



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	26 th February 2016
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Service Area	Corporate Services
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	23 rd March 2016

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives for 2012-2016 were approved by Full Council on 29th February 2012.
- 1.2 The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to review its Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives at least every four years.
- 1.3 To support the review of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives for 2012-2016 a Task and Finish Group was established.
- 1.4 The Task and Finish Group consisted of the Council's Equalities Champion, Council Officers and key stakeholders that represent hard to reach groups in the community.
- 1.5 A Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020 has been developed for the Council in partnership with Council Officers and partners.
- 1.6 The Strategic Equality Plan includes an Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil supported by four Equality Objectives for 2016-2020. These Objectives will be monitored and delivered through a detailed Action Plan as part of the Strategic Equality Plan. A copy of the Strategic Equality Plan is available via the Background Papers link.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

- 2.1 The Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020 be approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Equality Act 2010

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) brings together and replaces the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplifies and strengthens the law, removes inconsistencies and makes it easier for people to understand and comply with it. The majority of the Act came into force on 1st October 2010.
- 3.2 The Act includes a new public sector equality duty (the 'general duty'), replacing the separate duties on race, disability and gender equality. This came into force on 5th April 2011.
- 3.3 The new general duty covers the following protected characteristics:
- Age.
 - Gender reassignment.
 - Sex.
 - Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality.
 - Disability.
 - Pregnancy and maternity.
 - Sexual orientation.
 - Religion or belief – including lack of belief.
- 3.4 It applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.
- 3.5 The aim of the general duty is to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities. The duty ensures that equality considerations are built into the design of policies and the delivery of services and that they are kept under review. This will achieve better outcomes for all.
- 3.6 Public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Specific duties in Wales

- 3.7 The broad purpose of the specific duties in Wales is to help listed bodies in their performance of the general duty and to aid transparency.

- 3.8 The specific duties in Wales are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. The specific duties in Wales came into force on 6th April 2011.
- 3.9 The specific duties in Wales included a requirement for listed bodies to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan by 2nd April 2012 that contained Equality Objectives and included information on the engagement process carried out in order to identify these.
- 3.10 As part of this requirement listed bodies must also:
- Have due regard to the need to have objectives to address the causes of any pay differences that seem reasonably likely to be related to any of the protected characteristics.
 - Publish an equality objective to address any gender pay gap identified or else publish reasons why it has not done so.
- 3.11 The Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives for 2012-2016 were approved by Full Council on 29th February 2012.
- 3.12 Progress on delivering these Equality Objectives is reported as part of the Council's Annual Equality Report that is considered and approved by Cabinet.

4.0 STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN FOR 2016-2020

- 4.1 The Act and Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to review its Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives at least every four years.

Strategic Equality Plan Task and Finish Group

- 4.2 To support the review of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives for 2012-2016 a Task and Finish Group was established.
- 4.3 The Task and Finish Group consisted of the Council's Equalities Champion, Council Officers and key stakeholders that represent hard to reach groups in the community.
- 4.4 These key stakeholders were from The Big Lottery – Community Voice MAGNET Project (Merthyr Achieving Greater Networking and Engagement Together), which provides an opportunity for members of marginalised communities to increase their voice in influencing public service providers policy, planning and delivery processes. The Merthyr Portfolio is made up of the following seven projects, each being led by different voluntary organisations:
- **Visible** - Bringing together lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons to provide support and promote their voice within Merthyr Tydfil.
 - **Focal Point** - Engaging with migrant workers, facilitating inclusion and cohesion, improving cultural awareness in the wider community.
 - **Bridges** - Building confidence and skills with the Gypsy / Traveller community and creating opportunities for effective engagement with local services.

- **One Voice** - Advocacy and empowerment for disabled persons to agree collective action and engagement with service providers.
- **Perthyn (Belonging)** - Intergenerational project between younger and older people living in social housing, focusing on past, present and future housing policies. Delivered in Caedraw, Gurnos and Trelewis.
- **POSSIB** - Bilingual arts project to engage working aged men, parents and children in the areas of health, well-being, employment and education. Delivered in Northern Communities First Cluster.
- **Up and Coming** - Youth media project where young reporters convey positive messages about young people and Merthyr Tydfil and communicate with service providers and decision makers.

Council's Strategic Equality Plan Objectives for 2012-2016

4.5 As part of the review of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2012-2016 it was identified that the following Equality Objectives (listed in the table below) were being addressed by other plans, reports and work streams. Therefore, to avoid duplication in monitoring and reporting on these, they have not been included in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020.

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Equality Objectives</u>
Employment	<u>Equality Objective 1</u> Improve employment and training opportunities for young people and other under represented groups.
Access	<u>Equality Objective 2</u> Better access to quality services and facilities.
Engagement	<u>Equality Objective 3</u> Improve community cohesion for all members of society by fostering good relations between protected groups.
Hate Crime	<u>Equality Objective 4</u> Improve reporting of hate crime and domestic violence and satisfaction with how it is handled.

4.6 The Gender/Equal Pay Objective for 2012-2016 (listed below) will remain as an Equality Objective for 2016-2020:

- Ensure equity of pay across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Council's Strategic Equality Plan Objectives for 2016-2020

4.7 As part of the review of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan it was identified that an Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil was essential in order to set out the Local Authority's Ambition to eliminate discrimination / harassment, advance equality and foster good relations. The following Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil has been developed:

"A place where diversity is valued and respected and everyone can participate, flourish and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential free from discrimination and prejudice."

- 4.8 This Vision will be delivered through four Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 that are listed in the table below. These Objectives can be found in more detail in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020 which is available via the Background Papers link. These Objectives have been identified as priorities for the Council as part of the review of the Strategic Equality Plan and are supported by evidence and relevant information.

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Equality Objectives</u>
Community Engagement	<u>Equality Objective 1</u> Put citizens' voices at the heart of local decision making so that their contribution is understood, recognised and used to help the Council understand and respond to the needs of its communities.
Equality Awareness Raising	<u>Equality Objective 2</u> To support and facilitate Equalities training and learning opportunities so that staff at all levels, Councillors and partners recognise and incorporate Equalities as part of their role.
Understanding our Staff and Communities	<u>Equality Objective 3</u> Develop robust monitoring systems to collect, collate, monitor and publish equalities data on our employees and customers, which will help the Council to ensure that it provides fair and accessible services.
Gender/Equal Pay	<u>Equality Objective 4</u> Ensure equity of pay across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

- 4.9 These Equality Objectives were written in partnership with Council Officers and partners, and will be delivered through a detailed Action Plan, which can also be found in the Strategic Equality Plan.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 4.10 The Council's Vision and Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 will contribute to delivering the seven Well-being Goals that are set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This is discussed in further detail in the Strategic Equality Plan.

Senior Leadership Team & Change Management Steering Group

- 4.11 As part of the consultation on the Equality Objectives for 2016-2020, the Objectives were shared with the Council's Senior Leadership Team and Change Management Steering Group for consideration, comment and feedback.

Cwm Taf Community Engagement Hub

- 4.12 As part of the consultation and engagement process on the Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 the Council used the Cwm Taf Community Engagement Hub, which gave

residents, partners and other organisations the opportunity to have their say on the Objectives.

4.13 There were 45 respondents in total for the consultation, however not all of these completed all of the questions. The response to the consultation was very positive in support of the Council's Vision and Equality Objectives for 2016-2020. The following demonstrates the percentage of responses who either strongly agreed or agreed with the Council's Vision and Equality Objectives:

- Vision = 82%.
- Equality Objective 1 (Community Engagement) = 68%.
- Equality Objective 2 (Equality Awareness Raising) = 74%.
- Equality Objective 3 (Understanding our Staff and Communities) = 70%.
- Equality Objective 4 (Gender/Equal Pay) = 90%.

4.14 The vast majority of comments agreed with the proposals. There were a small number of comments that disagreed with the proposals. However, it is felt that these comments had either been addressed in the Plan or have been taken into account and further minor adjustments made. A summary of the responses is available via the Background Papers link.

5.0 DELIVERING, PUBLISHING AND MONITORING RESULTS

5.1 The Council's Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 will be monitored and delivered through a detailed Action Plan, as part of the Strategic Equality Plan. The Action Plan identifies SMART Actions and Delivery Dates to deliver the Objectives.

5.2 The Council will publish an Annual Equality Report that will provide:

- Information on the delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan.
- Progress on the Equality Objectives and Action Plan, and the effectiveness of the steps it is taking to meet those objectives.
- Employment monitoring information.
- Details of relevant information and Equality Impact Assessments.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

6.1 There are no specific financial implications identified in this report. Any financial implications arising from the delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020 will be reported to Cabinet/Council as appropriate, including potential options for funding.

7.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

7.1 The Single Integrated Plan & Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed and the proposals positively impact on the Corporate Plan and Single Integrated Plan as the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020 aims to improve outcomes for all people with protected characteristics by reducing inequalities and

improving the well-being of the County Borough. No negative impacts have been identified.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full assessment is required. The form can be accessed on the Council's website/intranet via the 'Equality Impact Assessment' link.
- 8.2 The positive impacts are that the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020 aims to improve outcomes for all people with protected characteristics by reducing inequalities and improving the well-being of the County Borough.
- 8.3 No negative impacts have been identified.

GARETH CHAPMAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR PHIL WILLIAMS
CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE
& CORPORATE SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Strategic Equality Plan for 2012-2016	February 2012	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Website.
Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020	March 2016	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Website.
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.