

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

22 September 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 Annual Report 2020-2021

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 Annual Report for the period 2020-2021 for consideration and approval prior to its publication in line with statutory requirements.

Executive Summary

2. The Annual Report for 2020-2021, attached at Appendix 1, provides an account of progress in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and in particular against the revised equality objectives and actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.
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 over the period.

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. 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 delayed the publication of the revised Plan.
8. The plan was published in October 2020 with revised actions published in January 2021.
9. As a consequence the Annual Report 2020-2021 contains information on the development of the Plan as well as progress on actions. Some actions have a reporting period of January – March 2021 while others have a longer reporting period. Reporting periods are identified in the report
10. **Key elements of work during 2020-2021**
 - 9,500 Chromebooks and 300 laptops were provided to pupils to facilitate wellbeing support and engagement in learning particularly for those from low income families and where COVID-19 has had particular impact. 940 laptops were purchased for teachers to develop blended and distance learning practices and support them to provide pupils with live or recorded sessions.
 - Services to maintain contact and provide support to pupils especially those at risk of becoming not in education employment or training (NEETs) post 16 were provide in new ways and settings – online, by telephone, even garden visits.
 - Two videos featuring celebrities and young people were made to highlight the importance of school attendance not only for academic reasons but also to help combat the social impact of COVID 19.
 - We continued to promote all available domestic abuse support services and helplines, via social media posts, banners in areas of high footfall and leaflets in key locations across the county borough.

- The BME Community Association undertook consultation to gain an insight into the lived experiences of members of our BME communities. This engagement was undertaken with the support and assistance of our Vulnerable Learners Service, Community Cohesion Officer and the Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator. As a result the identification of barriers, issues and concerns will be considered as part of the work to develop the Council's Corporate Recovery Plan.
- Following the 'Black Lives Matter – a Conversation' held with staff and trade union representatives in September 2020 an action plan was developed to address the issues raised. Some progress has been made but it is recognised that the realisation of all concerns raised will take a significant period of time to achieve.
- Our median (the midpoint in the ranges of hourly rates of men and women) gender pay gap (excluding schools) had reduced to 3.44 % from 3.93% in 2019, while the mean (the difference in the average hourly rate) gender pay gap (excluding schools) was 7.2% in 2020 compared to 9.15% in 2019.
- While the development of an action plan to address issues for those with low net disposable income was in the early stages of development at the pandemic outbreak we were able to make a difference by awarding the remaining EU transition funding we had received from the Welsh Government to a number of local organisations supporting those facing food poverty.
- The NPT Safe and Well Service was established within an extremely short timescale to provide humanitarian assistance for those who were told to shield as well as those told to strictly observe social distancing measures and to limit their contact with other people.

Financial Appraisal

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

Integrated Impact Assessment

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

Valleys Communities Impact

13. The Annual Report includes progress made in delivering initiatives within the valley communities.

Workforce Impact

14. The progress described in the annual report was achieved against a backdrop of an unprecedented emergency situation. This has involved a step change in workforce flexibility and innovation underpinned by enhanced use of data and digital technology. A significant number of the Council's workforce were redeployed temporarily to new duties.

Legal Impact

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

Risk Management

16. 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

17. 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".
18. 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

19. 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.'
20. 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

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

Recommendations

22. It is recommended that Cabinet considers and approves the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2020-2021.
23. 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

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

Implementation of Decision

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

Appendices

26. Appendix 1 –Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2020-2021

List of Background Papers

27. Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024
28. [Equality Act 2010](#)
29. [Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)

Officer Contact

30. Mrs Sheenagh Rees, Head of Human & Organisational Development Tel: 01639 763315 or e-mail: s.rees5@npt.gov.uk
31. Mrs Caryn Furlow-Harris, Strategic Manager – Policy & Executive Support Tel: 01639 763242 or e-mail: c.furlow@npt.gov.uk
32. Mrs Rhian Headon, Corporate Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language Tel: 01639 763010 or email: r.headon@npt.gov.uk