

Scrutiny Report



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Part 1

Date: September 2021

Subject Strategic Equalities Annual Report 2020/21

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The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Area / Role / Subject	Page Numbers
Rhys Cornwall, Head of People and Business Change	Head of Service	
Heather Powell, Connected Communities Manager	Report Author	

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1 Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked to consider:

1. The Council's progress towards achieving the objectives that were defined in the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2020-24.
2. Whether the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2020/21 contains sufficient information to monitor the achievement of the 9 Objectives.
3. Whether it wishes to provide comment and recommendations on the SEP annual report to Cabinet.

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities are required to set a number of Equality Objectives every 4 years which assist them in their duty to pay due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, foster positive relationships between community groups and eliminate

discrimination. The council's Equality Objectives are set out in our [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#) (the Plan).

- 2.2 Local authorities are also required as part of the Welsh specific duties of the Equality Act 2010 to produce and publish an Annual Report, within 12 months of the end of each financial year. The report highlights the challenges, changes and progress made throughout the year and measures these against Equality Objectives set out in the Strategic Equality Plan. The Annual Report also includes workforce data which is a publishing requirement under the Welsh specific duties.
- 2.3 This Annual Report demonstrates the progress made during the first year of delivery against the council's new Strategic Equality Objectives published in March 2021. The council currently have 6 equality objectives relating to Leadership and Governance, Access and Engagement, Representative Workforce, Community Cohesion, Learning Well and Independent Living.
- 2.4 The Strategic Equalities Group (SEG) considers progress made against the Strategic Equality Objectives throughout the year and is chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Equalities.

Previous Consideration of this item

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee consider the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report on an annual basis. The Committee also commented on the 2020-2024 draft Plan.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is the draft Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

The role of the Committee in considering the report is to:

Question the progress towards achieving the Equality Objectives set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24.

- Look back at how well the Council has performed in 2020/21 against its Equality Objectives in the Strategic Equality Plan
- To assess whether the actions taken to achieving the nine Equality Objectives are being undertaken, to what extent and where the evidence for this is;
- Assess and make comment on:
 - How effectively the Council is performing against the Objectives/Actions;
 - The extent to which any underperformance is being addressed and associated risks are being mitigated;
- Conclusions:
 - What was the overall conclusion on the information contained within the report?
 - Is the Committee satisfied that it has had all of the relevant information to base a conclusion on the performance against the SEP?
 - Do any areas require a more in-depth review by the Committee?
 - Do the Committee wish to make any Comments / Recommendations to the Cabinet?

Suggested Lines of Enquiry

4.1 The Committee may wish to consider:

- The impact that COVID-19 has had on the delivery of strategic equality objectives during 2020/21
- How progress against the Strategic Equality Plan is monitored throughout the year
- How factors such as the BLM Movement and the impact of COVID-19 on minority ethnic communities have affected equality priorities this year
- Whether all stakeholders are effectively engaged in delivering strategic equality objectives
- How the introduction of the Socio-economic Duty in March 2021 has been addressed during this reporting period

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

5.1 [Socio-economic Duty Guidance](#)
[Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The [Strategic Equality Plan](#) and its Equality Objectives are deliberately aligned with:

The Corporate Plan – our Cohesion and Representative Workforce Objectives
Wellbeing Objectives – our Cohesion, Learn Well and Independent Living Objectives
Modernised Council – our Representative Workforce Objective

The Plan also takes account of priorities for addressing inequalities set out in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's '[Is Wales Fairer?](#)' 2018 review, and Welsh Government's ongoing Cohesion, Equality and Inclusion, and Nation of Sanctuary work programmes.

7 Impact Assessment:

7.1 **Summary of impact – Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**

A full Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) has been undertaken on the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 to which this Annual Report relates.

The Plan's Equality Objectives and the actions that underpin them balance short term needs with the delivery of medium to long-term solutions over the course of the 4 year Plan, and were developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, including grassroots community groups. This Annual Report sets out a number of ways in which involvement and engagement has continued during this reporting period, including the establishment of a number of staff networks, and external reference groups.

The Plan and its Objectives identify existing issues (such as workforce under-representation) and seek to invest resource into preventing these problems from getting worse, and improving overall outcomes for groups that experience disadvantage. All of the council's Equality Objectives contribute to creating a more equal Wales, improving community cohesion and developing strong, resilient communities.

7.2 **Summary of impact – Equality Act 2010**

The FEIA undertaken on the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 identifies positive impacts for people that share Protected Characteristics of race, age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and sex. The Plan includes explicit reference to those characteristics which each Equality Objective directly benefits. There were no negative impacts identified.

7.3 **Summary of impact – Socio-economic Duty**

The Strategic Equality Plan's FEIA was carried out prior to the introduction of the Socio-economic Duty, however, specific actions were identified within the Plan to ensure the Duty is embedded across council processes during this period. The Annual Report updates on these. The FEIA also identified the likely positive impact that those areas of Newport with higher minority ethnic populations would experience as a result of the Plan – these areas are also some of the most socio-economically deprived. The Plan's focus on educational and involvement/engagement outcomes is also likely to benefit those experiencing inequalities as a result of socio-economic disadvantage.

7.4 **Summary of impact – Welsh language**

There were no significant impacts identified for the Welsh language within the Plan's FEIA.

8. **Background Papers**

- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Corporate Plan](#)
- [Socio-economic Duty Guidance](#)
- [Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

Report Completed: 27th August 2021