

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

15 SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ACTION PLAN 2020 - 2024

1. Purpose of Report

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

2. Connection to corporate wellbeing 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 assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** – taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

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 an action plan containing objectives that describe how equality issues for people in Bridgend will be addressed for the next four years.

3.4 Annual progress reports describing the work involved in implementing the current Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 have been presented to Cabinet Committee Equalities since 2016. Annual progress reports will continue to be presented during the lifetime of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 was approved by Cabinet on 10 March 2020 (appendix one). In order to develop the equalities action plan (appendix two) 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 the implementation of the Socio-Economic Duty (now deferred to March 2021)
- Considered national and local issues and taken into consideration the Black Lives Matter campaign and the impact of COVID-19
- 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
- Worked with services to develop outcome focused actions that will be delivered over the next four years

4.2 In addition we have engaged with residents, staff and stakeholders and used 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 A public consultation 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.

- 4.4 Our Strategic Equality Plan overarching objectives were set in line with the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission 'Is Wales Fairer?' report and the public consultation. The following outcome focused actions have been developed to reflect the views of residents and stakeholders from across the county borough. We have identified 25 outcomes and 58 actions:

Objective one – Education

Everyone who accesses education should be free from discrimination, bullying and abuse in educational settings.

Within the education objective there are five outcomes, with a total of eight actions:

Outcome one - To reduce incidents of hate based bullying in schools	
	Actions:
1.1.1	Review the process in place to report hate-based bullying to the local authority in schools, to include homophobia, disability, religion and belief as well as gender based and racial incidents Lead: Education and Family Support
1.1.2	Analyse bullying data gathered by schools, including racist bullying, to identify trends and review anti-bullying strategies so that there are effective solutions in place Lead: Education and Family Support & Equalities team

Outcome two – To amend the curriculum in schools to reflect the Black Lives Matter campaign	
	Actions:
1.2.1	To fully implement the findings and recommendations of the Welsh Government working group review of learning resources available to support the teaching of themes relating to Black Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and 'cynefin' across all parts of the curriculum within our schools Lead: Education and Family Support

Outcome three - To improve access to equality information in schools for both learners and staff	
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	Actions:
1.3.1	Provide equality, unconscious bias and critical thinking training to all learners as part of the curriculum Lead: Education and Family Support
1.3.2	Provide equality, unconscious bias and critical thinking training to teaching staff and all school governing bodies Lead: Education and Family Support

Outcome four – Ensure individual needs are considered in adult learning and other educational settings

	Actions:
1.4.1	To consult with learners to determine and monitor needs throughout programs of learning; to offer additional support where needs are identified and offer inclusive yet differentiated learning opportunities. Lead: Education and Family support
1.4.2	Continue to offer additional resources where any deficit or disadvantage is identified. Lead: Education and Family support

Outcome five – Develop a whole education approach to Violence against women domestic abuse and sexual violence

	Actions:
1.5.1	Work with schools to ensure the effective implementation of the nine elements of the whole school approach across all schools in Bridgend Lead: Community Safety Partnership

Objective two - Work

Promote a more inclusive workforce and improve the participation, wellbeing and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics.

Within the work objective there are four outcomes, with a total of 12 actions:

Outcome one - To ensure equal pay for equal work

	Actions:
2.1.1	Develop knowledge of our workforce by improving the collection of workforce data by encouraging employees to provide up to date equality information Lead: Human Resources
2.1.2	Promote awareness campaigns linked to protected characteristics Lead: Human Resources & Equalities team
2.1.3	Continue to report on the gender Pay Gap and progress gender equality actions Lead: Human Resources

Outcome one - To ensure equal pay for equal work	
	Actions:
2.1.4	Establish process to monitor pay levels for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic employees and those with a disability with the view to identify and address any gaps that may be discovered Lead: Human Resources

Outcome two – To support our communities into the world of work	
	Actions:
2.2.1	Employability Bridgend to work in partnership with DWP, Working Wales and training providers to deliver programmes which support people to prepare for employment Lead: Communities Directorate

Outcome three – To improve diversity in our workforce, with a focus on age, race and disability	
	Actions:
2.3.1	Introduce more graduate and apprenticeship opportunities to increase workforce diversity Lead: Human Resources
2.3.2	Review recruitment processes and introduce specific campaigns with an aim to attract applications from the BAME community and people with a disability Lead: Human Resources
2.3.3	Become more disability confident as an employer by maintaining our Disability Confident status and developing our Disability Confident action plan Lead: Human Resources

Outcome four – To increase training opportunities for staff	
	Actions:
2.4.1	To review existing e-learning provision to ensure appropriate and relevant equality and diversity training is available, including the section on equality legislation of the mandatory corporate induction module to encourage increased participation in training Lead: Human Resources
2.4.2	Provide equality and unconscious bias training to employees Lead: Human Resources
2.4.3	Provide equality and unconscious bias training to councillors to encourage increased participation in training Lead: Democratic Services
2.4.4	Work with community organisations such as Stonewall, Mental Health Matters, People First Bridgend, Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) and Show Racism the Red Card to develop training opportunities for employees Lead: Human Resources & Equalities team

Objective three – Living standards

Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty.

Within the living standards objective there are four outcomes, with a total of seven actions:

Outcome one - To ensure that the socio-economic duty is fully considered as part of the council's governance and strategic decision making processes	
	Actions:
3.1.1	Review the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to include poverty as a protected characteristic Lead: Equalities Team
3.1.2	Produce guidance and training for staff on the implementation of the socio-economic duty Lead: Equalities Team
3.1.3	Evidence the impact of the changes to the EIA in the EIA annual report produced to Cabinet Committee Equalities Lead: Equalities Team

Outcome two – Demonstrate commitment to low paid employees by introducing Real living wage	
	Actions:
3.2.1	Progress implementation of the Real Living wage to all council employees benefitting those on the lowest pay grades Lead: Human Resources

Outcome three – Support low income families through increased commitment for free school meals	
	Actions:
3.3.1	Continue to ensure families are able to access free school meals and provide food parcels for families eligible for free school meals throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Lead: Education and Family Support
3.3.2	Deliver the national School Holiday Enrichment Programme, subject to funding in agreed local areas. Lead: Education and Family Support

Outcome four – Support learners by ensuring all schools participate in the Period Dignity scheme	
	Actions:

3.4.1	Continue to work in partnership with Welsh Government and Wings Cymru to ensure free menstrual products are provided to all learners in primary, secondary and special schools within the county borough. Lead: Education and Family Support
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Objective four - 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.

Within the health and wellbeing objective there are four outcomes, with a total of 14 actions:

Outcome one - To improve the physical wellbeing of staff	
	Actions:
4.1.1	Implement the COVID-19 risk assessment for employees Lead: Human Resources
4.1.2	Promote the health and wellbeing of employees through partnerships with Halo, the Cycle to Work scheme Lead: Human Resources
4.1.3	Development of menopause protocol Lead: Human Resources

Outcome two – To improve the emotional wellbeing of staff	
	Actions:
4.2.1	Introduce and implement a health and wellbeing protocol to support all employees Lead: Human Resources
4.2.2	Work with partners to provide training and resources in mental health awareness, mindfulness and resilience Lead: Human Resources
4.2.3	Promote mental health awareness to staff and the support mechanisms in place, including adapting to work in the COVID-19 pandemic. Lead: Human Resources
4.2.4	Work with partners to develop BAME, LGBTQ and disability staff networks (BLM action) Lead: Equalities Team
4.2.5	Development of carers protocol Lead: Human Resources

Outcome three - To provide and promote activities in the community for people with protected characteristics	
4.3.1	Work with Sport Wales, Welsh Government and Arts Council for Wales to develop inclusive and integrated community activities for people with a protected characteristic in partnership with Halo and Awen.(e.g. super-agers, Hynt scheme, free swimming) Lead: Social Services and Wellbeing

4.3.2	Work with Disability Sport Wales to operate the national disability sport programme for households in Bridgend and across the Central South region Lead: Social Services and Wellbeing
4.3.3	Work in partnership with Town and Community Councils and other partners including Halo Leisure, Awen, Play Wales, Sport Wales, schools and Welsh Government to offer inclusive and integrated play opportunities for all securing play sufficiency requirements across the county Lead: Social Services and Wellbeing

Outcome four - To raise awareness of hidden disabilities within the community and with businesses across the county borough	
4.4.1	Promote awareness of the Hidden Disability sunflower lanyard scheme and awareness of support cards, including the 'Can't Wait card', to ensure that our communities and businesses become more aware of the needs of people with hidden disabilities Lead: Equalities
4.4.2	Celebrate Awareness Days and weeks that highlight hidden disabilities such as deaf awareness week, dementia action week and mental health awareness days Lead: Equalities
4.4.3	Improve awareness of hidden disabilities within the workforce Lead: Equalities

Objective five - 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.

Within the safety and respect objective there are four outcomes, with a total of nine actions:

Outcome one – Develop and promote community cohesion	
	Actions:
5.1.1	Signpost European Union (EU) citizens living in Bridgend County Borough to the Home Office EU Settlement Scheme and provide the appropriate level of local authority support Lead: Community Safety Partnership
5.1.2	Monitor and respond to community tensions relating to the Brexit process Lead: Community Safety Partnership
5.1.3	Identify community groups that represent the range and diversity of Bridgend citizens and develop appropriate communication channels Lead: Community Safety Partnership
5.1.4	Hold community events, promote positive community cohesion and celebrate diversity. Explore the use of online methods for community groups in light of COVID-19 Lead: Community Safety Partnership & Equalities Team
5.1.5	Work collaboratively to support Pride events through the brand 'Proud Councils'. To demonstrate our commitment to the LGBTQ community and our workforce through the development of Proud Councils policies and practice across all local authorities who are involved with Proud Councils. Lead: Equalities Team

Outcome two – Improve awareness and outcomes of hate crimes	
	Actions:
5.2.1	Develop targeted activities to ensure victims and potential victims of hate crime are aware of reporting mechanisms and have awareness of the support services available to them in collaboration with South Wales Police and Victim Support Lead: Community Safety Partnership
5.2.2	Work with partners to arrange events and activities to promote Hate Crime Awareness week (October) Lead: Community Safety Partnership

Outcome three – To embrace Black History Month	
	Actions:
5.3.1	Embrace Black History Month (October) by working closely with schools, and by holding public events to highlight the reality of the negative impact of racial inequality and celebrate the contribution made by BAME communities to our local and national life as well as working with partner organisation such as Awen Cultural Trust to promote and raise awareness of BAME activities such as The Paul Robeson exhibition Lead: Equalities Team

Outcome four – To improve awareness of how to report VAWDASV and the support available	
	Actions:
5.4.1	Identify three annual campaigns and plan and deliver appropriate actions to maximise their impact to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older persons • Learning disability • Male victims Lead: Community Safety Partnership

Objective six - Participation

Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them, and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Within the participation objective there are four outcomes, with a total of eight actions:

Outcome one – To improve participation in consultations	
	Actions:
6.1.1	Ensure people are appropriately represented in council consultations and engagement events, and can participate in the future design of council services Lead: Consultation and Engagement Team
6.1.2	Ensure all council consultations consider the development of an easy read and youth version dependent on the potential impact Lead: Consultation and Engagement Team
6.1.3	Review how the Citizens' Panel operates and its interface with relevant council decisions

	Lead: Consultation and Engagement Team
6.1.4	Include the Youth Council in consultations to ensure participation in the future design of council services Lead: Consultation and Engagement Team

Outcome two – To provide resources to staff to improve communication with the public	
	Actions:
6.2.1	Ensure resources are available to staff to assist them in providing information that is easy to understand and takes accounts of individuals' needs Lead: Consultation and Engagement Team

Outcome three – Improve community engagement with protected characteristic groups	
	Actions:
6.3.1	Strengthen our relationship with protected groups through attendance at forums and meetings to ensure people are included in and kept up to date in council activities Lead: Consultation and Engagement Team
6.3.2	Share all consultations with the Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum, and where relevant provide face to face or online engagement opportunities for member organisations Lead: Consultation and Engagement Team

Outcome four – Promote community events and equality through the use of corporate social media	
	Actions:
6.4.1	Share information and promote events such as PRIDE Cymru, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day, Hate Crime awareness month and others via our bi-lingual corporate social media channels Lead: Consultation and Engagement Team

4.4 Within the action plan each of the objectives are linked to relevant protected characteristics, the Future Generations Act five ways of working and our corporate priorities.

4.5 The Strategic Equality Plan action plan 2020-2024 will be reviewed annually, to demonstrate progress against actions, incorporate new areas of work for the council, changes to legislation and the development of any new objectives for the duration of the plan.

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 accompanies this report at appendix Three.

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

- 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. The full assessment accompanies this report at appendix four.

- 7.2 Long Term The Strategic Equality plan, in line with national guidance from EHRC and Welsh Government spans four years between 2020 and 2024.

The plan/action plan will be reported on annually to Cabinet Committee Equalities and made available to the public in order to demonstrate progress and achievements within the lifetime of the action plan.

Prevention The Strategic Equality Plan seeks to work within the community to ensure that issues are identified and can be acted upon.

The Strategic Equality Plan supports the local authority to meet its general Equality Duty:

- 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.

Integration The Strategic Equality Plan and action plan ensure that a wide range of outcome focused objectives and actions are delivered within the county borough and within the workforce to ensure equality of provision, and where relevant inequality identified so that this can be acted upon.

Collaboration The Strategic Equality Plan action plan outline show we will work in partnership with statutory organisations as well as third sector organisations to deliver effective equality outcomes.

Involvement A public survey based on Bridgend County Borough Council's Draft Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-2024 was completed over a six week period between 23 December 2019 and the 9 February 2020.

The purpose of this consultation was to outline the overarching objectives which will then enable BCBC to develop an action plan to support these objectives.

The consultation received 647 responses from a combination of the consultation survey (424 survey responses), four public engagement events in libraries, one Citizens' Panel event and attendance at nine equality group meetings which included a total of 220 attendees and 3 social media comments.

We will continue to work with equality groups, our workforce and stakeholders throughout the lifetime of this SEP and action plan to deliver effective equality outcomes

8. Financial Implications.

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

9. Recommendation.

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

Mark Shephard

Chief Executive

Date: 15 September 2020

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Background papers: None