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Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 11 January 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Review of Vale of Glamorgan Council Strategic Equality Objectives for Period 2024-25
Purpose of Report:	To seek Cabinet endorsement of the proposals for reviewing Strategic Equality Objectives for the period 2024-25
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring – Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	The Strategic Equality Objectives are relevant to all wards, individual member consultation is therefore not appropriate
Policy Framework:	The Strategic Equality Objectives set out the Council’s priorities for no more than four years and inform annual service planning processes
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report sets out how the Council intends to review the draft Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-24. • The report sets out proposals for the review of our Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-24 including the involvement of the Equalities Consultative Forum (ECF), Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, the Council’s partners, and other stakeholders. • The report sets out the timetable for reviewing the consultation findings and the development of a final draft for consideration by Scrutiny Committee (Learning and Culture) and Cabinet prior to the publication of the Strategic Equality Objectives within its Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2025 by 31st March, 2024. • The Strategic Equality Plan sets out the Council's strategic equality objectives which are a requirement under the Equality Act 2010 and the specific duties for Wales. They frame how the Council will deliver its equalities vision for ‘working together for a fairer future’ and support the Council’s corporate objectives. 	

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approves the proposals for the review of equality objectives (contained in Appendix A) ahead of wider stakeholder engagement as outlined in this report and equality impact assessment (Appendix B).
2. That Cabinet refers this report and appendices to Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee for their consideration as part of the proposed consultation process as outlined in the body of this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure the Council has reviewed and agreed strategic equality objectives which reflect the work being undertaken across the Council to improve equality and fairness in the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. To enable:-
 - Timely and meaningful consultation on the proposed review of the strategic equality objectives for the period 2024-25, including consideration by the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee.
 - Time for the consultation process to run and for the findings of the same to be fully considered and scrutinised prior to the agreeing and publishing of the strategic equality objectives for 2024 – 2025 by 31st March, 2024.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 includes a public sector equality duty ('the general duty'). The general duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.
- 1.2 In addition to this, the Council (as a listed body under the Act) must comply with the specific duties in Wales, designed to help performance of the general duty and to aid transparency.
- 1.3 The specific duties in Wales cover a range of requirements, including the requirement to draw up and publish a strategic equality plan which includes equality objectives.
- 1.4 The Strategic Equality Plan is a live document and is the vehicle for containing information about equality work that we do. It can be updated on a regular basis as new or updated information becomes available, or we can create links within it to allow people to access the information elsewhere.
- 1.5 There is a requirement to publish an equality objective to address any gender pay gap identified or else publish reasons why it has not done so. It must 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. Our plan has an objective to deal with pay gaps.

- 1.6 The current Plan was developed in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the specific duties for Wales. It sets out the Council's equality objectives and how it will deliver them.
- 1.7 Progress is monitored annually and reported on in the Annual Equality Monitoring Report. This is scrutinised by the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee. This report is published on the Council's website.
- 1.8 The Equality and Human Rights Commission monitors compliance.
- 1.9 Equality objectives must be reviewed no less than every four years, and the Council published its current equality objectives in 2020.
- 1.10 The equality objectives need to be reviewed and objectives for beyond March 2024 to be agreed and in place by 31st March, 2024.
- 1.11 This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the proposed review process and seeks approval to consult on our equality objectives for the period 2024-2025 (Appendix A).

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 A Strategic Equality Plan is the device used to detail information that demonstrates that the Council is meeting the general duty. It must include information on a number of prescribed issues, such as its arrangements to identify and collect relevant equality and employment information, arrangements for assessing the likely impact on protected groups of any policies and practices, and how the authority will promote knowledge and understanding of the general and specific duties among employees.
- 2.2 A key element of the Strategic Equality Plan is the equality objectives. The Council is required to publish objectives for each of the protected characteristics or to publish reasons why not. It is possible to have a smaller number of equality objectives which benefit a number of protected characteristics. We must justify where we do not have an objective for each protected characteristic.
- 2.3 To formulate our draft equality objectives for 2020 – 2024, we used national research from the Equality and Human Rights Commission ('Is Wales Fairer? 2018'), took account of the Welsh Government's draft equality objectives, and listened to the views of members of the Equality Consultative Forum on our current equality objectives. We considered this information in the context of our draft corporate objectives. We prioritised the areas where we believed we could have most impact. We believed this to be a realistic approach given the resources available to us.
- 2.4 We see it as important that the Strategic Equality Plan closely links with the corporate objectives, but the timescale is out of kilter with this as our Corporate Plan runs from 2020 – 2025.
- 2.5 Much has changed since we developed our current equality objectives. These changes include Brexit, Covid, the Black Lives Matter movement, the publication of the Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, its LGBT+ Action Plan,

and its Locked Out report from which we anticipate a Disability Action Plan being published.

- 2.6** It is important that we are able to inform the Strategic Equality Plan with robust data and research. This is needed to ensure our equality objectives make a meaningful impact on areas of known disadvantage nationally and locally. As part of this, we take into account national research and information including the Equality and Human Rights research series 'How Fair is Wales?' and the Welsh Government's equality objectives.
- 2.7** The latest '[Is Wales Fairer? 2023](#)' report was published on 16th November, 2023 and so we have not yet had the opportunity to thoroughly consider this with our Services.
- 2.8** We take into consideration the Welsh Government's equality objectives. Its proposed equality objectives and principles of approach were published on 13th November, 2023 for consultation. Within this document, it states: 'We hope other Public Sector organisations in Wales will develop their own, tailored, local level objectives to match the national approach.'
- 2.9** We also need to take into account our own local research which included the most recent public opinion survey 'Let's Talk about Life in the Vale'. The results of this survey are yet to be fully analysed and reported.
- 2.10** Given these factors, we propose to engage and consult with stakeholders to retain the current equality objectives for a further one-year period. We will review the equality objectives again during April 2024 – 31st March, 2025. This will allow us to take into account recently published information as well as relevant action plans and to develop our equality objectives in line with our corporate objectives. We will have new Corporate Wellbeing Objectives in place by 31st March, 2025 and we propose the same timescale for agreeing new strategic equality objectives.
- 2.11** In the meantime, the proposed Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2025 will set out the steps we intend to take to meet each objective and how we intend to monitor progress. There are strategic level actions for each of the equality objectives. We intend to review those actions with the relevant Services and use the outcome to inform the 2025 Strategic Equality Plan. Once approved there can be no significant changes to equality objectives without further engagement with representative groups and approval of those changes.
- 2.12** We intend to engage with representative groups and stakeholders to explain our proposed approach to the review, seeking their views on this, and to involve them in the more thorough review in the coming year. These groups will include our Equalities Consultative Forum, advocacy groups, Vale 50+ Strategy Forum, Youth Cabinet, and the Public Services Board.
- 2.13** There will be a further report to Cabinet in March to provide an update on this process and seek formal approval of the equality objectives for 2024-25.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Strategic Equality Plan contributes to the national Well-being Goals as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act through the delivery of its strategic equality objectives.
- 3.2** The equality objectives were developed in accordance with the five ways of working.
- 3.3** The involvement of partners and stakeholders in the development and delivery of the equality objectives is important as is the need to work in a more integrated way, recognising the connections across Council services and with other partners.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no direct climate change or nature implications associated with this report. Climate change can have a greater impact on certain groups such as older people, women, poorer people, disabled people, and people in poor health particularly those with respiratory difficulties. In this context, our work to address inequality is important.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The equality objectives are in line with the Council's Corporate Plan objectives which reflect the Council's priorities for 2020 – 2025. This informs the way resources are allocated, whilst also taking account of the availability of resources to deliver it.
- 5.2** The outcome of the Council's budget consultation and revenue settlement from the Welsh Government will inform the content and extent of delivery of the plan in coming years.

Employment

- 5.3** There are no direct employment implications associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.4** The Council is required to review its strategic equality objectives no less than every four years.
- 5.5** The equality impact assessment for the 2020 – 2024 Strategic Equality Plan has been updated and can be found in Appendix B. A new equality impact assessment will accompany the final plan when reported in due course.

- 5.6** The equality impact assessment confirms that the impact of the equality objectives is anticipated to be positive. It acknowledges that there has been a focus on particular protected characteristics where the evidence supports this.

6. Background Papers

[Vale of Glamorgan Strategic Equality Plan](#)

Appendix A

Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 Objectives and Actions

Our first Corporate Well-being Objective is **to work with and for our communities.**

Our Strategic Equality Plan links with this by identifying the communities who are most disadvantaged as identified in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' and through local engagement.

Strategic Equality Objective One

- Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups, but we will focus on disabled, people from ethnic minorities, women and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

These are the groups identified as being most disadvantaged in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018'. (Work)

Expected outcomes

Identified improvements in place.

Stakeholders have information about the improvements and the opportunity for input to support progress.

Actions

1. Identify how the Council currently involves, engages, and communicates with protected groups.
2. Provide advice and training to Services on data analysis.
3. Put in place action plans for improvement.
4. Put in place a communication plan to engage with and update stakeholders on progress.

5. Review how the Equalities Consultative Forum operates and its interface with relevant Council Champions by July 2020.

How we will know how we are doing

1. Range of organisations we engage with is representative of the needs of protected groups.
2. Information and data on how engagement has been used to improve outcomes for protected groups and socio-economic disadvantaged groups.
3. Information and data on the number of front-line staff who have received equality, race, and disability training.
4. Information and data on the results of staff and service user satisfaction surveys by protected characteristic, including how feedback has been used to improve outcomes for protected groups and socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Strategic Equality Objective Two

- Continue to reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2025, and report on both annually.

Protected characteristics

This benefits women and ethnic minorities, groups which 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' identifies as experiencing pay gaps. (Work)

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that a gender pay gap persists in Wales, despite a small narrowing of the gap. Median hourly earnings were higher for men in Wales (£11.36) than women (£9.80) in 2016/17, representing a 13.7% gender pay gap.

The Council has achieved a significant reduction in the gender pay gap which in early 2020 was under 5%.

The Council is starting to establish systems so that it can report on the ethnic minority pay gap and to identify appropriate actions.

Expected outcomes

Gender pay gap continues to improve.

The Council identifies if there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities and takes appropriate action if this is the case.

Actions

1. Continue to monitor gender pay gap every month.

2. Establish process to monitor pay gap for ethnic minorities to identify pay gap.
3. Monitor pay gap for ethnic minorities every month.
4. Progress actions as part of the Council's People Strategy to address where possible issues relating to gender and ethnic minorities pay gaps.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on pay gaps, particularly for gender and race.

Strategic Equality Objective Three

- Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2025.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups but the Council will look at how it can remove barriers to employment, apprenticeships, and work experience for disabled people and young people.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' identifies disabled people as falling further behind in employment. They are under-represented in apprenticeships, and their employment rate is less than half that of non-disabled people. (Work)

Local engagement confirmed that disabled people would like barriers removed to take up flexible employment opportunities.

The Council has identified that there is an under-representation of young people in its workforce.

Expected outcomes

Increase in rates of employment for disabled people and young people across jobs, apprenticeships, and work experience.

Stronger links with the disabled community so that they are aware of the work opportunities available in a timely way.

Continued links with young people's groups such as the Vale Youth Cabinet.

Actions

1. Work with local groups to identify barriers to taking up work opportunities by March 2025.
2. Take action to address barriers and create more opportunity for employment by March 2025.
3. Engage regularly with local disabled and young people's groups to discuss progress.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on the diversity of our staff, including internal progression, explaining how improvements have been achieved.

Strategic Equality Objective Four

- Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2025.

Protected characteristics

This will benefit all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that the number of women gaining employment in higher paid roles has increased and the gender pay gap has narrowed. However, evidence shows high levels of bullying, harassment and negative experiences in the workplace, including sexual harassment and discrimination as a result of pregnancy or maternity. (Work)

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people are more likely to experience discrimination in the workplace (Stonewall's 'LGBT in Britain – Work Report (2018)'). The Council continues to be a member of Stonewall's Workplace Diversity Programme.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that disabled people's employment rate in Wales is less than half that for non-disabled people. (Work)

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that apprenticeships remain strongly gender segregated. Ethnic minorities and disabled people are under-represented in apprenticeships. (Work)

Expected outcomes

Improved score in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index.

'Pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace: Recommendations for change' report is considered and acted on as appropriate.

Increased staff awareness of sexual harassment policy and completion of training.

Improved staff engagement through engagement and innovation groups and the Learning Café.

Recruitment processes in place that challenge gender stereotypes.

Actions

1. Improve lesbian, gay, bi, and trans inclusion in the workplace and measure progress through the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index every year.
2. Progress the six areas of action to address pregnancy and maternity discrimination as set out in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace: Recommendations for change' report by March 2025.
3. Promote the Council's sexual harassment policy and e-learning training opportunities by March 2025, monitoring and reporting on training completion rates.
4. Hold regular meetings of the Corporate Engagement and Innovation Forum with staff to encourage wellbeing and good working practices, innovation, and improved communication.
5. Hold regular meetings of Local Engagement and Innovation Groups to increase the ability of staff to influence the direction of the Council.
6. Hold regular meetings of the Learning Café - the Council's network for sharing ideas, promoting best practice, equipping staff with the skills and knowledge to cope with workplace challenges, and supporting career progression.

7. Promote employment opportunities in a way that challenges gender stereotypes.

How we will know how we are doing

Staff satisfaction surveys.

Action plans from staff Engagement and Innovation groups.

Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

Workforce data.

Strategic Equality Objective Five

- Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that women remain under-represented and there is limited data on other groups such as disabled people and ethnic minorities.

(Participation)

Expected outcomes

Councillors have up to date knowledge of equality issues to inform decision making.

Equality and LGBT Champions supporting priority equality issues such as improvement in inclusivity of workplace.

Actions

1. Provide all Councillors with equality training by July 2022 and as appropriate thereafter.
2. Engage with elected member Equality and LGBT Champions to identify how and where they can confidently support equality issues.

How we will know how we are doing

Number of elected members who have completed equality training.

Range of equality issues supported by elected member Equality and LGBT Champions.

Our second Corporate Well-being Objective is **to support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth.**

Our Strategic Equality Plan aims to support learning and employment for protected groups, focusing on those who are most disadvantaged.

We want residents to have a fair opportunity to become well-educated, skilled, and to achieve their potential as they develop and learn. We are committed to encouraging people's ambitions and to ensuring that individuals and communities can prosper and achieve their best.

Strategic Equality Objective Six

- Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that attainment gaps persist for pupils in receipt of free school meals and children with additional learning needs. (Education)

Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that young women and girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and children with additional learning needs are more likely to be at risk of experiencing identity-based bullying. (Education)

Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that poorer children, children with additional learning needs, White children and children of mixed ethnicity have higher than average exclusion rates. (Education)

Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that subject choices remain highly gendered, with girls being much less likely to continue studying science and mathematics after school. (Education)

Expected outcomes

Reduction in attainment gaps.

Programmes in place to tackle identity-based bullying.

Reduced exclusion rates for children with certain protected characteristics, including disabled children and mixed ethnicity children.

Actions

1. Deliver and evaluate programmes and interventions aimed at addressing attainment gaps to make sure they have a positive impact on socio-economic disadvantage, disability, sex, race, other protected characteristics and young carers.
2. Seek to minimise exclusion rates for children with certain protected characteristics, including socio-economic disadvantage, ethnicity and disability.
3. Analyse bullying data gathered by schools, including racist bullying, to identify trends and review anti-bullying strategies so that there are effective solutions in place.
4. Work with partners to deliver programmes which support people to prepare for employment.

How we will know how we are doing

1. Information and data on how programmes and interventions have affected attainment gaps on children and young people with protected characteristics and who are socio-economically disadvantaged.
2. Information and data on number of children excluded by protected characteristic and socio-economic disadvantage.
3. Analysis of school bullying data showing trends and review of anti-bullying strategies to address findings.
4. Information and data on outcomes of programmes supporting people to prepare for employment.

Our third Corporate Well-being Objective is **to support people at home and in their community**.

The Strategic Equality Plan supports the safety and well-being of people at home and in their community, with particular regard to protected groups identified as disadvantaged in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' and our own local information and data.

We work in partnership to make sure people are safe at home and in the community and can make choices that support their overall well-being. We give people the necessary advice, care and support when they need it.

Strategic Equality Objective Seven

- Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that the number of recorded hate crimes has increased across all protected characteristics in Wales, with evidence to suggest a spike in race and religion hate crimes following trigger events. (Justice and personal security)

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that there has been a sharp increase in the number of sexual and domestic violence offences reported to and recorded by the police since 2015. (Justice and personal security)

Expected outcomes

Processes in place to tackle hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Improved awareness amongst people in the community of the advice and support available to them.

Actions

1. Work with partners to deliver preventative measures and provide advice and support to people who experience abuse, harassment, hate crime or bullying, including women from ethnic minorities, disabled women, women with complex needs, men, young people and children.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on preventative processes, including outcomes for protected groups.

Information and data on relevant advice and support provided to people experiencing abuse, harassment, hate crime or bullying, focusing on groups identified as in most need.

Information and data on number of people accessing advice and support.

Information and data on progress with Regional Strategy for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2018 - 2023.

Strategic Equality Objective Eight

- Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that disabled people face a shortage of accessible and adaptable homes and long delays in making existing homes accessible.

(Living standards)

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that rough sleeping in Wales has increased and there are high levels of homelessness. (Living standards)

A report commissioned by Ending Youth Homelessness Cymru was published in August 2019 - 'Out on the Streets. LGBTQ+ & Youth Homelessness in Wales'. This report identifies that the LGBTQ+ community is disproportionately affected by youth homelessness and young people are more likely to be made homeless as a result of family breakdown than their non-LGBT peers.

Expected outcomes

More adapted and accessible affordable housing properties available that are suitable for disabled and/or elderly people.

Existing homes made accessible in a reasonable time scale where adaptations are needed.

Improvement in percentage of homeless cases prevented.

Actions

1. Consider evidence and feedback on barriers to accommodation and take action as appropriate.
2. Develop and implement an Older Persons Housing Strategy to meet the needs of the Vale's ageing population.
3. Implement an action plan to ensure our services are more accessible to the young LGBTQ communities.
4. Provide our staff with specialist training to enable them to provide appropriate service that meets the needs the young LGBTQ communities.

How we will know how we are doing

Additional number of adapted/accessible affordable housing properties delivered each year.

Information and data on preventative programmes, including outcomes for protected groups.

Information and data on number of people accessing advice and support.

Information and data on housing needs by protected characteristic.

Information and data on homelessness in Vale of Glamorgan.

Strategic Equality Objective Nine

- Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups and in particular, older and disabled people.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that poor transport and digital infrastructure in rural areas is affecting people's ability to participate in all aspects of life, particularly households without cars, older people in rural areas, and disabled people.

(Participation)

Expected outcomes

Improved accessibility of local transport.

Actions

1. Engage with people to identify transport access issues.
2. Develop a plan to address transport access issues as appropriate.
3. Provide training to Council staff on how to help meet the needs of disabled passengers.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on preventative programmes, including outcomes for protected groups.

Information and data on number of people accessing advice and support.

Information and data on measures taken to improve transport accessibility.

Information and data on service user satisfaction.

Information and data on how Council staff have been trained to have the knowledge and skills to help meet the needs of disabled passengers.

Our fourth Corporate Well-being Objective is **to respect, enhance and enjoy our environment.**

The Strategic Equality Plan seeks to ensure our local environment can be enjoyed by a diverse range of people, including disabled people.

We understand how our environment contributes to individual and community well-being. We are committed to respecting and enhancing our environment to ensure we all have access to our local area, know about it, and can enjoy it.

Strategic Equality Objective Ten

- Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

Protected characteristics

This will benefit all protected groups, particularly disabled people for whom there are more barriers.

Expected outcomes

Residents and visitors will be able to access information on the natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including how accessible these are and what facilities are available so they can plan their visits.

Actions

1. Consider the needs of people with protected characteristics when working with community groups and other partners to provide and sustain local facilities.
2. Promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage so that where possible, they are accessible and known to all protected groups.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on promotion strategies.

Information and data on community groups and other partners we have engaged with to promote environment and heritage.

Information and data on toilets and Changing Places.

Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix B

1. What are you assessing?

The Council's Strategic Equality Plan's equality objectives for 2024 - 2025

2. Who is responsible?

Name	Rob Jones	Job Title	Operational Manager for Corporate Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development
Team	Corporate Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development	Directorate	Corporate Resources

3. When is the assessment being carried out?

Date of start of assessment	May 2019 Updated December 2023
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4. Describe the proposal?

What is the purpose of the proposal?

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 sets out equality objectives for the Council. It details how we will meet those objectives and show how the Council will work together with its partners for a fairer future.

The Council proposes to keep these objectives in place for a further 12 months so that it can evaluate evidence that has recently or will soon become available and to develop new ones in conjunction with the Corporate Plan objectives.

Why do you need to put it in place?

Equality Impact Assessment

Under the specific equality duties for Wales, we must review the equality objectives no less frequently than every four years.

Do we need to commit significant resources to it (such as money or staff time)

The Strategic Equality Plan sets out the Council's equality priorities and high-level supporting actions. The development of the equality objectives requires engagement across the Council and with external stakeholders.

The Council's equality objectives reflect the Council's priorities and inform the way we allocate resources, taking into account the availability of resources to deliver it. The outcome of the Council's budget consultation and revenue settlement from the Welsh Government will inform the content and extent of delivery of the Plan in coming years.

What are the intended outcomes of the proposal?

The equality objectives provided a set of equality priorities for the Council for the period 2020 – 2024 and a framework for the Council to work with its partners for a fairer future.

Our proposal is that we continue to work on these priorities for another twelve months. They are long term objectives and there is further work that we can do.

Who does the proposal affect?

The equality objectives affect Vale residents and those who visit and work in the Vale. They are high-level strategic objectives encompassing all Council services. We will include more detailed actions in Service Plans. Changes to services and policies across Council Directorates will be the subject of more detailed equality impact assessments which will need to explore the potential impact.

Equality Impact Assessment

Will the proposal affect how other organisations work?

We will deliver many of the activities arising from the equality objectives in partnership. We will work closely with other organisations to deliver parts of this plan.

Will the proposal affect how you deliver services?

The equality objectives set out the Council's equality priorities for a four year period which we would like to extend by a year. They will influence and shape service delivery across the Council.

Will the proposal impact on other policies or practices?

The equality objectives set out the Council's equality priorities for the next year which will in turn influence policies and practices across the Council.

Can you change the proposal so that it further promotes equality of opportunity and fosters good relations?

The purpose of the equality objectives is to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

As part of the engagement and consultation process, we will ask for people's views on retaining our current objectives for another year. Dates have been amended accordingly.

There are ten equality objectives which align with our four corporate objectives:

To work with and for our communities

1. Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.
2. Continue to reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2025, and report on both annually.

Equality Impact Assessment

3. Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2025.
4. Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2025.
5. Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

6. Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

To support people at home and in their community

7. Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
8. Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.
9. Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

10. Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

How will you achieve the proposed changes?

Equality Impact Assessment

Council Services will deliver the Plan by working together and with the local community and other partners to ensure we deliver services that best meet the diverse needs of the community.

Who will deliver the proposal?

Council Services will deliver the equality objectives.

How will you know whether you have achieved the proposal's purpose?

We will monitor the Strategic Equality Plan through the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and the Council's Performance Management arrangements. We will report progress to our Corporate Management Team, our Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet.

5. What evidence are you using?

Engagement (with internal and external stakeholders)

We attended and hosted engagement meetings in the Vale between May 2019 and January 2020 to help us develop the draft Strategic Equality Plan. This included meetings of our Equalities Consultative Forum, attendance at a Youth Cabinet Meeting, and meetings with local disability groups.

Engagement work started in May 2019 with our Equalities Consultative Forum where key stakeholders representing the interests of protected groups helped us to consider which areas of the 2016 – 2020 Plan were still important and needed to be included in the next plan. This helped us to draft a plan for consultation with four broad equality objectives with supporting actions.

We recognised that consultation through an on-line survey and social media campaign may not be accessible to everyone, so we also met with groups through the consultation

Equality Impact Assessment

period. This included the Equalities Consultative Forum, the Vale Youth Cabinet, New Horizons, and Vale People First.

- External Stakeholder Event (Barry Civic Offices)

The feedback and information gathered across our engagement activities was reflected in the final version of the Corporate Plan 2020-2025.

We intend to consult on our proposal to keep our current equality objectives until March 2025 during January and February 2024.

Consultation (with internal and external stakeholders)

We used an online survey to consult people about these equality objectives between December 2019 and January 2020. We promoted this on the Council's website and through our social media channels.

During this consultation period, we sent the Plan to a number of stakeholders for their comment and to send to their stakeholders.

Within the Council, we promoted the on-line survey on our intranet, and consulted with our senior management team, officers responsible for implementing key areas of the plan, trade unions, and elected members.

We intend to consult key stakeholders in January and February about our proposal to keep the current objectives in place until March 2025.

National data and research

The key piece of national research that we have used is the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report 'Is Wales Fairer? 2018'. This report brings together evidence to assess levels of inequality in Wales and what progress has been made to improve outcomes for protected groups since the Commission's last report in 2015.

The report looks at outcomes for people for education, health, living standards, justice and security, work, and participation in politics and public life. It makes recommendations

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for action, including for the public sector. We have taken these into account in developing our equality objectives.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's report 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' was published on 16 November. We will be taking this research into account as we develop our next set of equality objectives during 2024/25.

Local data and research

The Strategic Equality Plan includes data from the Census, population estimates and population projections for the Vale of Glamorgan. This has helped us to identify, for example, that we have an ageing population and that the number of young people we employ is not representative of the local population. This, in turn, is reflected in the focus of relevant equality objectives.

Working in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board an [online Evidence Base](#) has been developed which enables the review of demographic, economic, social and environmental data sets specific to the Vale of Glamorgan. Key indicator sets are monitored through the Evidence Base to enable the appropriate response to data trends.

The majority of data relevant to protected characteristics was drawn from the national 2011 Census to inform the development of the 2020 - 2024 Plan. A new national Census was undertaken in 2021.

The Council has recently undertaken a 'Let's Talk about Life in the Vale' survey, the results of which are yet to be analysed.

We will take this information into account as we develop our next set of equality objectives during 2024/25.

6. [How robust is the evidence?](#)

Does it show what the impact will be (positive and negative)?

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The aim of the Council's work is to have a positive impact on residents, visitors and workers in the Vale of Glamorgan. The equality objectives set out the priorities of the Council in working towards more positive outcomes for people with protected characteristics and / or who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

For each of the equality objectives, there is an outline of the positive outcomes expected from achieving them.

The equality objectives align with the Council's well-being objectives to be achieved between 2020 and 2025:

- Objective One: To work with and for our communities
- Objective Two: To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
- Objective Three: To support people at home and in their community
- Objective Four: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

The Council is confident that, in working in a more integrated approach towards these 4 objectives and its ten equality objectives, it can influence a wide range of activities and services across the Vale. The Council will be working towards making a positive difference to the well-being of residents and visitors. Working to achieve the equality objectives will also help maximise our contribution to delivering the national well-being goals.

What are the gaps?

There are 35 high level actions that outline how we will work to achieve the equality objectives. More detail on how the 35 actions will be achieved is included in the Annual Delivery Plan which is published each Spring. The Annual Development Plan actions will be translated into actions detailed in Service and Team plans across the Council. The performance against actions in Service Plans are monitored, reported and scrutinised on a quarterly basis.

What will you do about this?

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We meet with officers in relevant services to identify gaps in data or information and to agree what needs to be done to deliver the supporting actions for each equality objective. Each year, we gather information on progress in our Annual Equality Monitoring Report.

We also use the Annual Development Plan to outline the specific work that Council Services does to achieve the objectives and high level actions. The Annual Development Plan is an annual document so areas of focus are identified in part through the Service Planning process with Directors, Heads of Service and Operational Managers.

What monitoring data will you collect?

The monitoring data we collect varies for each Council Service. Examples of this can be found in our [Annual Equality Monitoring Reports](#). These reports include a detailed employment report with information about the recruitment, pay and employment of our staff analysed by protected characteristics.

Progress against the Annual Delivery Plan is reported each year, including data on progress towards the equality objectives.

How often will you analyse and report on this?

We analyse data annually for the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and the Annual Delivery Plan. We will publish this information on our website.

During the year, each Council Service will have its own timetable for analysing the information it collects.

Where will you publish monitoring data and reports?

We publish our reports on the Council's website.

We discuss progress with our Equalities Consultative Forum.

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7. [Impact](#)

Is there an impact?

The purpose of the equality objectives is to 'work together for a fairer future' and to have a positive impact on protected groups within the Council and the Vale of Glamorgan.

The equality objectives cover all Council Services and aim to improve outcomes for protected groups and people who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

The Welsh Government commenced the socio-economic duty on 31 March 2021. We anticipated this and incorporated actions to focus on those in our community who are socio-economically disadvantaged. We will strengthen this as we develop our equality objectives in the year ahead.

If there is no impact, what is the justification for thinking this? Provide evidence.

If there is likely to be an impact, what is it?

Age –The aim is to have a positive impact on people of different ages, for example, through:

- improving employment opportunities for young people;
- reducing attainment gaps for young people;
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- reducing exclusion rates for children and young people;
- supporting young people to prepare for employment;
- providing more accessible housing services for young LGBT people;
- meeting the housing needs of older people;
- looking at barriers to accommodation for older people;
- addressing issues relating to transport accessibility.

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Disability – The aim is to have a positive impact on people with disabilities, for example, through:

- improving engagement and communication with disabled groups;
- improving employment opportunities;
- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- reducing attainment and exclusion rates for children with Additional Learning Needs and disabilities;
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- addressing issues relating to transport accessibility.

Gender reassignment, including gender identity – The aim is to have a positive impact on gender identity, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- continuing our work to make progress against the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index;
- developing more accessible housing services for young LGBT people;
- improving engagement and communication with all protected groups;
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions.

Marriage and civil partnership (discrimination only) – The aim is to have a positive impact on marriage and civil partnership, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council.

Pregnancy and Maternity – The aim is to have a positive impact on pregnancy and maternity, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- progressing the recommendations in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace: Recommendations for change'.

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Race – The aim is to have a positive impact on race, for example, through:

- progressing actions to address an ethnic minority pay gap (if we identify there is one);
- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- reducing exclusion rates for children and young people from ethnic minorities;
- developing processes to address hate crime.

Religion and belief – The aim is to have a positive impact on religion and belief, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- developing processes to address hate crime.

Sex – The aim is to have a positive impact on sex, for example, through:

- continuing to address the gender pay gap;
- progressing the recommendations in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace: Recommendations for change'.
- Promoting employment opportunities in a way that challenges gender stereotypes;
- developing processes to address hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Sexual orientation - The aim is to have a positive impact on sexual orientation, for example, through:

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- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- continuing our work to make progress against the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index;
- developing more accessible housing services for young LGBT people;
- improving engagement and communication with all protected groups;
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- developing processes to address hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Welsh language – The aim is to have a positive impact on the Welsh language, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- promoting the cultural heritage of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Human rights – The aim is to have a positive impact on human rights by considering the needs of protected groups and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged and seeking to better meet these through achieving its equality objectives.

How do you know?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

As stated earlier in this document, we have developed our equality objectives using national and local evidence to pressing identify areas of inequality. We have explained above how we think there will be a positive benefit to protected groups.

We have outlined expected outcomes and how we will know how we are doing. We will use these to assess our progress together with data and information from the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and the Annual Development Plan.

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What can be done to promote a positive impact?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

We believe that achieving the work outlined in the equality objectives will result in better outcomes for protected groups. One of our equality objectives is to improve how we involve, engage and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions. As part of this process, we will be able to promote the work we are doing to achieve our equality objectives and maintain an ongoing dialogue with protected groups to inform our continuing work throughout the lifespan of this Plan.

What can be done to lessen the risk of a negative impact?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

There is no evidence to suggest that there would be negative impacts arising from our work on our equality objectives. However, regular monitoring through gathering information and data, and ongoing engagement should alert us to any issues so that we can address these as they arise.

Is there a need for more favourable treatment to achieve equal outcomes? (Disability only)

We have tried to be inclusive in the way that we have developed the equality objectives they are intended to have positive outcomes for all protected groups as outlined above. However, the evidence we have gathered through research, engagement, and consultation had identified that some issues affect some protected groups more than others. Where this is the case, we have explained this within the Plan and have identified appropriate actions to address this.

Will the impact be positive, negative or neutral?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

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In delivering the equality objectives, the Council will seek to improve outcomes for protected groups. There should be no negative impact as a result of the implementing them.

As has been set out in the previous sections of this equality impact assessment, the Council has sought to ensure that a diverse a range of people has been given the opportunity to feed into, shape and influence the equality objectives. How the equality objectives are intended to impact upon these different groups has been outlined in the previous sections.

In implementing the equality objectives, the Council will seek to continue the conversations that have been started with those who have been involved through engagement and consultation.

8. [Monitoring ongoing impact](#)

Date you will monitor progress

We will monitor progress through the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and Annual Delivery Plan as described above.

Measures that you will monitor

We will use the indicators included in the Plan and appropriate local and national performance indicator measures to assess progress made towards achieving our equality objectives.

Date you will review implemented proposal and its impact

Work to achieve the equality objectives and actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan will be ongoing until March 2025. We will monitor progress annually.

We propose that we review the equality objectives in the next twelve months so that we have a new set in place by 31 March 2025.

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9. Further action as a result of this equality impact assessment

Possible Outcomes	Say which applies
No major change	No major change applies
Adjust the policy	
Continue the policy	
Stop and remove the policy	

10. Outcomes and Actions

Recommend actions to senior management team

The equality objectives are relevant to all Services across the Council. Staff should be made aware of the proposal to keep the current equality objectives for another year and Services should identify how they will continue to contribute towards the achievement of the objectives and report on progress at least annually.

Outcome following formal consideration of proposal by senior management team

Services will continue to work on implementing the equality objectives for another year until they are further reviewed.

11. Important Note

Where you have identified impacts, you must detail this in your Cabinet report when seeking approval for your proposal.

12. Publication

Where will you publish your approved proposal and equality impact assessment?

Equality Impact Assessment

The current Equality webpage will be updated on the Vale of Glamorgan Council's website: https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/equalities/equalities.aspx

In addition to being available online, copies of the Strategic Equality Plan will be available in Council offices and public libraries throughout the Vale.

13. Authorisation

Approved by (name)	Rob Jones
Job Title (senior manager)	Operational Manager for Corporate Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development
Date of approval	18 December 2023
Date of review	March 2025