

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

28 APRIL 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016 - 2020

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet Equalities Committee of the approval at Cabinet on 15 March 2016 of 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 for the council to produce and publish a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) to include equality objectives describing 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 previous SEP 2012 – 2016 have been presented to Cabinet Equalities Committee since 2012.

4. Current situation / proposal.

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

As a result of this review, the equality objectives were reduced from nine to seven. The main changes being:

- removal of 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;
- removal of benefits as an objective as the original welfare reforms have now been introduced and are now business as usual;
- expanding the Fostering Good Relations objective to include awareness raising. This combines the objective and actions previously related to consultation, engagement and communications and now includes community cohesion issues such as hate crime reporting, human trafficking and sexual exploitation;
- expanding leisure to include arts and culture as well as sports and recreation participation;
- developing a new equality objective on children to support the emotional and educational attainment of children in the borough through addressing issues such as school bullying.

4.2 The above changes formed the basis for a consultation exercise which began on 4 February and ended on 25 February 2016. During the consultation a drop in session was arranged to which all members of the Bridgend Equality Forum were invited. A survey was developed and made available to the public in hard copy and online and promoted through a variety of channels. The council received 101 responses to the consultation.

4.3 The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed changes and with each individual objective, therefore there was no change to the proposed objectives in principle. Amendments made to mitigate some concerns were 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.

Other relevant points raised when respondents were asked to identify any gaps will be used to support the development of the SEP action plan.

4.4 A copy of the SEP 2016-2020 is attached as appendix 1 and was published on 1 April 2016 as required by equality legislation.

4.5 A detailed SEP 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 Equalities Committee notes the content of this report and the approval at Cabinet on 15 March 2016 of the Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020.

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Background papers: None.