



CABINET REPORT

Date Written	4 th March 2021
Report Author	Amii Cooper / Lorna Townsend
Service Area	Corporate Services
Committee Division	Strategic
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	24 th March 2021

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Annual Equality Report for 2019-2020

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 were approved by Council on 23rd March 2016.
- 1.2 In addition to preparing a Strategic Equality Plan, the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty also requires the Council to prepare and publish an annual report every year noting progress across all aspects of its equalities work, including progress on delivering its Equality Objectives.
- 1.3 Through the Strategic Equality Plan and its Equality Objectives the Annual Equality Report for 2019-2020, attached as Appendix 1, is testament to the Council's ongoing drive to progress its equality agenda and deliver our Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil.
- 1.4 The Council's Vision and Equality Objectives support the Council's Well-being Objectives, the seven national Well-being Goals and link to the five ways of working (the Sustainable Development Principle) that are set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 1.5 This report looks back at 2019/20. Good progress has been made against the actions in the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

2.1 The Council's Annual Equality Report for 2019-2020 be approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Equality Act 2010

3.1 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. The majority of the Act came into force on 1st October 2010.

3.2 The Act includes a 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 general duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnerships
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality
- Religion or belief – including lack of belief
- Sex (Gender)
- Sexual orientation

3.4 It also 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 specific duties in Wales are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, and are there to help listed bodies in their performance of the general duty and to aid transparency. The specific duties in Wales came into force on 6th April 2011 and included a requirement for listed bodies to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan that contains Equality Objectives at least every four years.
- 3.8 An Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil was developed in order to set out the Council's ambition to eliminate discrimination / harassment, advance equality and foster good relations. The Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil is:
- *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.*
- 3.9 This Vision has been supported by the following four Equality Objectives (listed in the table below) that are set out in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020. The Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020 was approved by Council on 23rd March 2016.

Themes	Equality Objectives
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.

Annual Reporting

3.10 The Council is required to prepare and publish an annual report noting progress across all aspects of its equalities work, including progress on delivering its Equality Objectives.

4.0 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT FOR 2019-2020

4.1 The Council's Annual Equality Report for 2019-2020 is attached as Appendix 1. Some of the key points to note from the report include the following:

LGBTQ+

- This was the sixth year that the Rainbow and Transgender flags were raised outside the Civic Centre to celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) History month as part of the Council's commitment to supporting and engaging with the LGBTQ+ community within Merthyr Tydfil.
- The Council was proud to actively take part in Pride Cymru in August 2019 for the fourth consecutive year. MTCBC and other Council's in South Wales are part of the 'Proud Councils' network, which involves working in a visible and unified way to support and promote equality for LGBTQ+ communities. All 'Proud Councils' marched together in the parade to visibly show their commitment and support. 'Proud Councils' also had a stall over the weekend long event, engaging with visitors to discuss how Councils can improve upon service delivery, access and inclusion, and prevent discrimination for the LGBTQ+ community.

Welsh Language

- A Welsh language customer telephone and greeting training course has been developed. The aim of the course is to upskill MTCBC staff to support the Council's provision of Welsh language services to the communities of Merthyr Tydfil. During 2019-2020, thirteen members of front-line staff received this training. This has been enhanced with our Customer Service Agents undertaking Level 1 Welsh. As part of the ongoing upskilling of staff the Council will continue to roll out this training as part of the Council's training programme for Welsh language.
- MTCBC has received positive feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner in the report 'Rights in use The Welsh Language Commissioner's assurance report 2018-19'. MTCBC is recognised for the good work undertaken with partners including the work we have done with the local Menter Iaith and our work experience and further opportunities; *"Merthyr Tydfil CBC is working with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to identify opportunities for similar work in future."*

Inspport

- MTCBC is currently an Inspport Silver Local Authority in the Disability Sport Wales programme and throughout 2019-2020 we have continued to work towards the Gold level. Merthyr Tydfil is one of only two Local Authorities in Wales to have presented to the Inspport Gold pre-panel to set our their priorities for their submission.
- We continue to support a number of local clubs to work through their relevant Inspport levels, ensuring there is a range of inclusive opportunities across the County Borough. We also continued to pilot the Inspport education programme with Disability Sport Wales; the only Local Authority in Wales to do so.

Hate Crime/Discrimination

- We continue to regularly engage with groups vulnerable to harassment and/or experiencing community tensions, especially in relation to Brexit. Groups such as EU citizens, BAME communities and other protected characteristic groups. We have been working with partner agencies to conduct mapping exercises, to understand the communities in Merthyr Tydfil so engagement can be more targeted. This has been useful when engaging with EU citizens to offer advice and support on the EUSS scheme.
- For National Hate Crime Awareness Week in October 2019, a week of events and engagement were arranged to raise awareness and encourage the reporting of hate crime. There was a total of 29 events held across the Cwm Taf region. A total of 451 residents took part in our hate crime surveys and we engaged with a much greater number on a more informal basis.

Schools

- MTCBC continues to support all of our schools to tackle bullying on the grounds of protected characteristics. Throughout 2019-2020, all schools within the Local Authority were offered Hate Crime Awareness training for both staff and pupils.
- An 'Equality Champion' programme has been put together and includes young people aged 14-19 receiving specialised training about the protected characteristics. These young people will then go on to their respective colleges, schools and youth forums and put together events, deliver training and run engagement sessions surrounding any of the protected characteristic groups.

Armed Forces Covenant

- To engage with as many veterans and forces personnel as possible, the Veteran Advice Officer (VAO) actively attends veteran groups within the Cwm Taf area. Plus, a large amount of marketing has taken place, such as with leaflets and on social media. A drop-in advice surgery has also been held in

the MTCBC Civic Centre, to allow veterans or current service personnel to access free, impartial information and advice from the Veteran Advice Service.

- The Armed Forces Flags were raised outside the Civic Centre for Armed Forces Day Forces Day itself, to show appreciation for the contribution made by all those who serve or have served in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces.

5.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 The Socio-economic Duty places a responsibility on the Council to actively consider ('pay due regard' to) how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions. The duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. The overall aim of the duty is to deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- 5.2 In broad terms, 'socio-economic disadvantage' means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.
- 5.3 The duty will come into force on 31st March 2021 and will be a key mechanism in supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, and will be extremely important when we recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

7.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	4 of 4	0 of 4	0 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5

3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	10 of 10	0 of 10	0 of 10
4. Biodiversity	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
<u>Summary:</u>			
<p>The Council's Annual Equality Report for 2019-2020 notes progress across all aspects of the Council's equalities work, including progress on delivering its Equality Objectives for 2016-2020.</p> <p>The Council's Equality Vision and Equality Objectives support the Council's Well-being Objectives and the seven Well-being Goals.</p> <p>The Council's Annual Equality Report for 2019-2020 positively impacts on the Council's Well-being Objectives, the five ways of working and the protected characteristics (including Welsh language).</p> <p>No negative impacts have been identified.</p>			

Appendix 1 - ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT FOR 2019-2020

ELLIS COOPER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BARRY
CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE
& CORPORATE SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
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.