

Report

Council

Part 1

Date: November 2022

Subject **Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2021/22**

Purpose This report reflects Newport City Council's progress in delivering against its 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan and reports 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 Head of People, Policy and Transformation

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 contained within this report.

This report is the second Annual Report on progress towards meeting Equality Objectives 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 and publish it on the Council's website, in accordance with statutory deadlines**

Action by Head of People, Policy and Transformation

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

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

Signed Head of People, Policy and Transformation

Background

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities are required to set Equality Objectives every four 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 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 the Equality Objectives in the Strategic Equality Plan. The Annual Report also includes workforce data, a publishing requirement under Welsh-specific duties.

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

This Annual Report demonstrates the progress made during the second 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.

In the last reporting period, Welsh Government also enacted Section 1 of the Equality Act, the Socio-economic Duty (SED), introduced in Wales on the 31st of 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 taken this year to ensure that the council meets its statutory responsibilities under this new legislation.

Report Summary

This report details the progress made during 2021-22 so is an historic look back at the actions undertaken against each of the strategic equality objectives contained within the Strategic Equality Plan.

The report lists the achievements against each strategic objectives, with key highlights below.

- As a demonstration of the commitment at all levels of the Council to Equality Diversity and Inclusion, we are proud to say that the Leader was appointed as the Welsh Local Government Association for Equalities, Migration and Anti-Poverty
- Inclusive Leadership training was completed by nearly 300 Senior Leaders and Managers during the period and this year we will be evaluating how this has supported our vision of becoming a more inclusive organisation
- Equality, Hate Crime and EUSS awareness sessions delivered to all senior customer service staff to support
- £415,000 of funding was distributed to 79 community projects via the Participatory Budgeting process to support activities to overcome the inequality seen by some communities during the pandemic. This was supported by Newport’s Fairness Commission.
- Our staff networks have provided to be successful and have been instrumental in influencing workplace policies, service delivery and strategic decision making during the period, including supporting the recruitment process for senior leaders.
- Development and roll out of Emotional Based School Avoidance support and resources for schools to support all children and young people to attend school.
- Floating support schemes supported over 2,665 people to access and maintain their accommodation including adults with learning disabilities, refugees, people escaping domestic abuse and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

As well as the many positives the report also recognises areas of improvement. The analysis of our workforce data (from page 42) highlights some potential areas of focus, including the representation of minority ethnic staff, and higher levels of leavers for staff with particular protected characteristics. Deep dives into any themes and associated improvements will be undertaken during this financial year.

Governance and management

The Strategic Equalities Group (SEG) considers progress made against the Strategic Equality Objectives throughout the year. SEG is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation, who has responsibility for Equalities.

Respective Equality Objective leads provide a quarterly highlight report for consideration and support from SEG members. Specific delivery groups have also been established during this period to ensure operational delivery of each Equality Objective. This report summaries the key achievements from the quarterly updates provided at SEG.

The annual report has also been considered at Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet.

Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

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 Title / Description	Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Risk Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	Risk Owner Officer(s) 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	Mandated Equalities training for staff and members continues to be delivered across the organisation, and the 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, Policy and Transformation and Elected Members
That Equality Objectives are not implemented and reviewed	M	M	Progress against equalities objectives is reported on regularly to the Strategic Equality Group	Policy and Partnership Manager and Senior Equalities Officer

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The Strategic Equality Plan and its Equality Objectives are 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 Right's Commission's 'Is Wales Fairer?' 2018 review, and Welsh Government's ongoing Cohesion, Equality and Inclusion, and Nation of Sanctuary work programmes.

Options Available and considered

- 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 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 a combination of existing service area budgets and external grant funding. 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 second 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 identifies those areas where further improvements are required. Although there is no requirement to report on performance in relation to the socio-economic duty, the report also sets out the steps taken to meet the requirements of this new duty. The report will need to be approved by full Council before being published in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

This annual report reflects the positive progress made and highlights some examples of good practice that we have delivered over the past 12 months. The report also identifies some areas in which we will need to make improvements in the year to come.

Continued work on the objectives within the Strategic Equality Plan contributes to the delivery of the Council's well-being objectives and the national well-being goals, working towards a Wales of vibrant culture and an equal Wales.

Scrutiny Committees

The SEP Annual Report 21/22 was presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 23 September 2022. 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 were happy with the report and its contents and thanked Officers for their work. A summary of comments and responses is outlined below.

1. The committee commented that information regarding the Strategic Equalities group and the areas it explored could've been beneficial to include within the report.
The achievements and updates in the report are based on feedback from discussions at the Strategic Equality Group. Relevant information from the Group will be considered for future reports.
2. The committee felt that there could be more clarity when presenting how aims have been achieved.
Format of future annual reports will be considered by the Strategic Equalities Group to discuss and agree improvements, including how more clarity on achievement of objectives can be included.
3. The committee asked for a copy of the exit survey questions to better understand what was being asked of leavers and make any recommendations and comments where necessary.

A copy of the current exit questionnaire was shared with Committee members as part of the written response. Human Resources are currently reviewing this questionnaire. Once drafted, this will be presented to Staff Networks for their feedback before more formal approval.

4. The committee recommended that the Council expands the breadth of organisations that are used for benchmarking beyond the current Pride Council collaborative forum, with the recommendation that this be brought back the committee in future.

Following the introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 there has been a change to the benchmarking data available and required by Local Authorities. Newport City Council, are discussing the best way in which to benchmark against other local authorities, and this will form part of those discussions

5. The committee asked for confirmation regarding the data on pages 40 and 42 regarding employees as of the 31st of March.

As highlighted in the report, at the time of data capture, we had 5982 staff employed, 850 leavers and 5777 applicants. Anomalies in data (numerical statistics in 'pay band by sex', 'contract type by sex', 'working pattern by sex', 'ethnicity pay gap' and 'disability pay gap') are due to the time that reports were run/requested but were analysed from a date correct at 31/03/2022 and the percentages displayed are reflective of the correct data. Officers will review how this can be mitigated for in future reports.

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**

In consideration of the sustainable development principle, 5 ways of working:

Long Term – Activities in relation to delivery of compliance with SEP's 4-year plan thus supporting activities in the medium to long term.

Preventative – The Plan and its Objectives identify existing issues (such as workforce under-representation) and seek to invest resources into preventing these problems from exacerbating and improving overall outcomes for groups that experience disadvantage.

Integration – It identifies key successes and challenges for the Welsh language in Newport and shows how the council has worked towards compliance with the Welsh language standards and promoted Welsh across the diverse communities of Newport increasing the visibility of the language across the city.

Involvement – the objectives within the SEP were developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, including grassroots community groups. This annual report sets out ways in which involvement and engagement have continued during this reporting period.

Collaboration - 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 explicitly refers to those characteristics that each Equality Objective directly benefits. There were no negative impacts identified.

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

The Strategic Equality Plan's FEIA was completed before the introduction of the Socio-economic Duty in Wales. Specific actions were identified within the Plan to ensure the Duty is embedded across council

processes during this period. The FEIA also identified residents in areas of Newport with the largest concentration of minority ethnic people would likely experience a positive impact 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 improve inequality of outcome for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

- **Summary of impact - Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

There were no significant impacts identified for the Welsh language within the Plan's FEIA, and Welsh Language is within the remit of the Strategic Equalities Team thus having a positive impact.

Consultation

The Equality Objectives in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 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, and 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](#)

[Cabinet Report](#)

Dated: 14 November 2022