

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	14 MAY 2024
Report Title:	OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN OBJECTIVES 2024 - 2028
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, HOUSING 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:	To inform Cabinet on the outcome of the draft Strategic Equality Plan objectives 2024-2028 consultation and to seek approval of the Strategy for publication. The consultation was undertaken over an 8-week period between 4th January 2024 to 29th February 2024 and received 400 responses.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the draft Strategic Equality Plan objectives 2024-2028 consultation and to seek approval of the Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives 2024-2028 for publication.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives 2024-2028 have been developed to demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, which came into force on 6 April 2011. This Strategy (attached as **Appendix B**) sets out how Bridgend County Borough Council will achieve this.
- 2.2 Within the Equality Act 2010, public bodies have an additional responsibility to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are outlined below:

Public Sector Equality Duty The General Duty

When making decisions and delivering services we must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained later in this report).
- Fostering good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and peoples who do not share it.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 To develop the equality objectives we have engaged with our residents, stakeholders and our workforce and used relevant information, including Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reports, Welsh Government reports and internal strategies. In addition to this we have also:

- Reviewed our Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 and our action plan for this period and considered our achievements to date;
- Used the Council’s corporate plan which outlines the five ways of working and the seven well-being objectives identified to underpin our equality goals;
- 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 such as developing an Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP), along with an LGBTQ+ action plan;
- Assessed what we have learnt from regional networks and partnerships such as domestic abuse, violence against men and 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;
- 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;
- Established a corporate equality group made up of key officers from a variety of directorates to discuss and agree key priorities and objectives; and
- Carried out engagement and equality sessions with local school children to encourage them to share their views on what they feel is important to them.

3.2 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 following the consultation to reflect the views of residents and stakeholders from across the county borough:

- **Access to services**
- **Protecting the most vulnerable**
- **Living standards**
- **Participation and Engagement**

- **Learning**
- **Employment**

3.3 A public survey was available to complete online through a link on the consultation page of the Council's website. Paper copies of the consultation were also available, which could be sent directly to residents upon request. The consultation was sent out to our Citizen Panel, shared with Town and Community Councils and public engagement events were also held throughout the consultation period. Surveys were available in Welsh and English Language; alternative copies were available upon request. The content of the page remains online. Respondents could choose to answer all or some questions. All survey responses offered the option of anonymity.

3.4 In total, there were **400 responses** to the public consultation, including online and paper completions.

3.5 The attached consultation report (**Appendix A**) sets out in detail the views expressed by those who participated. BCBC consulted on six proposed equality objectives to demonstrate how we will promote equal opportunities for all and make a real difference to the lives of those living and working in Bridgend County Borough. Overall, the majority of respondents provided positive feedback on the proposed objectives. Comments and suggestions made throughout the consultation were considered when developing the strategic equality action plan (Appendix B).

3.6 Social Media

The Council currently has 14,766 followers on its English Twitter account and 369 on its Welsh Twitter account; 20,087 followers on its English Facebook page and 262 on the Welsh Facebook page; 3,335 followers on Instagram and 7,298 followers on LinkedIn and 209 subscribers on YouTube. Details of the success of the social media and website campaigns can be found in the full consultation report at **Appendix A**.

3.7 govDelivery

govDelivery is a digital communications platform that was introduced by the local authority in June 2020 to improve communication. It is currently used to issue Council updates directly to residents' email inboxes in the language of their choice. There are currently 35,158 English language and 280 Welsh language users who have subscribed to receive the Council's weekly update emails.

govDelivery is also used to distribute notification of consultation to members of the Citizen panel who have subscribed to email correspondence.

Weekly staff bulletin messages including details of the consultation are sent out to staff via govDelivery. Details of click through links to the consultation can be found in **Appendix A**.

3.8 Media and publicity

A press release was issued to coincide with the start of the consultation, to raise awareness and encourage participation. This was released on 17th November 2023 <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/news/consultation-launched-to-shape-council-s-new-engagement-and-participation-strategy/> . A last chance reminder of the Engagement and Participation consultation was included in news round-up on 19 January 2024. The Leader of the Council also shared in his regular update emails to his list of contacts which include local councillors, MP's, MS's.

3.9 Promotional materials

- Staff Bulletin
- Details of the engagement and participation survey were included in our weekly staff bulletin, which included links to the survey and strategy.

3.10 Throughout the consultation period there six in-person engagement events, including public drop-in sessions, to encourage residents and members to share their views on the strategy. Details of the events were shared via the Council's social media. In-person events were held at:

- ❖ The Bridge
- ❖ Town and Community Council Forum
- ❖ Corporate overview and scrutiny committee
- ❖ Pyle Life Centre
- ❖ Ogmore Life Centre
- ❖ Garw Valley Life Centre

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

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, or socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

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 costs of carrying out the consultation were met from existing budgets.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the outcome of the consultation and approve the Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives 2024-2028 attached as **Appendix B** for publication.

Background documents

None