



## **FULL COUNCIL REPORT**

Date Written	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Report Author	Lorna Townsend
Service Area	Business Change
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	25 <sup>th</sup> March 2020

*To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen*

# **Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024**

## **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty includes a requirement for public authorities to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan every four years.
- 1.2 The Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 were approved by Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016.
- 1.3 A Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-2024 has been developed for the Council in partnership with Council officers and partners. Feedback from the consultation has been taken into consideration when developing the objectives.
- 1.4 The Strategic Equality Plan includes the Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil supported by five Equality Objectives for 2020-2024. These objectives will be monitored and delivered through a detailed Action Plan as part of the Strategic Equality Plan. The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.5 The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 was discussed in Cabinet on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and to be progressed to Council for approval.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that**

- 2.1 The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 be approved.

### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council has had in place a four year Strategic Equality Plan which was approved in March 2016. This plan has undergone revision in order to reflect changes in best practice. The Strategic Equality Plan sets out how the Council aims to meet the commitment to equality and how to meet the legal obligations as found within the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010 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.
- 3.3 The Act includes a new Public Sector Equality Duty (the 'general duty'), replacing the separate duties on race, disability and gender equality.
- 3.4 The general duty covers the following protected characteristics:
- Age
  - Disability
  - Gender Reassignment
  - Marriage and Civil Partnership
  - Pregnancy and Maternity
  - Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality
  - Religion or belief – including lack of belief
  - Sex (Gender)
  - Sexual orientation
- 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 When making decisions and delivering services public authorities must 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.
- 3.7 In advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't the Council must also ensure that we:
- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and are connected to that characteristic.

- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation is disproportionately low.
- Meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.

### **Specific duties in Wales**

3.8 There are specific statutory duties placed upon the Council which set out what actions the Council must take to comply. 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. The specific duties in Wales came were published by Welsh Government in April 2011.

3.9 A listed body in Wales must:

- Publish objectives to meet the general duty.
- Publish a statement setting out the steps it has taken or intends to take to meet the objectives and how long it expects to take to meet each objective.
- Make appropriate arrangements to monitor progress towards meeting its objectives and to monitor the effectiveness of its approach.
- Give appropriate consideration to relevant equality information it holds when considering what its equality objectives should be.

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 2016-2020 were approved by Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016.

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 2020-2024**

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

4.2 Prior to consulting on the objectives with staff and the workforce, a workshop was held with Corporate Management Team and Senior Leadership Team to gather views on the objectives to consult on.

4.3 The themes and objectives are shown below:

- **Inclusive Engagement and Participation** - Engage with our Citizens to participate and have their voices heard to understand and respond to the needs of our communities.
- **Community Cohesion** - Promote and facilitate inclusive, safe and cohesive communities.
- **Inclusive and Diverse Workforce** - Create an inclusive and diverse workforce, which reflects the communities in Merthyr Tydfil.
- **Gender/Equal Pay** - Ensure equity of pay across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. (The gender pay objective is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty).
- **Accessible Services** - Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing our services.

4.4 The theme 'Accessible Services' was included following the consultation as accessibility was raised in the consultation responses. We have listened to our workforce and the community and included this additional objective. We have also ensured that we integrate and include actions relating to the Welsh Language.

4.5 The Council consulted with the workforce, public and community groups during a 12 week consultation period (16<sup>th</sup> December 2019 to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020) to involve as many views as possible in developing the objectives and to give an opportunity for suggestions to be made or ideas for other objectives. There were 34 responses in total. The following demonstrates the percentage of responses who agreed with the Council's Vision and Equality Objectives;

- Vision = 94%
- Inclusive Engagement and Participation = 97%
- Community Cohesion = 94%
- Inclusive and Diverse Workforce = 88%
- Gender/Equal Pay = 91%
- Accessible Services (This was included as a result of the consultation).

4.6 Feedback from the consultation was supportive of the draft objectives. Areas for improvement and barriers were identified. We have taken into account the comments that were raised in the consultation. Further meetings with Managers have been undertaken to finalise the actions included within the plan.

4.7 The plan has been developed to reflect our commitment to equality in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and to ensure we are meeting our statutory obligations as found within the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. It is a fit for purpose document and has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

## 5.0 DELIVERING, PUBLISHING AND MONITORING

5.1 The Council's Equality Objectives for 2020-2024 will be monitored and delivered through the Action Plan, as part of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.

- 5.2 The Council will publish an Annual Equality Report that will provide information on:
- Delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan
  - Progress on the objectives and actions
  - Employment monitoring information
- 5.3 The plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that actions are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound), and fit for purpose and that new legislation/guidance is factored into the plan. This will enable us to continuously improve the plan.

## 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 2020-2024 will be reported to Cabinet/Council as appropriate, including potential options for funding.

## 7.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
<b>1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives</b>	4 of 4	0 of 4	0 of 4
<b>2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term</li> <li>• Prevention</li> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Involvement</li> </ul>	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
<b>3. Protected Characteristics</b> <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	10 of 10	0 of 10	0 of 10
<b>4. Biodiversity</b>	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1

### Summary:

The main positive impacts are that the plan reflects our commitment to equality in the County Borough and also in meeting the duties and obligations placed upon us. The plan also ensures that we are thinking long term and preventing problems from arising. Ensuring that involvement and collaboration is undertaken and that it links to other strategies which assist is our work to ensure that we have inclusive communities free from discrimination.

The plan positively impacts on the Council's Wellbeing Objectives, the five ways of

working and the protected characteristics (including Welsh language).

No negative impacts have been identified.

**ELLIS COOPER**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**COUNCILLOR ANDREW BARRY**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE**  
**AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

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

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