

KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL

RESOURCES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

28 November 2006

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

**Joint report by Brad Fleet, Director of Community Services and
Anne Ewing, Head of Human Resources
Report DCS/49/2006**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend that Members adopt a Disability Equality Scheme which has been prepared under the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 There are no costs involved in adopting the scheme but there will be subsequent implications for resources as one of the requirements of the legislation is to undertake a series of service and policy reviews using the Council's Diversity and Equalities Impact Assessment methodology.
- 2.2 The purpose of this work is to ensure that the Council examines its existing policies and service delivery mechanisms (and any it may subsequently introduce) to identify barriers or possible improvements for people with disabilities.
- 2.3 This is an extensive task and likely to result in some positive changes to the way the Council operates. These changes could, however, have cost implications which will only come to light as the reviews are undertaken. (The National Audit Office provides some guidance on resources and diversity. It states that addressing diverse needs is often about varying existing resources to meet the needs of a wider customer base rather than injecting additional resources to meet a specific need. Initiatives to improve how services are delivered to diverse customers can be successful while being modest in terms of scale and resources required.)

3 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None unless these come to light as part of the service and policy review process.

4 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no legal implications arising as a result of this report.

5 **RISK IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no risk implications arising from this report.

6 **BUDGETARY PROVISION**

6.1 There will be budgetary implications flowing from the scheme, particularly as there is an ongoing requirement for authorities to actively engage disabled stakeholders and facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration. It is not possible to specify at this time what that provision will be but mention of the need for a budget has already been flagged up in the Human Resources Service Delivery Plan.

7 **BACKGROUND**

7.1 Both the Disability Discrimination Act and Regulations published in 2005 require Councils to produce and publish a Disability Equality Scheme to promote equality of opportunity by removing environmental and attitudinal barriers to its buildings, services and employment practices which could exclude or disadvantage persons with disabilities. The Council also has a duty to consider how it can influence the wider community through its activities.

7.2 Specifically, authorities have to set out what they are doing to plan, deliver and evaluate actions to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. The core requirements are:-

- * publish a Disability Equality Scheme (including within it an Action Plan)
- * involve disabled people in producing the Scheme and Action Plan
- * demonstrate they have taken actions in the Scheme and achieved appropriate outcomes
- * report on progress
- * review and revise the Scheme.

7.3 Having summarised the statutory requirements, what Kennet's Disability Equality Scheme actually does is:

- * Show how we have, and will involve disabled people in the decisions we make
- * Find out what barriers are faced by disabled people and then take steps to remove them
- * Set out how we will find out what disabled people need and which of these needs are the most important to them
- * Tell people what our responsibilities are. This includes informing councillors, staff, unions, partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors and residents

- * Explain how we make things fairer for disabled people in planning our services and what we do
- * Commits us to work in partnership with disability and equal opportunity organisations to prevent ignorance and prejudice in the wider community
- * Show what changes have resulted from our work and set out our three-year disability equality action plan on how we will put the Scheme into practice
- * Monitor and check what we are doing and report each year
- * Make sure we meet our legal duties.

7.4 The Scheme which is appended to this report complies with the Government's requirements and makes an ongoing commitment to reduce inequalities wherever they may exist by narrowing the gaps in outcomes between disabled people and non-disabled people. It addresses the way the Council will deliver services in the future, how it makes policy decisions and works with its own employees.

7.5 The scheme/action plan covers three years and it will be regularly reviewed and information gathered to review the effectiveness of the action plan will help prepare subsequent schemes. The majority of this work and monitoring will be undertaken by the Council's Equalities Steering Group and the Human Resources Service.

7.6 Members will note from the action plan that there are a number of requirements for officers to report progress to Members and that additional training will be provided for Members and staff.

8 **CONCLUSIONS**

8.1 The scheme is not perfect and more consultation and engagement with disabled stakeholders could certainly have taken place but it is considered by officers to be a good base on which to build. The important work is taking forward the actions, improving the performance of the authority through the outcomes of impact assessments, building up the information base about performance on disability equality and actually improving and changing things for disabled people.

8.2 Finally, as mentioned above, the scheme will be the subject of continual review and one of the proposed actions is the establishment of a Disability Forum which will participate in the future evolution and monitoring of the scheme.

9 **RECOMMENDATION**

9.1 It is recommended that Members agree to:–

- a. Adopt the Equality Disability Scheme appended to this report.
- b. The publication of the scheme in line with the 2005
 Disability Discrimination Act and Regulations

Director of Community Services

November 2006