

Report

Council



Part 1

Date: 23 November 2021

Subject **Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2020/21**

Purpose This report reflects Newport City Council's progress on delivering its 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan whilst also reporting on the essential equalities employment information that the Authority is required to publish under the Equality Act 2010.

The Annual Report is required to be published on the Council's website in accordance with statutory deadlines.

Author Connected Communities Manager

Ward All

Summary Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council is required to report annually on the progress it has made against the 6 Strategic Equality Objectives contained within its Strategic Equality Plan. The Equality Act also requires Local Authorities to publish staff equalities data, which this report also contains.

This report, previously received by Cabinet, is the first final Annual Report on progress towards meeting Equality Objectives set out in the Authority's third four year Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), as approved by Council in July 2020.

Proposal **To approve the attached final monitoring report for publication on the Council's in accordance with statutory deadlines.**

Action by Head of People and Business Change

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Cabinet Member for Community and Resources
- The Council's Strategic Equalities Group
- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
- Cabinet

Signed Head of People and Business Change

Background

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 people that share protected characteristics and people who do not, and eliminate discrimination. The council's current Equality Objectives are set out in our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 (SEP).

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.

The 2020-24 SEP was approved by Cabinet in July 2020 and sets out six equality objectives, each with a number of related outcomes and key actions that will contribute to those outcomes. The objectives relate to Leadership and Governance, Access and Engagement, Representative Workforce, Community Cohesion, Learning Well and Independent Living, and were set as a result of comprehensive community engagement, and review of local and national data.

This Annual Report demonstrates the progress made during the first year of delivery against the council's new SEP.

Legal context

The Equality Act 2010 (Wales) states that a listed body in Wales, including Local Authorities, must produce an Annual Report by 31st March each year.

The Act requires that the report must specifically outline progress towards fulfilling each of the Authority's Equality Objectives, provide a statement on the effectiveness of the steps that the Authority has taken to fulfil each of these, and include specified employment information, including information on training and pay (unless it has already published this information elsewhere).

The report should also set out the steps the Authority has taken to identify and collect relevant information and how we have used this information in meeting the three aims of the Public Sector General Equality Duty, which are to:

1. Foster positive relationships between those who share Protected Characteristics and those who don't
2. Eliminate unlawful discrimination
3. Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a Protected Characteristic and those who don't

If relevant information has not been collected a statement on the effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information must also be included.

During this reporting period, Welsh Government also enacted Section 1 of the Equality Act, the Socio-economic Duty (SED), introduced in Wales on the 31st March 2021. The SED requires specified public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to pay due regard to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. Although the SED does not include a reporting duty, this Annual Report sets out the steps that have been taken this year to ensure that the council meets its statutory responsibilities under this new legislation.

Governance and management

The Strategic Equalities Group (SEG) considers progress made against the Strategic Equality Objectives throughout the year and is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community and Resources who also has responsibility for Equalities.

Respective Equality Objective leads provide a quarterly highlight report for consideration and support from SEG members. A number of delivery groups have also been established during this period to ensure operational delivery of each Equality Objective.

The annual report has also been considered at Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet. The version attached to this report includes a sample of the graphics that will be used in the final published report.

Financial Summary

The cost of implementing the Strategic Equality Plan and the Equality Objectives is met out of existing budgets by each relevant service area. The majority of the actions relate to work already identified in Service Plans, for example workforce monitoring, or which occurs in projects that have already been approved and prioritised, such as educational and housing priorities.

| | Year 1 (Current) £ | Year 2 £ | Year 3 £ | Ongoing £ | Notes including budgets heads affected |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| Costs (Income) | | | | | Not applicable |
| Net Costs (Savings) | | | | | |
| Net Impact on Budget | | | | | |

Risks

| Risk | Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L) | Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L) | What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect | Who is responsible for dealing with the risk? |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| That the Annual Report is not published | M | L | A draft report has been compiled and taken through relevant governance processes for approval | Heads of Service |
| That equality commitments are not understood by employees and members | M | M | Equality training for staff and members continues to be rolled out across the organisation, and development of our Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment process has further embedded equalities considerations as part of the Authority's decision making process. | Head of People and Business Change and Elected Members |
| That Equality Objectives are not implemented and reviewed | M | M | Progress against equalities objectives are reported on regularly to the Strategic Equality Group | Connected Communities Manager |

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.

Options Available

- a) To approve the attached report and publish on the council's website
- b) To not approve the attached report and redraft.

Preferred Option and Why

Option a) is the preferred option, in order to ensure that the Council remains compliant with its statutory obligations.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial implications associated with the proposal to approve and then publish the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report on the Council's website. The cost of implementing the SEP is met from existing budgets in service areas. Fairness & Equality Impact Assessments are included in business cases during the Medium Term Financial Plan process when applicable.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 the Council is required to publish an annual report setting out progress made and the effectiveness of the actions taken to meet its public sector equality duty and specific objectives. The annual report is also required to set out equalities data in relation to staffing information. The general public sector equality duty requires the Council to have due regard in the exercise of its functions, to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct and to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations. As from April 2021, the Council has a further duty under the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. The Regulations made by the Welsh Ministers impose specific duties on local authorities in Wales for the purpose of enabling better performance of these general duties. These include the duty to publish objectives designed to enable the authority to perform the statutory duty, to publish a statement setting out steps taken or intended steps in order to fulfil each objective and how long the authority will take in order to fulfil each objective.

This report provides an update on the first year of delivery against the new four-year Strategic Equalities Plan 2020-2024 and confirms that good progress has been made in meeting the 6 equalities objectives set out in the Plan, but also identifying those areas where further work is required. Although there is no requirement to report on performance in relation to the new socio-economic duty, the report also sets out the steps taken to meet the requirements of this new duty.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

This Annual Report reflects the positive progress made towards implementing our Strategic Equality Plan in its first year. The pandemic has presented significant challenges in delivering against some areas of work, however a range of activity has progressed as outlined in the report.

The publication of the report also meets the requirements to annually publish staff equalities data for the Local Authority. The work delivered over the last 12 months contributes to the delivery of the Council's well-being objectives and the national well-being goals, particularly a more equal Wales.

Scrutiny Committees

The report was received by the Overview and Management Committee at its meeting on the 10th September 2021. The full details will be published in the minutes of the Committee meeting on the Council's democracy pages. The following issues were discussed:

- The Committee would like further information on the terms of invitation to the roundtable discussions for members of marginalised community members, and would like to know further whether we should be formalising these community groups.

The discussions, which arose following the Black Lives Matter movement, are to support engagement between the Council's leadership and a range of communities in order to develop an understanding of relevant issues. This has been informal to date but will continue to be reviewed as discussions develop.

- Further, the Committee would like to know if the groups are associated with the One Newport PSB, and whether they interact at all.

One Newport PSB delivers the Well-Being Plan for the city and consists of a range of partners, whereas the leadership discussions are NCC discussions. However the work of the PSB does include a range of engagement with a wide range of communities and the participatory budgeting programme which formed part of the council's COVID recovery work is an example of this (also covered in the annual report).

- Committee agreed that they would like to extend a community cohesion group or roundtable to all communities within Newport and not just marginalised communities.

Detail was given to the Scrutiny Committee about the fortnightly community dial in with police and partners focussing on community cohesion issues which is open to any community member to join. From an engagement point of view, all communities are covered by the participatory budgeting work above.

- One Member noted the similarities between 'roundtable discussions' and an organisation in Newport by the name of Round Table, and asked that the Council be wary of this.

We have reviewed the clarity of this in the report.

- Committee asked that further information on the demographics of Newport be included in the report in order to further contextualise employment figures of protected classes and characteristics, and to show that our workforce is representative of Newport as a whole.

We have reviewed and updated the report.

- The Chair of the Committee noted the progress made, and the positive work of the Strategic Equalities Group.

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

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

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

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.

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.

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.

Summary of impact – Welsh language

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

Consultation

The Council's Equality Objectives were developed in partnership with key internal and external stakeholders and were subject to extensive community engagement. The involvement of grassroots communities ensures that whilst our Plan delivers a strategic vision for equality in Newport, it also ensures tangible outcomes for communities on the ground. The SEP includes further details of our consultation, comments received, and how this has shaped our priorities.

Background Papers

[The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)

[Corporate Plan](#)

[Socio-economic Duty Guidance](#)

[Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

[NCC Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#)

Dated: 16 November 2021