ethnicity or disability.

**Possible objective (RECOMMENDED): 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.**

### 1.3.9 Electoral Registration Services

Registration Services hold data only on citizens' names and nationality, not protected characteristics. It is therefore not possible to ascertain whether any protected characteristics are underrepresented. However, the Place Survey 2009 found that the youngest age group (16-24) felt

significantly less well informed than average about how to register to vote (28.8% compared to an average of 7.8% felt poorly informed), and the number of people who felt informed increased with age. (The other age groups where more people than average felt poorly informed about registration were 25-34 (16.1%) and 35-44 (8.2%).)

The Place Survey did not highlight significant disadvantages in this area according to gender, disability or ethnicity.

**Possible objective: Increase the proportion of younger people (aged 16-24 or aged below 44) who feel informed about how to register to vote.** However, the Registration Services Manager believes people's perceptions of the registration system are not always accurate - they may believe they are not registered when in fact they are. Since Place Survey 2009 substantial work has been done to increase awareness of registration among young voters, including visits to schools and university freshers' fairs.

### 1.3.10 Parks

The Place Survey 2009 found that the oldest residents (aged 75+) are least likely to have used parks and open spaces within the last 6 months (64%, compared to an average of 85.8% of residents), followed by the age groups 65-74 (79.4%) and 55-64 (72.3%). The oldest group was also the least likely to use parks and open spaces weekly (21%, compared to an average of 40.1% for all residents), followed by the age groups 55-64 (28.7%) and 65-74 (29.6%).

During the regeneration of Mote Park, issues around accessibility for the elderly and disabled were taken into account in the design of paths and toilets. A questionnaire known as GreenStat has just been introduced and will be used to collect data on the park's users and their experiences from now on.

The Place Survey 2009 noted no significant disadvantages according to gender, disability or ethnicity.

**Possible objective: Ensure that older residents are better represented among the park's users.**

### 1.3.11 Housing

Data is available about the gender, marital status, ethnicity, age, religion, sexuality, and trans/cissexual status of people accessing the housing service, though some categories are incomplete. It is not appropriate to set targets based on this data as analysis is extremely complicated. A few years ago the potential for university analysis was investigated but there were no funds to pay for the work.

- It is possible that some groups who are likely to join the register but have lower levels of need may become overrepresented on the register due to waiting for longer periods.
- When groups appear underrepresented on the housing register it is not clear whether this is due to lower need, or issues accessing the service. Support groups are used to help people access the service.
- Data for the people housed in 2010/11 is available: this cannot be compared directly with the current housing register. The Housing Manager does not believe that vulnerable people on the Housing Register would have trouble bidding for properties as housing officer support will be provided. Furthermore, people will be prioritised according to their level of need.

However, some observations which may point to potential future monitoring:

- The religion and sexuality of the large majority of people on the housing register are not recorded.
- The larger proportions of people on the register and housed in younger age groups, female, and married are probably due to needs in the population group (non-affordability of homes, lone female parents, and people with children).
- A smaller proportion of people on the housing register are disabled than in the population of Maidstone in general (2.19% compared to 4.3%). Disabled people formed a slightly larger proportion of people housed in 2010/11 but at 3.9% were still underrepresented compared to the population as a whole. It would be useful to investigate why this is the case.
- A larger proportion of people on the housing register are from 'other white' groups than in the population of Maidstone in general (5.82% compared to 3.2%). Of these, a notable number (17 out of 206) were gypsies/travellers. A larger proportion of people on the housing register are BME than in the population of Maidstone in general (8.59% compared to 7%). It is unclear whether this



reflects greater need among these groups or problems for the white British and Irish population in accessing the register.

- However, 'other white' people formed a slightly smaller proportion (3.59%) of people housed in 2010/11 than they do on the register. None of them were categorised as gypsies/travellers but people are sometimes wary of identifying themselves in this way. A smaller proportion of those housed in 2010/11 were BME than on the register (5.93% - lower than their representation in the population in general). This is a change from a few years ago and it is unclear whether it reflects the level of need of the people on the register, or issues finding suitable housing for these people.

Housing data is attached in **Appendix E**.

### 1.3.12 Sports and Leisure Services

Detailed information on protected characteristics (age, gender and ethnicity) is available only for users who were members in the period June-September 2009 (and therefore may be outdated). 60% of visits during this period were made by members (which does not mean that 60% of visitors were members).

Of people who were *active* leisure centre members in the quarter June-September 2009:

- Despite a greater proportion of members being female, of active members attending on average at least monthly and at least weekly, only 43.25% and 47.42% respectively were female. (Females form 50.53% of the population as a whole.) The Place Survey 2009 found that men were more likely than women to use sports and leisure facilities at least weekly (26% of men versus 19% of women), implying that these trends applied not just to members.
- Despite a proportionately high membership among over-75s, of active members using the facilities on average at least weekly and at least monthly only 3.71% and 4.26% respectively were aged over 75. (Over 75s form 7.96% of the population as a whole). The Place Survey 2009 found that 43% of the oldest residents last used the facilities longer than a year ago (the average is 25.2%). The age group 55-64 were also slightly underrepresented among active members using the facilities frequently. This accords with Place Survey 2009 data which showed that this age group was the least likely to use facilities weekly.

Ethnicity is recorded for only 2% of members so cannot be analysed.

Data is attached in **Appendix F**.

**Possible objective: Increase the frequency of visits among female residents.**

**Possible objective: Increase the frequency of visits among older residents.**

The age of the data and the fact that it is limited to members would make it a poor basis for an objective, though measures to improve experiences for particular groups of members should have knock-on effects for non-members. The Leisure Monitoring Officer notes that any objectives set would need to be agreed with the contractors operating Maidstone Leisure Centre as they would not be part of their contractual objectives, and the contractors' work would be important in achieving any targets.

### 1.3.13 **Community safety and community cohesion**

The Place Survey 2009 found that men are significantly more likely than women to feel safe in their local area after dark and the oldest age group (75+) are least likely to feel safe in their local area even in the day (87.3% compared to 92.1% on average).

77% of respondents to the 2011/12 Residents' Survey agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well with each other in their local area. This is a deterioration from 81% in the Place Survey 2009. The average for districts in 2008/9 was 77.2% and the top quartile was 81.7%. Though these figures may now be out of date, this does imply that there is room for improvement here.

**Possible objective: Increase the percentage of women who say they feel safe in their local area after dark, and increase the percentage of people in the 75+ age group who feel safe in their local area.** This is an issue where services such as the Police are able to have a much greater impact than the Council. Inequalities will also reflect, to an extent, physical vulnerabilities and cultural anxieties.

**Possible objective: Further increase the proportion of respondents to Residents' Surveys who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well in their local area.** However, this information is not specific enough to form the foundation of an objective as people's interpretations of the question will vary. Nonetheless, it is hoped that as work on the Big Society progresses this figure may improve as people get to know their neighbours while working towards shared goals.

### 1.3.14 **The Council's workforce**

This is based on the more detailed report produced to accompany the Report of the Head of Human Resources on 'Equality Duty – Publication of Data', which is attached in **Appendix G**.

Figures suggest more action should be taken to attract younger workers (especially aged under 25) as they are under represented in the work force (the age group 41-50 in particular is overrepresented). Analysis of recruitment suggests that we are positively recruiting younger candidates with an increase in the percentage of those being offered positions compared to those applying; however, this is also likely to be skewed due to the age profile of the Hotfoot school holiday play scheme staff candidates and this being such a large part (37%) of the recruited pool.

The gender split of the workforce is 52% female and 48% male; in the local area the gender split is 49.9% female and 50.1% male (Mid-year population estimates 2010). Given that the public sector traditionally attracts more female employees, the workforce balance is good compared to the local population. However, in grades 4 to 8 women are more represented than men by up to as much as 156% (Grade 6) and at grades 10 to 12 there are up to 60% fewer women than men. Overall it appears that recently a higher percentage of males have been shortlisted then failed to be offered a position - this pattern is even more marked if Hotfoot positions are excluded from the analysis. This is not representative of the work force profile but may reflect the type of posts that have been recruited this year.

Based on the 2001 census data, employees from BME communities are over-represented in the workforce, but this census data is out of date and more recent data sets do not include figures for working-age adults. Of the 83 Hotfoot applications only one was received from a candidate from a mixed ethnic origin and none from BME candidates. It was also found that there was a low success rate for BME applicants to customer service roles.

No concerning pay inequalities (by gender, ethnicity or disability status) were identified in analysis. Given the very limited data available, no significant inequalities according to disability, religion, maternity or sexual orientation have been identified.

**Possible objective: Increase the proportion of men working in grades 4 to 8 (to increase entry level opportunities) and/or of women working in grades 10 to 12 (to increase higher level opportunities).** With a reducing headcount it is very difficult to address this situation at present.

**Possible objective: Increase the representation of younger people (aged under 25) in the Council's workforce.** Actions already proposed in the HR action plan included advertising suitable vacancies in local schools, and continuing the apprenticeship

programme. However, recruitment into the Council is currently minimal so making targets in this area is inappropriate.

**Possible objective: Increase the number of BME candidates for Hotfoot roles and/or increase the success rate of BME candidates applying for customer services roles.**

The HR action plan proposes advertising Hotfoot posts to target areas with more people from ethnic minorities, but the future of the Hotfoot scheme is uncertain. The action plan also proposes examining the activities within the assessment centre to identify if there are any areas of bias against BME candidates and consider the possibility of a member of BME group as one of interviewers. However, a fixed target can be set only when recruitment levels rise again and once the issue is better assessed.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not recommended

1.4.1 Setting equality objectives is a statutory duty. Failure could result in action against the Council, and reputational damage. It would be against the values of the Council, which upholds the promotion of equality. The Council could choose to set fewer than two objectives but this is not proportionate to the Council's size and role.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Equality is a core value for the organization. Setting equality objectives can also help us in moving towards the organizational priority of ensuring that 'Residents are not disadvantaged because of...who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced.' Some objectives would also address other priorities.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are risks associated with not setting equality objectives.

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

1.7 Other Implications

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment

X
X
X
X

5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management


- 1.7.1 Financial: funding may be required for some of the objectives to be achieved.
- 1.7.2 Staffing: staff will need to be made aware of the new objectives as part of their roles. Objectives around the Council's workforce are not being recommended.
- 1.7.3 This report has highlighted some areas where future analysis would be useful; in itself this forms a type of equality needs assessment.
- 1.7.4 There would be legal implications if the Council did NOT set objectives.

## 1.8 Relevant Documents

### 1.8.1 Appendices

- Appendix A: Baseline population data for Maidstone
- Appendix B: Place Survey 2009 data
- Appendix C: Museum visitor data
- Appendix D: Healthy Weight Programme data (including NHS obesity figures)
- Appendix E: Housing data
- Appendix F: Leisure centre membership data
- Appendix G: MBC workforce data

### 1.8.2 Background Documents

EHRC: 'Objectives and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities'  
BRAP: ' Equality objectives and public authorities: Tips, hints, and bright ideas'  
KCC area data profiles and ONS area profiles  
Place Survey 2008/9 report and data tables  
Museum visitor survey writeup Q1 2011/12  
Powerpoint presentation on museum data for 2007  
Healthy weight data provided by the Community Partnerships team  
NHS/The Information Centre, 'Statistics on obesity, physical activity and diet: England 2006.'  
Leisure centre data provided by the service  
Housing data provided by the service  
Maidstone Profile Report produced for the LSP in 2008

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

..... Issue was logged 13/2/2012 so will appear in next Forward Plan....

This is a Key Decision because: ..... It affects the whole borough....

Wards/Parishes affected: .....All....