

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

29 September 2009

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 DRAFT EQUALITY STATEMENT 2009-2012

To consider, and recommend for adoption, a draft statement on equalities embracing previously adopted schemes for race, gender and disability.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Borough Council has a statutory duty to prepare a series of schemes setting out its policies and proposals for promoting race, gender and disability equalities. Each adopted scheme has a three year life and is accompanied by a three year action plan. Each of these schemes has been adopted at different times in line with legislation and the timing of their review thus also varies.
- 1.1.2 Good practice across the County and nationally is that these separate schemes are best combined into a single statement covering all three current equality strands. This allows a single reporting and review process and enables better co-ordination and integration of proposed actions between them. In addition, the new Equality Bill is likely to come into force in the Autumn of 2010 and, when this is enacted, it will extend equalities obligations to cover additional issues including age, sexual orientation and religion and belief. Having a single equality statement would thus enabled the Council to adopt a more resilient approach to such equalities issues via a single updating process to one adopted document, rather than having to prepare a number of new, separate schemes in addition to those already in place.
- 1.1.3 A copy of the draft Equalities Statement, which draws on existing policies and actions set in the adopted schemes for race, gender and disability and which seeks to achieve the above additional objectives, is attached as Annex 1 to this report. Members comments on the draft are invited.

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 As stated above, the Equalities Statement seeks to fulfil the Council's statutory obligations in respect of race, gender and disability and also provides a basis for responding to new duties likely to be introduced via the Equalities Bill.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 It is not expected that there will be any additional financial burdens arising from the adoption of this Statement. The Council has a small annual budget for equalities which we anticipate will cover our responsibilities.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 The Borough Council has a statutory duty to prepare a series of schemes setting out its policies and proposals for promoting race, gender and disability equalities. A combined equalities statement meets this duty this avoiding any risks associated with non compliance.

1.5 Policy Considerations

- 1.5.1 Equalities/Diversity
1.5.2 Customer Contact

1.6 Recommendations

- 1.6.1 That the draft Equalities Statement 2009 – 2012 **BE ADOPTED** to replace existing separate schemes for race, gender and disability;
- 1.6.2 That the adopted Equalities Statement 2009-2012 **BE REVIEWED** at the appropriate time in the light of any additional obligations arising from the Equalities Bill.

Background papers:

contact: Gill Fox

Nil

David Hughes
Chief Executive