

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Policy and Resources Cabinet Board

3rd September 2015

Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services

K.Jones

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Revised Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019

Purpose of Report

1. To seek endorsement of the Cabinet Board to the draft Revised Strategic Equality Plan 2015-19 prior to the Plan being considered for adoption by Council

Executive Summary

2. The Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives were revised through active engagement with equality groups, elected members and officers. While the equality objectives were considered still relevant, the actions within each one have been amended to reflect progress made to date, the changing needs of people who share protected characteristics, the work that is already being undertaken as well as the current financial climate.
3. The draft revised Strategic Equality Plan, including the equality objectives, has been subject to a period of public consultation and where appropriate amendments have been made.

Background

4. On 28th May 2015 the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board gave approval for the draft revised Strategic Equality Plan (including an action plan on the revised Equality Objectives) to be subject to a public consultation between 5th June and 21st August.

5. Following consideration of comments received during the consultation it was agreed that a final version of the revised Strategic Equality Plan would be presented to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board on 3rd September.
6. The revised Strategic Equality Plan is at Appendix 1.

Revised Strategic Equality Plan – consultation

7. The draft Strategic Equality Plan was placed on the Council's corporate consultation portal "Objective". The draft Plan was also sent to the various equality groups and networks that work in partnership with the Council and to LSB partners and wider networks. 10 responses were received; from individuals, the Older Person's Council and the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.
8. All respondents unanimously supported the equality objectives and a number of comments and suggested actions were provided. These have been considered by the members of the Heads of Service Equality and Community Cohesion Group and where appropriate have been incorporated into the Strategic Equality Plan and/or action plan.
9. Where this was considered inappropriate we are confident that the comments/concerns are being addressed through the Council's various strategies and plans, e.g. the Corporate Improvement Plan, or by offering alternative ways to counter concerns, e.g. meetings between various officers and the Older Persons' Council to highlight work that is being undertaken in these areas.
10. A summary of the consultation responses is at Appendix 2.

Financial Appraisal

11. It is anticipated that actions to meet the equality objectives will be undertaken within the reduced budgets that the Council will have available in 2015-16. Officers have been asked to provide a specific assurance on the affordability and relevance of proposals throughout the development of the revised Plan.

Equality Impact Assessment

12. The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to “pay due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.”
13. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. An overview of the EIA has been included in this report in summary form only and it is essential that Members read the Equality Impact Assessment, which is attached to the report at Appendix 3, for the purposes of the meeting.
14. The focus of the Strategic Equality Plan is to meet not only the general duty (above) but also the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. The active involvement of various equality groups throughout the development of the Plan has been of significant help and assistance in ensuring the Plan remains relevant to the concerns of people who share protected characteristics.
15. Consequently the impact of the Plan is considered to be positive.

Workforce Impact

16. The Plan will build further awareness and competence within the Council’s workforce on equalities issues.

Legal Impact

17. The Council has legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan and develop evidence based Equality Objectives. A revision of the Strategic Equality Plan must be undertaken every 4 years with the revision of the equality objectives undertaken at least once every 4 years.

18. The revision of the Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives will assist the Council in discharging its duty.

Crime and Disorder Impact

19. 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”.
20. The Strategic Equality Plan contains specific proposals to prevent and address hate crime and domestic abuse. These issues were identified by the equality groups who work in partnership with the Council as high priorities for action. The inclusion of these areas in the Plan was also endorsed by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
21. The implementation of the Equality Objectives and associated actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan will assist the Council in discharging the crime and disorder duty.

Risk Management

22. The Strategic Equality Plan acknowledges that the Council is working through large scale changes in order to respond to the continuing climate of austerity. The emphasis placed on further improvements to equality impact assessments, public information and engagement is part of the Council’s response to the financial challenges that it faces and is focused on working hard to understand the potential consequences of service cuts, reductions and changes, especially on groups who share a protected characteristic.

Consultation

23. This item has been subject to external consultation. A period of public consultation was undertaken as part of the development of the Strategic Equality Plan between the 5th June and 21st August 2015.

Recommendations

24. Having given due regard to the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 2 and the consultation report attached at Appendix 3 it is recommended that:
- (1) Cabinet Board endorses the revised Strategic Equality Plan 2015-19 attached at Appendix 1.
 - (2) the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-19 is presented to full Council for approval

Reason for Proposed Decision

25. To discharge the Council's duty in relation to the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Implementation of Decision

26. The decision is proposed for implementation after consultation with the Scrutiny Committee and then consideration and approval by Council.

Appendices

27. Appendix 1 – Strategic Equality Plan 2015-19
Appendix 2 – Summary of Responses
Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

List of Background Papers

28. Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Officer Contact

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