

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

4 December 2024

Report of

Report of the Head of People & Organisational Development – S Rees

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report for the period 2023-2024 for consideration and approval prior to its publication in line with statutory requirements.

Executive Summary

2. The Annual Report for 2023-2024, attached at Appendix 1, provides an account of progress in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and in particular against the equality objectives and actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 as well as through our other plans and strategies and various initiatives and projects we have undertaken over the period. It also reports on the essential equalities employment information that the council is required to publish under the Equality Act 2010.
3. This is the fourth and final Annual Report on progress towards meeting Equality Objectives in the Authority's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024, the latest revised plan (for 2024-2028) having been published in September 2024.
4. As part of the duties set out Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 local authorities are required to produce and publish an Annual Report within 12 months of the end of each financial year.

Background

5. Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and

victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations amongst and between people of different protected groups. This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

6. In Wales, specific duties have been introduced under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to help public bodies carry out the Public Sector Equality Duty. These include the requirement to publish a Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives every four years and to report on progress in an annual report for each those financial years.
7. This report relates to the final year of the revised Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 which was published in October 2020 and the revised actions published in January 2021.
8. Key elements of work during 2023-2024 include:
 - A Tackling Poverty team was established in July 2023 to coordinate the development and delivery of an action plan to address the issues for those with low net disposable income
 - Work was undertaken on the ground floor of Port Talbot Civic Centre to create a range of accessible meeting rooms with digital connectivity.
 - An Aging Well Engagement officer started in post in May 2023 to help advance the Ageing Well agenda across the county borough.
 - The work with schools and other relevant settings to support and provide access to work experience, training and professional development opportunities for those who are at risk of becoming not in education employment or training (NEETs) post 16 showed progress. For the year 2022/2023 the percentage of year 11 leavers who were NEET was 2.41%, at the end of 2023/2024 this figure decreased to 1.3%.
 - We recruited and trained 33 Mental Health Champions across the workforce. Champions are people with an interest in or experience of mental health problems and they are at the heart of the Time To Change Wales campaign to challenge the stigma associated with mental health.
 - The Council signed the Unison Anti-Racism Charter to demonstrate our commitment to addressing any racial disparities in recruitment, in promotions, in training opportunities, in employment relations procedures such as disciplinary and in pay. The charter aligns with our Future of Work Strategy ambition to become a proud Anti-Racist Council.
 - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council was awarded the 'Womenspire Fair Play Employer Award' recognising our achievements towards gender equality within the workplace

- Our ongoing commitment to ensure that our website meets accessibility compliance against the 'AA' standard or above is being highlighted as best practice with our council ranked in the top 20 most accessible council websites across the UK.
- Two of our schools, Baglan Primary and Ysgol Cwm Brombil, were awarded gold and bronze status respectively in the Armed Forces Friendly Schools Cymru scheme in recognition of the support given to their service children by embedding good practice into the daily running of the school and creating a positive environment.

Financial Appraisal

9. The performance described in the Annual Report was delivered within existing budgets.

Integrated Impact Assessment

10. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment.

Valleys Communities Impact

11. The Annual Report includes progress made in delivering initiatives across the county borough, including within the valley communities.

Workforce Impact

12. There are no workforce impacts with this report.

Legal Impact

13. This annual report is prepared under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Risk Management

14. We have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to produce and publish an annual report every year. Failure to produce an annual report could lead to a compliance notice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, an independent statutory agency which was established under the Equality Act 2006.

Crime and Disorder Impact

15. The Council has a legal duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to carry out all its various functions with “due regard to the need to prevent Crime and Disorder in its area”.

16. The Strategic Equality Plan contains specific proposals to prevent and address hate crime and domestic abuse and progress has been made to meet these proposals thereby assisting us in discharging the crime and disorder duty.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts

17. The Council has a legal duty under Section 2(1) of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 when exercising relevant functions to 'have regard (along with all other relevant matters) to the need to remove or minimise any factors which:
 - (a) increase the risk of violence against women and girls, or
 - (b) exacerbate the impact of such violence on victims.'
18. The Strategic Equality Plan contains specific proposals to prevent and address domestic abuse and progress has been made to meet these proposals thereby assisting us in discharging this duty.

Consultation

19. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

20. It is recommended that Cabinet considers and approves the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2023-2024.
21. It is recommended that the Head of People and Organisational Development as well as, if required, the relevant Cabinet Member be given delegated authority to make such changes as may be needed to the Annual Report prior to publication, provided that such changes do not materially alter the content of the document considered by Cabinet.

Reason for Proposed Decision

22. To meet the statutory requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Implementation of Decision

23. For immediate implementation.

Appendices

24. Appendix 1 –Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2023-2024

List of Background Papers

25. Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024
26. Equality Act 2010
27. Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

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