

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES

27 JULY 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS - ANNUAL REVIEW 2020/2021

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an annual update on the council's requirement to undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), an overview of the council's approach to EIAs and an outline of EIAs undertaken in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) service areas in 2020/2021.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective/objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **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.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure 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 to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out both general and specific duties for local authorities in Wales - one of which relates to assessing the impact of policies and practices.

The Equality Act 2010 also sets out a general duty that as a public body in Wales, BCBC is required to have due regard in its decision making processes (including financial decisions) to three factors:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- To advance equality of opportunity and;

- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.2 Reports on assessments must set out in particular:

- the purpose of the policy or practice that is being assessed;
- a summary of the steps taken to carry out the assessment, including consultation and engagement;
- a summary of the information used in the assessment;
- results, and any decisions taken in relation to those results.

3.3 In addition, when assessing the impact on protected characteristic groups, listed authorities must:

- comply with the engagement provisions;
- have due regard to any relevant information held.

4. Current situation/proposal

EIAs – an overview

4.1 The EIA is a tool to assess whether new (or changes to existing) policies/services/functions, or the removal of services, could impact on different sectors of society in different ways. EIAs should be carried out when making strategic decisions.

EIAs help the council make better decisions, identify how services can be more accessible or improved and consider the nine protected characteristics as well as the impact on the Welsh language.

4.2 Assessing the impact of proposed changes to policies and strategies is not just something the law requires, it is an opportunity to ensure decisions are based on robust evidence and that they:

- include a consideration of actions that would help to avoid or mitigate any impact on individuals or groups;
- are based on evidence;
- are transparent;
- record the equality considerations that have been taken into account.

4.3 The Welsh Language Standards requires the following considerations:

- whether a policy-related decision could have a positive or negative impact on opportunities for people to use Welsh;
- treating Welsh and English equally;
- ways to demonstrate how positive effects could be increased;
- how any identified adverse effects could be decreased.

Questions related to this were added into the EIA toolkit in 2016 as an existing assessment tool rather than creating an additional impact assessment.

- 4.4 It is important to recognise that the duty to eliminate discrimination is a continuing one. It cannot be exercised once and for all, but must be continually revisited and borne in mind, therefore the EIA should be revisited as policies change and are reviewed.
- 4.5 The lead person drafting or reviewing a policy or strategy within the service area is responsible for conducting the EIA. EIA screenings should be retained by the service area, referenced and summarised in the Equality Act 2010 implications section of the relevant cabinet report. Where a full EIA is needed this should be included as an appendix to the report.
- 4.6 The EIA toolkit has been revised in readiness for the implementation of the socio-economic duty in March 2021, to include guidance for officers on the socio-economic duty and when this needs to be considered. Workshops for members and officers took place in April 2021. These will be reported on in the 2021/2022 annual report.
- 4.7 The administration of the EIA process has been reviewed and consideration continues to be given to an online assessment process to assist in the collation and publication of data.
- 4.8 Currently full EIAs are linked to Cabinet reports and as such become public documents. All EIA screenings are retained by the service area.

EIA training

- 4.9 An e-learning module continues to be available for employees which provides an overview of EIAs, their role in improving services and a guide to conducting them. At the end of the module, staff have an opportunity to complete an EIA and compare this against an already completed version to assess how the module has assisted in terms of knowledge and understanding.
- 4.10 During the period April 2020 to March 2021, 10 council employees have completed EIA training (via e-learning) per the following table:

Directorate	Completions
Social Services and Wellbeing	5
Communities	1
Education and Family Support	0
Chief Executive	4
Total	10

To date 238 council employees have completed the EIA e-learning module.

Face to face training and training on the Socio-Economic Duty commenced in April 2020 and will be reported on in the 2021/2022 annual report.

EIAs undertaken in 2019/2020

- 4.11 Between February 2020 and March 2021, four full EIAs were undertaken and accompanied Cabinet reports and these are listed in Appendix one.
- 4.12 26 EIA screenings were undertaken during this period and these are listed in appendix 2. These screenings were referenced in the relevant Cabinet report/s and indicated that the policy/ies being assessed could either be “screened out” or would require a full EIA to be undertaken.

Where full EIAs are needed the following timeframes apply:

- Within six months or before approval of policy (high impact);
- Within one year of screening (medium impact);
- Within three years of screening (low impact).

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 As this is an information report, there is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an EIA in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

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

- 7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

Long-term -The consideration and approval of this report will assist in supporting equalities objectives the short-term and in the long term.

Prevention – Equality Impact Assessments aim to identify issues that are relevant in our community or workforce and set objectives to prevent problems disproportionate impact to any protected characteristic groups, on socio-economic disadvantage or on the Welsh Language.

Integration – Equality Impact Assessments support all the wellbeing objectives and ensures integration for all people with protected characteristics.

Collaboration - Monitoring Equality Impact Assessments is done in collaboration with all council services.

Involvement - Publication of the report ensures that the public and stakeholders can review the work that has been undertaken.

8. Financial implications

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

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That the Cabinet Committee Equalities notes the progress made in the council during 2020/2021 in the completion of Equality Impact Assessments, the progress made with training - e-learning and the development of face to face training and workshops in preparation for the implementation of the Socio-Economic Duty.

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Background papers:

None