

# NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

24 February 2021

Report of

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

## Matter for Decision

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

**Report Title:** Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019: Annual Report 2019-2020

## Purpose of Report

1. To present the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 Annual Report for the period 2019-2020 for consideration and approval prior to its publication in line with statutory requirements.

## Executive Summary

2. The Annual Report for 2019-2020, attached at Appendix 1, provides an account of progress in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and in particular against the equality objectives set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019.
3. The report is required to meet duties set out Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
4. 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.
5. Matters identified in the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 that require ongoing consideration and attention have been addressed in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024; equality objectives and the actions to meet them. The Strategic Equality Plan, including the equality objectives, and the actions were approved by Council on 23 September and 27 January respectively and are published on our website.

## **Background**

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. The reallocation of resources to support the Council's response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic followed by our work to revise the Strategic Equality Plan (taking into account the impact of the pandemic on our communities and the Black Lives Matter movement) to meet statutory requirements, have resulted in a delay in bringing this Annual Report before members.
9. Even though delayed the Annual Report still meets the statutory reporting requirements; to be published by 31 March 2021.
10. **Key areas of progress**
  - We were awarded the Silver Award for Gender Diversity by Chwarae Teg in recognition of our clear commitment to making a difference to the recruitment, retention and progression of women in the workplace
  - In partnership with local service providers and survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) we reviewed the Strategy 'Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities' although its launch was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Working with a range of partners we have developed and realised the implementation of healthy relationship lessons for schools; reaching over 650 pupils in over 10 schools.
11. **Review of the Strategic Equality Plan**

Although work to review our equality objectives and produce a revised Strategic Equality Plan had begun early in 2019 publication of the Plan was delayed until October 2020 due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The review took into account various national and local publications/research findings; latest data available to the Council and issues raised by local equality groups during meetings of the Equality and Community Cohesion Group.

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak the opportunity was taken to further review the equality objectives and actions in light of the emerging impacts of the outbreak on our various communities and the increase in awareness of racial inequality highlighted with Black Lives Matter movement.

### **Financial Appraisal**

12. The performance described in the Annual Report was delivered against a challenging financial backdrop. Since 2010, spending reductions to c£95 million have been delivered to enable the Council to achieve a balanced budget. In 2019-2020, we achieved our target budget savings of £5.803 million against a total net revenue expenditure of £287.999 million.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

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

### **Valleys Communities Impact:**

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

### **Workforce Impact**

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

### **Legal Impact**

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

### **Risk Management**

17. 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**

18. 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”.
19. 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**

20. 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.’
21. 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**

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

### **Recommendations**

23. It is recommended that Cabinet considers and approves the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 Annual Report 2019-2020.
24. It is recommended that the Head of Human and Organisational Development 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**

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

### **Implementation of Decision**

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

### **Appendices**

27. Appendix 1 –Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019: Annual Report 2019-2020

### **List of Background Papers**

28. [Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019](#)
29. [Equality Act 2010](#)
30. [Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)

### **Officer Contact**

31. Mrs Sheenagh Rees, Head of Human & Organisational Development Tel: 01639 763315 or e-mail: [s.rees5@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s.rees5@npt.gov.uk)
32. Mrs Rhian Headon Corporate Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language email: [r.headon@npt.gov.uk](mailto:r.headon@npt.gov.uk)