

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	19 DECEMBER 2023
Report Title:	DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024 - 2028
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER, FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	ZOE EDWARDS, CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND EQUALITIES MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	All public bodies in Wales must comply with the Public Sector Equality. One of the specific duties is to produce a Strategic Equality Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to commence a public consultation on the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Equality Act outlines that all public bodies in Wales must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty which gives us general duties and specific duties. One of the specific duties is to produce the Strategic Equality Plan. Some of the other specific duties include engaging with residents and carrying out equality impact assessments and publishing employment monitoring data.

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.

- 2.2 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.

- 2.3 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 four years.
- 2.4 Annual progress reports describing the work involved in implementing the corporate Strategic Equality Plans have been presented to Cabinet Equalities Committee since 2016.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The equality objectives have now been proposed in order to develop a new Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 – 2028. Consultation and engagement exercises will be carried out in order to approve the equalities objectives (**Appendix 1**).

In order to produce a draft of the objectives, the following activities have been undertaken:

- Reviewed the current Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 and action plan for this period.
 - Used the council's new corporate objectives of:
 - better and more targeted use of resources,
 - One council, working well together and with partners
 - Improving communication, engagement and responsiveness
 - Supporting and empowering communities
 - protecting the services that matter to you the most
 - 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 lessons learnt from networks and partnerships such as regional approaches to meeting the needs of domestic abuse victims, violence against women, 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.
 - Used feedback from local equality and diversity groups and via the Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum such as how accessible Council services are to provide support as well as promote and raise awareness of issues such as hate crime and LGBTQ History Month.
- 3.2 In addition staff and stakeholders have been engaged and relevant information used, 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.
- 3.3 The following objectives have been proposed in line with the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EQHR) 'Is Wales Fairer?' report and with agreement from our internal equalities forum that have contributed to shaping these equality objectives:

Objective	What we hope to achieve/support?
Objective 1: Access to services	Improve the experience and outcomes for our citizens, ensuring that every resident has equity of access to the services that they need.
Objective 2: Protecting our most vulnerable	To establish comprehensive policies and procedures that effectively safeguard and support the rights and well-being of our most vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, people with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness or poverty and those that access care and support from Social Services
Objective 3: Living Standards	Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty. Consideration to vital services such as Housing and homelessness, cost of living and the effect adverse effects on individuals.
Objective 4: Participation & Engagement	Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them and influence the decisions that affect their lives. Building and increasing quality relationships with communities to ensure a focus on what matters to them
Objective 5: Learning	To promote equal access to quality learning for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, abilities, age or ethnic background. Support diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout.
Objective 6: Employment	Promote a more inclusive workforce that values diversity. Improve the participation, wellbeing, and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 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. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations Implications and Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no Climate Change Implications from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The consultation will be funded from existing revenue budgets.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet give approval for the commencement of a public consultation on the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 and note that the final Strategy will be reported back to Cabinet for approval.

Background documents

None