

# **BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **REPORT TO CABINET**

**15 MARCH 2016**

### **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES**

#### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016 - 2020**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for Bridgend County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020.

##### **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.

2.2 This report also supports the following corporate priorities:

- Priority 2: Helping people to be more self-reliant
- Priority 3: Smarter use of resources

##### **3. Background**

3.1 The council has a general duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.2 One of the specific duties is to produce a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

3.3 Within the SEP 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.

3.4 Bi-annual progress reports describing the work involved in implementing the current SEP 2012 – 2016 have been presented to Cabinet Equalities Committee since 2012.

##### **4. Current situation / proposal.**

4.1 The nine equality objectives that were set in 2012 have been reviewed in order to develop the SEP for 2016 – 2020. The review of these objectives has been based on progress to date, further consideration of the protected characteristics, consideration of local and national issues, learning that has come out of networks and partnerships, feedback regularly received from equality and diversity groups and consideration of the council's priorities and external reports.

As a result of this review, it was proposed to reduce the equality objectives from nine to seven. The main changes are:

- remove equal pay as an objective as this is now business as usual for the council and any issues arising will sit under the Our Role as an Employer Objective;
- remove benefits as an objective as the original welfare reforms have now been introduced and are now business as usual;
- expand the Fostering Good Relations objective to include awareness raising. This involves combining the objective and actions previously related to consultation, engagement and communications and also now includes community cohesion issues such as hate crime reporting, human trafficking and sexual exploitation;
- expand leisure to also include arts and culture as well as sports and recreation participation;
- develop a new equality objective on children which will support the emotional and educational attainment of children in the borough through addressing issues such as school bullying.

4.2 The above proposed changes formed the basis for the council's consultation exercise which began on 4 February and ended on 25 February 2016. During the consultation period a drop in session was arranged to which all members of the Bridgend Equality Forum were invited. This was also made available to the public. A survey was developed and made available in hard copy and online and promoted through a variety of channels. In total the council received 101 responses to the consultation. The full consultation report is attached as appendix 1.

In summary:

- 66% of respondents agreed with the proposed changes in section 4.1. 18% did not agree and 16% didn't know if they agreed or not;
- Of those who said no to the changes (18%), some concerns were around the removal of equal pay and benefits as an objective and adding arts and culture into the leisure objective;
- 76% agreed with objective one: transportation;
- 83% agreed with objective two: fostering good relations and awareness raising;
- 73% agreed with objective three: our role as an employer;
- 86% agreed with objective four: mental health;
- 93% agreed with objective five: children;
- 84% agreed with objective six: leisure, arts and culture;
- 51% agreed with objective seven: data.
- When asked if they thought there were any gaps 20% said yes, 24% said no and 46% said they didn't know;
- Of those who said there were gaps (20%), this covered issues such as general well-being, children with disabilities accessing sports, older people, education and training and work around EIAs and consultation.

4.3 As the majority of respondents have agreed with the proposed changes and to each individual objective, it is recommended that there is no change to the proposed objectives in principle. Amendments that have been made to mitigate concerns raised are as follows:

- Under the objective for 'Our role as an employer' it has been highlighted that equal pay is still recognised as important and that actions will be developed and progressed accordingly;
- Under the objective for 'Fostering good relations and awareness raising' it has been highlighted that benefits is still recognised as important and that actions will be developed and progressed accordingly;
- The wording of the objective for leisure, arts and culture has been amended to make it clearer that the council will be working with partners to support this objective.

It is also important to note that although data as an objective received a lower percentage of respondents who agreed with this objective (51%) the council needs to continue to improve our collection and use of data in order to develop services. It is also something we are committed to doing under our equality duties.

Other relevant points raised such as where respondents identified gaps will be used to support the development of the actions that will sit under these objectives.

A copy of the draft SEP 2016-2020 is attached as appendix 2.

- 4.4 Following approval of the SEP, a detailed action plan will be developed during April 2016 and further consultation and engagement will be arranged. The action plan will outline the specific tasks and actions to be undertaken over the next four years and will be outcome focused. The final action plan will be presented to Cabinet Equalities Committee for approval in July 2016.

## **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**

The objectives set out in the SEP 2016-2020 will positively assist the council in meeting its duties under the Equality Act. A Full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken following conclusion of the consultation exercise to be undertaken on the actions that will come under each of the equality objectives in the SEP.

## **7. Financial Implications.**

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

## **8. Recommendation.**

- 8.1 That Cabinet approves and adopts the authority's Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020.

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**Corporate Director – Resources**  
**Date: 7 March 2016**

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**Background papers: None.**