



## CABINET – 11TH MARCH 2020

**SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS 2020-2024**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

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- 1.1 The attached draft Strategic Equality Plan, Objectives and Actions 2020-2024 was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Members were asked for their views on the draft Strategic Equality Plan prior to it being considered by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
  - 1.2 The scrutiny committee were advised that the Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales came into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011 and included a requirement for public authorities to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan every four years. The Council has had a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) in place since 2016, and must now update this for the next 4-year cycle.
  - 1.3 Members sought clarification on Objective 2 of the Corporate Plan 2018-2023, enabling employment, which was also reflected as part of Equality Objective 2. Two Members requested information on action being taken in the north of the County Borough to increase employment and the number of people accessing services and commercial opportunities in town centres. Officers advised that the issues raised related more to regeneration policies rather than the Equality Plan, and highlighted the Draft Heads of the Valleys Masterplan which utilises the Cardiff Capital Region Investment Fund to support the region's economic growth.
  - 1.4 A Member asked about the support available to Elected Members and the voluntary sector so that they can galvanise and facilitate community cohesion. Issues highlighted in the Draft Plan under Equality Objective 3: promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities. Officers advised that training sessions with Regional Community Cohesion Officers could be arranged and different forms of current public engagement were highlighted. Discussion ensued on the need to explore better and new ways of engaging and galvanising communities in order to make them more inclusive and cohesive. Members suggested that public seminars be established with the support of Regional Community Cohesion Officers in order to improve public engagement. Discussion also ensued on the implications of possible future funding cuts to the voluntary sector. Members were advised that future funding was currently being considered as Service Level Agreements with the voluntary sector had not been reviewed since 2008.
  - 1.5 Members raised the issue of deprivation as a key factor that can lead to examples of inequality. Officers advised Members about partnership working that had taken place in order to combat challenges caused by deprivation. The regeneration of the Lansbury Park Housing Estate in Caerphilly was given as an example.
  - 1.6 Members sought clarification with regard to Equality Objective 7: reducing the Gender Pay Gap. One Member wanted to know why part-time posts, which are mostly held by females, attracted salaries in the lower quartiles according to data contained in the Strategic Equality

Plan. Officers advised that the data indicated that part-time posts attracted salaries in the lower quartiles, regardless of gender. But, because of societal reasons the responsibility of childcare still falls disproportionately upon women and that therefore females tended to favour part-time employment in order to accommodate this commitment. One Member queried the suggested action of reviewing and updating HR policies regularly to include matters such as flexible working, part-time or job-share options and shared parental leave. It was suggested that a bolder response was needed. Officers advised that a review would help the Council to understand the size and causes of any pay gaps and identify any issues that need to be addressed. It was outlined how a future action plan would help tackle any causes identified. Discussion ensued on further measures such as the possibility of developing childcare facilities within council buildings. Officers advised that a report on the Gender Pay Gap was coming to Cabinet next month. Members were also advised that the council was confident that any gender pay gap did not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

- 1.7 The Chair summed-up the views expressed by Members during the meeting. It was outlined that the Strategic Equality Plan should include:
- (i) The establishment of public seminars in communities to increase greater Community Cohesion. Regional Community Cohesion Officers to be asked to explore new ways of promoting and increasing public engagement.
  - (ii) Exploration of new ways of eliminating the Gender Pay Gap, the reduction of which was identified as an Equality Objective in the draft Strategic Equality Plan.
- 1.8 Following consideration and discussion the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommend to Cabinet that:
- (i) The views outlined in 1.7 are given full consideration.
  - (ii) The Strategic Equality Plan, Objectives and Actions 2020-2024 be presented to Council for its approval as adoption as Council policy.
- 1.9 Cabinet are asked to consider the report and the above recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee.

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Appendices:

Appendix Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 – Agenda Item 8