

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Sub Committee

4 October 2022

Report of

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

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 - Annual Report 2021-2022

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report for the period 2021-2022 for consideration and approval prior to its publication in line with statutory requirements.

Executive Summary

2. The Annual Report for 2021-2022, 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 revised Strategic Equality Plan was published in October 2020 with revised actions published in January 2021.

8. **Key elements of work during 2021-2022**

- An Ethnic Minority Employee Forum has been established. The Chief Executive, and a number of officers from key service areas, and representatives from the NPT BME Community Association supported the inaugural meeting and, at the request of the Forum, ongoing support at future meetings is being provided by a HR manager.
- More than £150k from the Welsh Government has been managed and administered to enhance local support services to assist those facing food poverty.
- A £2million Council hardship fund to further support residents facing financial pressure due to Brexit, the legacy of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis was announced; on 29 June Cabinet granted authority to the Chief Finance Officer to enter into a partnership agreement with Warm Wales to facilitate delivery of the NPT Hardship Relief Scheme.
- The Safe and Well scheme remains operational, supporting community members with a volunteer led service response linking in with wider community services such as the Local Area Coordinators and third sector where necessary
- We have attained a bronze award, employer recognition scheme as part of the Armed Forces Covenant, details will be added to the new recruitment website shortly.
- All digitally excluded learners identified as needing support have been catered for; this has included devices and mobile broadband. In addition schools have received additional IT resources under the EDTech programme.
- The education support service and VLS have met with the BME Community Association to discuss the curriculum for Wales (being introduced in

September 2022) and the Association's potential contribution to the delivery of specific aspects of the curriculum.

- Discussions between Secondary Head Teachers and our Education Welfare Service are to be held over the coming months to discuss bullying and harassment data and the links to Estyn recommendations.
- Three audits of our Integrated Impact Assessment framework were undertaken during the year; by our internal audit service, an external consultant and Audit Wales. The Audits considered the relation to the completion of and compliance with legislation surrounding Integrated Impact Assessments, the quality of the assessments undertaken and the way that public bodies undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and what impact this has on decision making respectively. Recommendations will be considered and implemented as appropriate along with a training programme due to commence in the autumn.

Financial Appraisal

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

Integrated Impact Assessment

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

Valleys Communities Impact

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

Workforce Impact

12. The progress described in the annual report was achieved against a backdrop of the continuing unprecedented emergency situation and tentative emergence from restrictions. This has involved a step change in workforce flexibility and innovation underpinned by enhanced use of data and digital technology.

Legal Impact

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

Risk Management

14. 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

15. 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”.
16. 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

17. 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.’
18. 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

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

Recommendations

20. It is recommended that Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Sub Committee considers and approves the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2021-2022.
21. It is recommended that the Head of People 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 (Policy and Resources) Sub Committee.

Reason for Proposed Decision

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

Implementation of Decision

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

Appendices

24. Appendix 1 –Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2021-2022

List of Background Papers

25. Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024
26. Equality Act 2010
27. Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

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