

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****14 June 2016****Report of the Director of Central Services****Part 1- Public****Matters for Recommendation to Council****1 EQUALITY POLICY STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES 2016-20****1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 The approval of the equality policy statement and objectives is within the Council's policy framework and is a matter for Full Council.

1.1.2 The Equality Act (2010) 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. As part of the duty, the Council is required to prepare and publish one or more objectives and review these at least every four years.

1.2 Progress 2012-16

1.2.1 The West Kent Equality Partnership Aims and Commitments were in place for 2012-16. These were developed in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. These are no longer fit for purpose as they do not support robust reporting of outcomes for each individual authority. Examples of things Tonbridge and Malling achieved during 2012-16 include:

1.2.2 As a community leader we have worked to reduce health inequalities by providing activities and events such as the Tonbridge Well Being Day.

1.2.3 As a service provider we have carried out work to improve the accessibility of our website for people with visual impairments, motor difficulties and learning disabilities.

1.2.4 As an employer we have completed an analysis of pay based on gender and not identified any faults within our pay practices.

1.3 **Equality Policy Statement and Objectives 2016-2020**

- 1.3.1 The Equality Policy Statement and Objectives is attached at Annex 1. It has been decided that, in future, the 3 authorities will determine their own objectives, to replace the West Kent Equality Aims and Commitments.
- 1.3.2 We continue to take a proportionate approach to responding to our duties under the Equality Act (2010), reflecting the demographics of our communities and within current resource constraints.
- 1.3.3 Management Team have developed objectives based on information within their service areas that indicate where inequalities may exist. The Equality Policy Statement and Objectives were subject to a six-week consultation on the Council's website and Twitter. Only two responses were received. No changes to the policy or objectives were necessary following the consultation. The objectives will be subject to regular reviews during the next four years to ensure they remain appropriate in the context of local priorities and demographics. Our equality objectives for 2016-2020 are summarised as follows.
- 1.3.4 Equality Objective 1
- 1.3.5 As a community leader, we will advance equality of opportunity for those living within Snodland, East Malling and Trench to achieve better outcomes in relation to health, employment and education.
- 1.3.6 Rationale: The Government's latest Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 indicates that parts of the wards of Snodland, East Malling and Trench are significantly more deprived than other areas in the Borough including poorer health, higher levels of worklessness and poverty, and lower levels of educational attainment.
- 1.3.7 Equality Objective 2
- 1.3.8 As a service provider, we will advance equality of opportunity by increasing the number of customers with a disability who are able to use our services regardless of the method they use to access the service.
- 1.3.9 Rationale: According to Cabinet Office statistics, in 2014 "just under 10% of the population may never be able to gain basic digital capabilities, because of disabilities or basic literacy skills". Our aim will be to provide support to anyone who cannot independently access the Council's digital services.
- 1.3.10 Equality Objective 3
- 1.3.11 As a service provider, we will advance equality of opportunity by increasing uptake of the assisted waste collection ("pull out") service where needed.
- 1.3.12 Rationale: Approximately 500 households currently receive this service. Although this is lower than the number of households with one or more persons with a long-term health problem or disability, we would expect that many households already

receive assistance from others within the household or from neighbours etc. However, we still need to establish whether there may be additional households that require our assistance.

1.3.13 Equality Objective 4

1.3.14 As an employer, we will eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation by giving staff and Members the necessary skills and understanding to promote equality and diversity in both service delivery and employment.

1.3.15 Rationale: Equality and diversity training was last provided to all staff in 2010 and we want to ensure that staff and Councillors maintain their awareness of corporate values.

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 Understanding the needs of people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010) will assist the Council in allocating resources to areas or services where it is considered to be a greater priority. The implementation of actions to achieve the equality objectives will need to be incorporated into appropriate service budgets.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 If the equality policy statement and objectives are not adopted, the Council will not be able to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and action may be taken against the Council by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. This report sets our objectives for addressing key areas of discrimination and disadvantage over the next four years.

1.8 Policy Considerations - Equalities/Diversity

1.8.1 As above at 1.7.1.

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 That the Equality Policy Statement and Objectives attached at Annex 1 be recommended to Council for adoption.

Background papers:

Nil

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