

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 March 2012

Report of the Chief Executive & Cabinet Member for Communities

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 WEST KENT EQUALITY PARTNERSHIP AIMS AND COMMITMENTS, 2012-16

To consider and approve the West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Equality legislation changed in 2010 through the Equality Act, requiring the Council to take specific actions to ensure its legal obligations are met. The Act sets out a 'Public Sector Equality Duty' which requires public authorities to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their day to day work

in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

1.1.2 As part of the duty, the Council is required to prepare and publish one or more objectives by 6th April 2012 and at least every four years thereafter. A statutory code of practice for the Public Sector Equality Duty is not due to be published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission until Spring 2012 but in the meantime we are required to comply with the statutory deadline and have taken non-statutory guidance into account.

1.2 West Kent Equality Partnership

1.2.1 The West Kent Equality Partnership was formed in 2010 between Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council. The partnership has developed a joint response to the

requirement to publish equality objectives intended to support improved partnership working and to allow authorities to report shared outcomes against common objectives.

1.3 West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments

- 1.3.1 The West Kent Equality Policy Statement and Objectives 2012-16 are attached at **Annex 1**. These have been informed and developed by officers from all three authorities. This will replace the Council's existing Equality Statement. The West Kent Equality Policy Statement and Objectives is a more concise document which takes a proportionate approach in responding to the duty, reflecting the demographic profile of our communities and current resource constraints. It also aims to support and strengthen the corporate priorities within each authority.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Failure to do so may result in action being taken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, including issuing a formal 'compliance notice' and possible court action.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 The implementation of actions to achieve the equality objectives will need to be incorporated into appropriate service budgets. The West Kent Equality Partnership is supported by a shared officer. Production of a joint policy statement and objectives is also intended to streamline future progress reports.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.6.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.7 Recommendations

- 1.7.1 That the Committee consider the West Kent Equality Policy Statement and Objectives 2012-16 document and recommend it to Cabinet for approval.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Richard Beesley
Sarah Lavallie

David Hughes
Chief Executive

Owen Baldock
Cabinet Member for Communities

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments document is designed to address key areas of discrimination or disadvantage.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The policy statement and objectives document is designed to deliver outcomes that will make a positive difference to our communities. These will be monitored and reported on annually.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.