

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

10 MARCH 2020

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020 - 2024

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for Bridgend County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out general and specific duties for local authorities in Wales. One such specific duty is to produce a Strategic Equality Plan.

2.2 This report also assists in the achievement of the following Corporate Priorities:

- **Priority 2:** Helping people to be more self-reliant; enabling people to use the language of their choice by ensuring our systems and front line services are delivered bilingually. Ensuring that bilingual systems enable people to better equipped to manage situations themselves and the council services can concentrate on those in greatest need.
- **Priority 3:** Smarter use of resources; ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the council's priorities.

3. Background

3.1 The Equality Act introduced a General Duty for public bodies to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity and;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.2 The Equality Act also introduced specific duties which include:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan;
- Ensuring it engages with people who have an interest in how the Council's decisions affect them and;

- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results if there is a substantial impact on the Council's identified.

3.3 Within the Strategic Equality Plan the council must publish equality objectives that describe how the most pressing issues for people in Bridgend will be addressed for the next 4 years.

3.4 Annual progress reports describing the work involved in implementing the current Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020 have been presented to Cabinet Equalities Committee since 2016.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 The equality objectives have now been reviewed in order to develop the Strategic Equality Plan for 2020 – 2024 (appendix one). A consultation and engagement exercise has been followed on the proposal to reduce the previous 7 equality objectives to 6. In order to develop the equalities objectives we have:

- Reviewed our Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020 and our action plan for this period
- Given further consideration to each of the nine [protected characteristics](#) covered by the three main aims of the general duty and the requirement to eliminate discrimination, harassment and other actions prohibited in the Equality Act 2010.
- Considered national and local issues.
- Assessed what we have learnt from regional networks and partnerships such as regional approaches to meeting the needs of Gypsy Roma and Traveller families, domestic abuse, violence against women, and sexual violence and hate crime;
- Looked at a number of the council's existing plans and strategies as well as the [consultations](#) which took place to inform their development, e.g. we have recently consulted on proposals to review our public toilets, subsidised buses and the council's budget (Shaping Bridgend's Future);
- Used feedback that we regularly get from local equality and diversity groups and via the Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum such as how accessible our services are and how we can help support, promote and raise awareness of issues such as hate crime and LGBTQ History Month.

4.2 In addition we have engaged with residents, staff and stakeholders and use relevant information, including Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reports, Welsh Government reports, internal strategies and the results of staff engagement exercises as well as community groups' engagement exercises.

4.3 We have set our objectives in line with the findings of the EHRC 'Is Wales Fairer?' report and the public consultation. The following overarching objectives have been

developed to reflect the views of residents and stakeholders from across the county borough:

- **Education**
Everyone who accesses education should be free from discrimination, bullying and abuse in educational settings.
- **Work**
Promote a more inclusive workforce and improve the participation, wellbeing and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics.
- **Living standards**
Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty
- **Health and wellbeing**
Support and promote good mental and physical health within our communities and our workforce and provide opportunities to participate in leisure and cultural activities.
- **Safety and respect**
Ensure that people within our communities have access to services that support them to live without fear of violence or abuse, and to be treated with respect.
- **Participation**
Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them, and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

- 4.4 The above strategic equality objectives formed the basis for the council's consultation exercise (appendix two) which began on 23 December 2019 and ended on 9 February 2020. During the consultation period the Consultation and Engagement Team attended community groups, conducted public engagement sessions in libraries and carried out the survey with members of the Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum. They hosted a Citizens' Panel event in the Council Chamber and the survey was sent to all members of the Citizens' Panel in the format of their choice. The survey was made available in hard copy and on line in Welsh and English. In total the council engaged with 220 residents across the county borough in face to face events during the consultation period, and received 424 responses to the consultation survey. Three comments were also received via social media.
- 4.5 Details of the consultation and the public engagement sessions were shared on social media using the council's corporate Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- 4.6 The survey responses received and the feedback gained was used to support the final development of the equality objectives.

4.7 A detailed action plan will now be developed during May and June 2020. The action plan will outline the specific tasks and actions to be undertaken over the next 4 years and will be outcome focused. The final action plan will be presented to Cabinet Equalities Committee for approval in July 2020.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 The report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but is required to effectively implement the council's statutory duties in relation to equalities and human rights.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 The actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan will positively assist the council in delivering its equality objectives. A Full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken during the development of the action plan in May and June 2020.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment

7.1 The actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan will positively assist the council in the delivery of the well-being goals identified in the Act. A Full Well-being of Future Generations Assessment will be undertaken during the development of the action plan in May and June 2020.

8. Financial Implications.

8.1 The implementation of the plan will be managed within existing resources.

9. Recommendation.

9.1 That Cabinet approves and adopts the authority's Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024.

10. Contact officers:

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Background documents: None