

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

17 September 2020

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

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Purpose of Report

1. To seek endorsement of the Cabinet to the draft Revised Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 prior to the Plan being considered for adoption by Council

Executive Summary

2. Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 we, along with other public bodies, have a duty to develop Equality Objectives and produce a Strategic Equality Plan containing equality objectives and other information as required in the Regulations.
3. The Equality and Community Cohesion Group has been instrumental in the development of the equality objectives. The draft equality objectives have been developed using information gathered from a range of sources: feedback from internal engagement activities; local, national and regional research publications as well as relevant strategies and plans that are already in place or being developed.
4. The draft equality objectives and proposed actions were subject to public consultation and 46 responses were received.
5. The new Strategic Equality Plan, including the equality objectives and associated actions, was due to be presented to Cabinet in April but was delayed due to executive reporting arrangements being disrupted and the immediate response required by the Council to the global pandemic.

6. The events experienced since the end of March have necessitated the equality objectives and actions to be revisited and while the equality objectives remain relevant in light of recent events, it has become apparent that the actions require further review, which is already underway.
7. Consequently, the new Strategic Equality Plan, attached at Appendix 1, includes the equality objectives and other information as required under the regulations. The action plan to achieve the equality objectives is being redeveloped and will be presented to Cabinet for approval by the end of the calendar year.

Background

8. 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; the Public Sector Equality Duty.
9. 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. Under these regulations we along with other public bodies have a duty to develop equality objectives and produce a Strategic Equality Plan containing the equality objectives and other information.
10. We have produced two Strategic Equality Plans since the introduction of the duty; in April 2012 and November 2015. The development and implementation of the latter plan had been brought forward six months to take into account the various topical issues of the time.
11. On 30 October 2019 Cabinet approved an extension to the current Strategic Equality Plan to April 2020 which will 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 held in October 2019.
12. On 10 January 2020 Cabinet approved a period of public consultation on the draft equality objectives and proposed actions to take place between 16 January and 20 February. A total of 46 responses were received via the online survey. A consultation summary report can be found at Appendix 2.

Strategic Equality Plan and Recent Events

13. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 it has become increasingly apparent that while all communities have been affected, Black, Asian and minority communities have been affected disproportionately in matters of health, as key workers, with the severe effects on employment as well as in relation to accessible education for children and young people.
14. The brutal killing of George Floyd on 25th May 2020, along with other events in our recent history as well as the devastating impact the pandemic has had on Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities has brought into sharp focus the deep seated attitudes and behaviours that remain towards people from these communities.
15. As a consequence it was recognised that the equality objectives and actions would need to be reviewed to ensure we fully address the impact of these events on our local communities.
16. Having reviewed the objectives, and taking into account recent evidence as reported to various government committees, the equality objectives were considered to be still relevant. Actions, however, fell short and alternative actions to better meet these objectives in the current circumstances will be developed with the involvement of our workforce and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.
17. The new Strategic Equality Plan, therefore includes the equality objectives along with other relevant information with actions included as an addendum to the Strategic Equality Plan later in the year.

Financial Appraisal

18. It is proposed that the equality objectives in the new Strategic Equality Plan will be met through actions already identified in existing strategies/plans or those due to be developed. The delivery of this work will be against an ongoing challenging financial backdrop.

Integrated Impact Assessment

19. A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage impact assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment was required.

An overview of the Integrated Impact Assessment has been included below in summary form only and it is essential that Members read the Integrated Impact Assessment, which is attached to the report at Appendix 3, for the purposes of the meeting.

As a result of widespread changes in circumstances since March 2020 due to the global pandemic, the killing of George Floyd and the intensification of the Black Lives Matter movement it has been apparent that a refocus of our work was necessary. This being the case the equality objectives and actions were reviewed taking into account evidence of the impact the pandemic has had/continues to have on Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and others who share protected characteristics. Although the equality objectives were deemed relevant the proposed actions did not adequately address the current situation.

Consequently the latter stages of the impact assessment has concentrated on the equality objectives including the subsequent conclusion.

The whole ethos of the Strategic Equality Plan and the equality objectives is to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well to advance equality of opportunity between different groups. The equality objectives were developed with this in mind and as such will help address inequalities experienced by members of our various communities.

As a result of our continued work on improving the availability and quality of our services through Welsh there is potentially a positive impact in relation to opportunities to use the Welsh language.

There will be no adverse effect on biodiversity or Eco-system resilience

There will be a positive impact in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations as the equality objectives have been developed in line with the five ways of working.

Valleys Communities Impact:

20. The equality objectives will contribute to projects supporting the valley communities.

Workforce Impact

21. The equality objectives will be achieved against a backdrop of a reduced workforce alongside ongoing financial challenges

Legal Impact

22. These equality objectives along with the Strategic Equality Plan have been developed to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Risk Management

23. We have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to develop equality objectives and publish these, alongside other information, in a Strategic Equality Plan. Failure to develop equality objectives 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

24. 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”.
25. The equality objectives contain specific proposals to prevent and address hate crime and domestic abuse thereby assisting us in discharging the crime and disorder duty.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts

26. 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.’
27. The equality objectives contain specific proposals to prevent and address domestic abuse thereby assisting us in discharging this duty.

Consultation

28. 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 16 January and 20 February 2020.

Recommendations

29. It is recommended that Cabinet considers that new Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 as attached at Appendix 1 and, if considered appropriate, that Cabinet commends the documents to Council for approval.
30. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Equalities be given delegated authority to make such changes as may be needed to the Strategic Equality Plan prior to publication, provided that such changes do not materially alter the content of the document considered by Council.

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 2020-2024
34. Appendix 2 – Consultation Summary Report
35. Appendix 3 – Integrated Impact Assessment

List of Background Papers

36. [Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 Draft Annual Report 2018-2019](#)
37. [Equality Act 2010](#)
38. [Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)
39. Draft Equality Objectives and Actions – Background documents:
 - [Is Wales Fairer?](#) – Equality and Human Rights Commission
 - [Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy](#) (currently being revised)
 - [Chwarae Teg Fair Play Employer Scheme - Action Plan](#)
 - Neath Port Talbot Poverty Symposium Report
 - Community Cohesion Survey
 - Stickability: Supportive Services for Gypsy and Traveller Communities in Neath and Port Talbot – research undertaken by Wales School for Social Care Research, Swansea University.
 - [Time to Change Wales Campaign Employer Pledge](#)

- [Smart and Connected - A Revised Digital Strategy](#)
- [Strategic Plan for Autistic Spectrum Disorder](#)
- Community Profile - NPT BME Community Association
- [Making Wales the best place in the world to grow older - Older People's Commissioner](#)
- Making Money Work (people's lived experience in Neath Port Talbot) – research undertaken by Toynbee Hall and Tai Tarian
- Council's Website Audit
- Community of Practice – feedback from initial event

Officer Contact

40. Mrs Karen Jones, Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer. Tel: 01639 763284 or e-mail: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk