



FULL COUNCIL - INFORMATION REPORT

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| Date Written | 17 th December 2021 |
| Report Author | Amii Cooper / Clare Williams / Lorna Townsend |
| Service Area | Business Change and Equalities |
| Exempt/Non Exempt | Non Exempt |
| Committee Date | 2 nd February 2022 |

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Annual Equality Report 2020-2021

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives for 2020-2024 were approved by Council on 25th March 2020.
- 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 2020-2021, 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 2020-2021. Good progress has been made against the actions in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.
- 1.6 Cabinet considered and approved this report on 2nd February 2022.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Equality Act 2010

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 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

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.*
- 2.9 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 2020-2024. The Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-2024 was approved by Council on 25th March 2020.

| THEME | OBJECTIVE |
|--|--|
| 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. |
| Accessible Services | Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing our services. |

Annual Reporting

- 2.10 The Council is required 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.

3.0 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2020-2021

- 3.1 The Council's Annual Equality Report for 2020-2021 is attached as Appendix 1. Some of the key points to note include the following:

LGBTQ+

- This was the seventh year that the Rainbow and Transgender flags were raised outside the Civic Centre to celebrate LGBTQ+ History month as part of the Council's commitment to supporting and engaging with the LGBTQ+ community within Merthyr Tydfil. Due to the national lockdown at the time, in person events could not take place. Therefore a virtual event was held and senior cabinet members gave recorded speeches that were posted on the Council's social media.
- Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 pandemic, events could not be held this year. However some events, such as Pride Cymru 2020, were held virtually. As part of the Proud Councils network, MTCBC was extremely pleased to be sponsoring some of the activities that took place at Pride Cymru.
- MTCBC and other Council's in South Wales are part of the 'Proud Councils' network, which is a partnership of Councils working together to support LGBTQ+ issues and actively champion LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Welsh Language

- In March 2021, a #SHWMAERONMENT event was organised to promote the use of the Welsh language across the County Borough. It had to be held virtually online due to the pandemic. The event started on St David's Day and ran over three weeks with several videos being posted each day on the Council's Facebook page. The Welsh Language Officer was also interviewed for television to promote the event.
- The Council continues to work in partnership with Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg (Learn Welsh Glamorgan) to provide workplace training opportunities for staff and Councillors. Nine members of staff have successfully achieved the WJEC Entry Certificate in Welsh Second Language: The Use of Welsh. Currently, there are 10 members of staff learning Welsh in the workplace.

Disability Sport

- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a lot of sports clubs and events were unable to run face to face. However some online events took place where possible. Disability Sport Wales officers across the Central South region teamed up in the summer to run an online inclusive summer holiday programme that ran for four weeks. This consisted of pre-recorded videos and live zoom sessions. A variety of sports and physical activities were included such as football, basketball, martial arts, workouts, family fitness, garden Olympics and much more.

- We have run a series of courses both for club personnel but also young people on employability programmes between January and March 2021. These courses including Sports Leaders, First Aid and Child Protection were run to support those who assist at clubs (or will be) to get the necessary qualifications needed. These were run at no cost to support clubs hit financially by the pandemic and included clubs from some of the most deprived areas of the County Borough. We have also supported over £360k of grant funding for local organisations to survive through lockdown and plan for the future.

Hate Crime/Discrimination

- We continue to regularly engage with groups vulnerable to harassment and/or experiencing community tensions. Groups such as EU citizens, BAME communities and other protected characteristic groups. With Covid-19, we were unable to engage with these groups face to face however, where possible, we continued working with the communities virtually.
- National Hate Crime Awareness Week was in October 2020, and unfortunately we were unable to run our usual week of events and engagement with the public, which prove very effective in raising awareness and encouraging the reporting of hate crime.

Black Lives Matter

- In 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement brought to the world's attention the important issues relating to on-going racism that continues in our society and around the world. One important issue raised during the Black Lives Matter movement related to ensuring that commemorations of history are appropriate to the current time. The Council is committed to working with communities with regards to any statue, monument, plaque, street name or building within the County Borough that may be considered offensive.
- Welsh Government (WG) undertook an audit of all statues and street names and asked all Council's to participate in this to provide information. The Council began work on identifying and reviewing all commemorations within Merthyr Tydfil to ensure they are representative of local people's values and those of a modern, inclusive Council. This information has been fed back into the WG review.

4.0 STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-2024

- 4.1 MTCBC's Strategic Equality Plan for the next four years (2020-2024) reflects our commitment to equality in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, and ensures we are meeting our statutory obligations as found within the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.2 It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering Welsh Language Standards and Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. This continues the work the Council is doing and promotes our commitment to ensuring that we have inclusive communities free from discrimination.

- 4.3 A Strategic Equality Plan Working Group was set up to work together on delivering the actions within the plan and identify any other actions which could be included, discuss issues, risks and update on progress. This group meets quarterly and is made up of officers from across the Council who are delivering actions within the plan.

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 came into force on 31st March 2021 and a number of activities were undertaken prior to this to ensure we met this duty. The duty 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.
- 5.4 We have reviewed the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to ensure it includes consideration for socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions. New sections were added into the IIA which include the socio-economic disadvantage, but also consultation and engagement, and data and evidence. Including these sections ensures that the Council is also taking into consideration what engagement was undertaken, and whether data was used in order to inform the proposal.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 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

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| 7.1 | | Positive Impacts | Negative Impacts | Neutral/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? | | 5 of 5 | 0 of 5 | 0 of 5 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement | | | | |
| 3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language) | | 10 of 10 | 0 of 10 | 0 of 10 |
| 4. Socio-economic Disadvantage | | 0 of 6 | 0 of 6 | 6 of 6 |
| 5. Consultation and Engagement | Undertaken | Due to be Undertaken | Not Required | |
| | 0 of 1 | 0 of 1 | 1 of 1 | |
| 6. Data and Evidence to inform the proposal | Yes | No | | |
| | 1 of 1 | 0 of 1 | | |
| 7. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems | Maintained | Enhanced | Reduced | Neutral/Not Applicable |
| | 0 of 1 | 0 of 1 | 0 of 1 | 1 of 1 |
| Summary | | | | |
| The main positive impacts are: | <p>The Council's Annual Equality Report for 2020-2021 notes progress across all aspects of the Council's equalities work, including progress on delivering its Equality Objectives for 2020-2024.</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 2020-2021 positively impacts on the Council's Well-being Objectives, the five ways of working and the protected characteristics (including Welsh language).</p> | | | |
| The main negative impacts are: | No negative impacts have been identified. | | | |

ELLIS COOPER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE
& CORPORATE SERVICES

| BACKGROUND PAPERS | | |
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| 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.