

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

30 October 2019

Report of

**Report of Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer
- K.Jones**

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019: Draft Annual Report 2018-2019 and Extension of the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 until April 2020

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 draft Annual Report 2018-2019 for consideration and approval.
2. To approve the extension of the current Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 until April 2020.

Executive Summary

3. The Annual Report, attached at Appendix 1, provides an account of progress over the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and in particular against the equality objectives set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019.
4. The report is required to meet duties set out Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
5. The Annual Report reports on progress in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty through our work in relation to the equality objectives as well as through our other plans and strategies and through the various initiatives and projects we have undertaken.

6. Concentrating our efforts on improving the accessibility of our website, working to address hate crime and domestic violence and improving our impact assessment process has enabled us to help improve areas which have a big impact on people's lives
7. To enable the better alignment of the revised Strategic Equality Plan for the period 2020 -2024 with the corporate plan, to better explore the requirements and impact of the soon to be introduced socio-economic duty as well as to take on board the outputs of various projects and initiatives such as the poverty symposium it is proposed to extend the current Strategic Equality Plan to April 2020.
8. A report on the review of the Draft Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives for 2020 -2024 for public consultation will be brought before Members in early December 2019.

Background

9. 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.
10. 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 of those financial years.
11. **Key areas that were progressed during the year include:**
 - Community Profile - a key piece of work to better understand our Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, along with their experiences of living in the area and the issues they face in accessing services was undertaken during 2018. The outcomes of the exercise have been discussed within the Equality and Community Cohesion Group and we will use the information to inform our work going forward.
 - BME Community Association – two Members now sit on the Board of the new organisation while two officers provide support and advice to the Community

Association. In April 2019 the Community Association became a Community Incorporated Organisation with the Charity Commission.

- We held the annual Crucial Crew event at Margam Park between 2 and 13 July 2018 for 1,600 Year 6 pupils with 12 partner agencies attending to deliver safety information; partner agencies included South Wales Police, Port Talbot and Afan Women's Aid, Calan DVS, Hafan Cymru, Neath Port Talbot Road Safety, Welsh Centre for Action on Dependency and Addiction (WCADA) delivering Internet safety, healthy relationships, cycle safety and drug/alcohol awareness. In addition, Year 10 pupils delivered peer education on issues such as bullying, anti-social behaviour, drugs, social media etc.
- We made significant progress on implementing the Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy (the renamed Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy) and have begun to consider how men, older people and minority groups are affected by this agenda too.
- A key part of our work during 2018-2019 continued to be understanding the impact of our policies and services on people who share protected characteristics. We have introduced a revised integrated impact assessment during the year and completed training on how to use the new framework with those officers that author reports.
- Gender pay gap – following our work to identify reasons for the gender pay gap in the Council we have subscribed to the Chwarae Teg Fair Play Employer Scheme for a 12 month period. This Scheme supports organisations to develop gender equality action plans, using analysis of available workforce data, consideration of employer practices, matched to evidenced best practice recommendations, including actions to reduce gender pay gaps.

12. Key areas where we did not perform as well as hoped:

- Educational performance – this remains a critical area. Performance of girls and boys has declined in both literacy and numeracy across all key stages (with the exception of the percentage of boys attaining level 5+ literacy at Key Stage 3 with a significant increase on last year, 80.48% compared to 78.31%).
- Issues in the development of and rescheduling of training sessions on the revised integrated impact assessment process during 2018 and 2019 caused the implementation of the revised impact assessment process to be delayed until April 2019. Issues which the introduction of the process was meant to address, such as when to undertake an impact assessment, what to consider and how to report the outcomes, were therefore not adequately addressed during the period. However, with the implementation of the revised

assessment process its effectiveness will be monitored closely during 2019-2020 to ensure any issues are addressed as soon as is appropriate.

Extension to the Strategic Equality Plan to April 2020

13. The current Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 was adopted by Council on 14 October 2015. The development and implementation of this plan had been brought forward six months to take into account the various topical issues of the time. However, this did raise issues of clear reporting in the first year of the plan, lack of alignment with other reporting requirements and plans.
14. While work is underway in reviewing the current Plan and equality objectives it is considered appropriate to delay its introduction until April 2020 to allow sufficient time to improve its alignment with our Corporate Plan, to better explore the requirements and impact of the soon to be introduced socio economic duty as well as to take on board the outcomes of various projects/initiatives such as the poverty symposium, etc. In addition, is it vital that the equality objectives are developed with the involvement of interested groups something that is central to the review of the Plan.
15. Consequently, officers consider it appropriate to extend the current Strategic Equality Plan to April 2020. It is proposed that a short explanation as to the reasons for the extension will be included at the beginning of the Plan. This proposed text is found at Appendix 2.

Financial Appraisal

16. The performance described in the Annual Report was delivered against a challenging financial backdrop. Since 2010, spending reductions to c£83 million have been delivered to enable the Council to achieve a balanced budget. In 2018-2019, we achieved our target budget savings of £6.790 million against a total net revenue expenditure of £282.851 million.

Integrated Impact Assessment

17. There is no requirement to undertake an integrated impact assessment.

Valleys Communities Impact:

18. The Annual Report includes progress made in delivering some of the projects to support valley communities.

Workforce Impact

19. The progress described in the annual report was achieved against a backdrop of a reduced workforce alongside ongoing financial challenges

Legal Impact

20. This Draft Annual Report is prepared under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Risk Management

21. 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

22. 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”.

23. 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

24. 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.’

25. 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

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

Recommendations

27. It is recommended that Cabinet considers and approves the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 Draft Annual Report 2018-2019.

28. It is recommended that the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer be given delegated authority to make such changes as may be needed to the Draft Annual Report prior to publication, provided that such changes do not materially alter the content of the document considered by Cabinet.

29. It is recommended that Cabinet approve an extension to April 2020 for the current Strategic Equality Plan.

30. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the explanatory note to be included in the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019.

Reason for Proposed Decision

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

Implementation of Decision

32. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in.

Appendices

33. Appendix 1 – Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 Draft Annual Report 2018-2019

34. Appendix 2 - Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 Extension to April 2020
explanatory text

List of Background Papers

35. [Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019](#)

36. [Equality Act 2010](#)

37. [Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)

Officer Contact

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