

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES

4 FEBRUARY 2013

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE - PERFORMANCE

DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2011 / 2012 ON THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the work being done to develop the council's first annual report (2011 - 2012) on the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out both general and specific duties for local authorities in Wales. The specific duties include the development of a SEP to identify the council's equality objectives and the publication of an annual report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new general duty for public bodies to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- Age (Act applies to over 18yrs)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to eliminating discrimination)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

- 3.2 In addition to the above, Welsh Government (WG) introduced specific duties for public authorities to meet the general duties under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 which came into effect on 6 April 2011. One of these duties was to publish equality objectives and a SEP by 2 April 2012 which the council completed.

3.3 The equality objectives set out how the council will address the most pressing issues for each of the protected characteristic groups.

4. Current situation / proposal

4.1 *'The essential guide to the public sector equality duty: An overview for listed public authorities in Wales'* published in June 2011 provides an overview of all of the specific duties that apply to listed public authorities in Wales.

4.2 The first draft annual report covers the period 6 April 2011 to 31 March 2012. The first year of reporting is unique in that, following the introduction of the new duties, equality objectives were only required to be published by 2 April 2012. The council's SEP 2012/15 was not published until this date and therefore falls outside of the reporting period.

4.3 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has indicated that there is no requirement to report on progress towards achieving our objectives in the first annual report. However, the regulations offer discretion in that authorities may include 'any other matter relevant to meeting the general duties and the specific duties'. Given this, it was considered valuable for the council to report on progress, particularly in recognition of the fact that the annual report will have a wider audience than the EHRC and WG. Similarly, it gives the council opportunity to include 2012/13 updates relevant to any of the other required information, detail on equality impact assessments, procurement arrangements and training. Also it allows the council to outline work that has been taken forward under the previous Corporate Equality Scheme or linked in to the SEP.

4.4 The SEP Annual Report 2011/12 is currently in draft form. It will be finalised and presented to Cabinet on 5 March 2013.

The purpose/detail of the annual report

The purpose of the annual report is to assist public authorities to meet the aims of their own specific equality objectives as well as the three aims of the general duty which are:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The annual report provides an opportunity to:

- Monitor and review progress
- Monitor and review the effectiveness and appropriateness of arrangements
- Review objectives and processes in light of new legislation and other new developments
- Engage with stakeholders around these issues, providing partners and the public with transparency.

The value of the annual report is in placing an emphasis on evaluating progress over the reporting period, rather than reproducing information included in the SEP.

Specifically the report must set out:

- The steps taken to identify and collect relevant information
- How this information has been used to meet the three aims of the general duty
- Any reasons for not collecting relevant information
- A statement on the effectiveness of arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information
- Progress towards fulfilling each of the equality objectives
- A statement of the effectiveness of the steps taken to fulfil each of the equality objectives
- Specific employment information, including information on training and pay.

The annual report covers a wide range of issues of interest to multiple audiences, including:

- School staff
- Local Education Authority
- Elected Members
- Members of the community and community groups
- Parents
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Welsh Government

The style of writing has been carefully considered to tailor the report accordingly. Therefore, extending the scope of the content beyond compliance will ensure the annual report is interesting and useful to a range of internal and external stakeholders.

Progress made by the council on each of the equality objectives and themes will be reported on. These are:

- Transportation
- Fostering good relations
- The council's role as an employer
- Equal pay
- Consultation, engagement and communication
- Mental health
- Leisure
- Benefits
- Data

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 As this is an information report, there are no proposed changes to the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 The report provides the committee with information which will positively assist in the delivery of the authority's equality duties.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no financial implications identified as this is an information/update report.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 That the Cabinet Committee notes the progress being made.

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Background documents:
None