



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1ST MARCH 2016

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN AND OBJECTIVES 2016-2020

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Report is seeking the views of Members on an updated Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives 2016-2020 prior to its presentation to Cabinet and Council to seek approval for adoption as Council policy.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has had a Strategic Equality Plan in place since 2012, and must now update this for the next 4-year cycle.
- 2.2 In addition, the Council's current Welsh Language Scheme comes to an end and will be removed from the policy framework and replaced with actions related to the new Welsh Language Standards.
- 2.3 As the operational requirements of both Equalities and Welsh Language statutory duties have converged steadily over the years, the unified action plan has reduced duplication and streamlined their implementation.
- 2.4 This has also ensured that the Council has a good foundation in place to meet three of the Well-being goals of the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Equalities and Welsh Language issues are crosscutting themes and impact on every other council policy, function and process.
- 3.2 These include:
- Ensuring that all Customer facing functions are robust in line with Equalities and Welsh Language statutory duties
 - Ensuring that all Human Resources functions are robust in line with Equalities and Welsh Language statutory duties
 - Equality Impact Assessments on all council reports, policies and proposals to ensure fairness in service provision and delivery
 - Welsh language translation requirements of every service area
 - Workforce development provision of Equalities and Welsh Language courses to staff
 - Corporate complaints issues where any have aspects of alleged discrimination or Welsh language issues

- Physical accessibility issues for all Council owned property and buildings

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Since April 2012, the Council has had in place a four-year Strategic Equality Plan alongside a Welsh Language Scheme in order to comply with statutory duties. These have been supported by a single operational document, the Equalities and Welsh Language Strategic Objectives and Action Plan.
- 4.2 This operational document was created as the requirements of both statutory duties have many similar requirements in terms of implementation, so this unified action plan reduces duplication of actions and streamlines the implementation of both sets of duties.
- 4.3 All local authority Welsh Language Schemes come to a formal end in March 2016 due to the introduction of the new legislation and so as part of this policy update, it will be removed from the policy framework, so that actions within the Strategic Equality Plan, related to the new Welsh Language Standards, can replace it.
- 4.4 The Strategic Equality Plan has undergone relatively minor updates for the most part on existing text, compared with the previous version, in order to reflect changes or to provide additional information only. The Objectives and Action Plan have been developed to take achievements and progress into account and to bring the document in line with the Welsh Language Standards.
- 4.5 The main additions are sections on the Armed Forces Covenant and links to the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as Equalities and Welsh Language issues, alongside Community Cohesion matters, form 3 of the 7 Well-being Goals within the Act.
- 4.6 The number of Strategic Equality Objectives has risen from 7 to 11, with the addition of the following:
- Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards
 - Supporting Age-friendly Communities
 - Supporting the Armed Forces Covenant
 - Working with Gypsy and Traveller Communities
- 4.7 The Strategic Equality Plan and the unified Objectives and Action Plan were the focus of consultation and engagement undertaken between December 2015 and January 2016 (see section 8).

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Given their nature, these documents demonstrate the Council's commitment to Equalities and Welsh Language work and by implementing the actions in the unified Plan under 11 Objectives, the Council will deliver many improvements to the lives of individuals and groups in Caerphilly county borough communities who are protected by current Equalities and Welsh Language legislation.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The updated policy and action plan cover many commitments and actions already being implemented and the financial implications of the Welsh Language Standards have been the focus of a number of Cabinet papers over the last 2 years. The Equalities and Welsh Language team will continue to coordinate training and statutory translation requirements corporately.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In light of the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and the wider requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, any personnel implications will be dealt with as they arise by Human Resources and the Equalities and Welsh Language team, and reported on in the annual reports each summer. They are difficult to quantify at this time however any significant implications that may arise would be reported via the Corporate Management Team to Cabinet and relevant Scrutiny Committees.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The draft Strategic Equality Plan was consulted on as normal as it only required a few minor updates, however the updated draft Objectives and Action Plan was circulated extensively both internally and externally for comment as this is the operational side of the plan. The list of consultees is shown as Appendix 1 at the end of this report.
- 8.2 17 responses were received by the consultation period closing date of 29th January 2016, and where possible, the comments and additional information received have been reflected in the amended draft policy being presented here. No negative responses were received.
- 8.3 The key amendments resulting from the consultation were:
- A greater alignment of the new Ageing Well in Caerphilly objective with existing national programmes
 - Inclusion of further references to criminal legislation around Hate Crime and other relevant legislation and regulations.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Prior to presentation of this Report to Cabinet and Council the Committee are asked for their views on the following recommendations to Cabinet:
- i. That Cabinet recommend the Strategic Equality Plan and the Objectives and Action Plan to Council for approval.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The updated policy and unified action plan will ensure that the Council has a fit-for-purpose strategy in place to demonstrate compliance with the latest statutory Equalities and Welsh Language duties.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

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- Appendix 1 - List of Consultees
- Appendix 2 - Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020
- Appendix 3 - Equalities and Welsh Language Objectives and Action Plan 2016-2020