



FULL COUNCIL - INFORMATION REPORT

Date Written	01 March 2024
Report Author	Amii Cooper
Service Area	Policy and Improvement
Exempt/Non-Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	20 March 2024

Annual Equality Report for 2022-2023

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives for 2020-2024 were approved by Council in 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 2022-2023, 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 2022-2023. Good progress has been made against the actions in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.
- 1.6 Cabinet considered and approved this report on 20th March 2024.

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 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 FOR 2022-2023

- 3.1 The Council's Annual Equality Report for 2022-2023 is attached as Appendix 1. Some of the key points to note include the following:

LGBTQ+

- The Progress flag was raised outside the Civic Centre to celebrate LGBTQ+ History month in February and in June for Pride month as part of the Council's commitment to supporting and engaging with the LGBTQ+ community within Merthyr Tydfil. MTCBC's Community Cohesion Team also organised engagement sessions at The College Merthyr Tydfil and various schools within the County Borough.
- 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. During this period, Covid restrictions were being lifted and Proud Councils were able to attend and represent the network in six Pride 2022 events.
- An online Q&A event was held for all staff during LGBTQ+ History Month. The event featured guest speakers who provided valuable insights into their journeys and careers.

Welsh Language

- To build on the success of the previous annual Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae event, the event in 2022 was arranged in conjunction with partners of the Welsh Education Forum (WEF) and the Welsh Language Strategy Steering Group. It was held in Cyfarthfa park and between 300 and 400 people attended.
- The Council continues to work in partnership with Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg (Learn Welsh Glamorgan) to provide workplace training opportunities for staff and Councillors.

Disability Sport

- A range of new opportunities were developed this year targeting residents that, according to insight and data, are less active. These included disability specific provisions, opportunities for older adults, recreational sessions for females, and specific activities for women going through the Menopause.
- There were lots of new developments in the County Borough. A new Balance Bike Track was installed in Cyfarthfa Park. Also, the next stage of development of the John Sellwood Community Track began with funding secured for permanent floodlighting to make the track accessible during the winter months.

Hate Crime/Discrimination

- Cohesion Officers continued to regularly liaise with the South Wales Police (SWP), and they worked together to raise awareness about hate crime during Hate Crime Awareness Week.
- Initiatives were carried out during this period including holding an engagement session in a local food premise, distributing merchandise and engaging with people from minority backgrounds.

Accessibility

- During January 2022 a software package, Silktide, was implemented to support with making necessary improvements to information and documents published on the corporate website. Silktide helps by testing our web pages for things which could hinder overall user experience such as spelling and grammar mistakes, accessibility compliance and unstructured documents. It also holds a ranking system with a low score meaning improvements are needed and a high score suggests a high likelihood for good accessibility.
- In January 2022, MTCBC was one of the worst performing Councils in the UK with a score of 40%. But with hard work we have significantly improved in our accessibility ranking and in July 2022 we scored 100% which we have maintained. MTCBC is now ranked joint 1st out of all the 403 UK websites tested for accessibility and the only Welsh Council to be in the top 20.

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.
- 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.
- 5.5 Other sections were also added into the IIA. These include consultation & engagement, and data & evidence. Including these sections ensures that consideration is taken regarding whether data was used to inform the proposal.

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	Neutral
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	4 of 4	0 of 4	0 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
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. Decarbonisation	0 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6

6. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems	Maintained	Enhanced	Reduced
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
7. Consultation and Engagement	Undertaken	Due to be Undertaken	Not Required
	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
8. Data and Evidence	Yes		No
	1 of 1		0 of 1
Summary			
The main positive impacts are:	<p>The Council's Annual Equality Report for 2022-2023 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 2022-2023 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.		

Appendix 1 - ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT FOR 2022-2023

ELLIS COOPER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BARRY
CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE
& RESOURCES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Strategic Equality Plan	March 2022	Equalities file storage and 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.