

# **The Vale of Glamorgan Council**

## **Cabinet Meeting: 11 April, 2016**

### **Report of the Leader**

## **Revised Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives 2016 - 2020**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To obtain approval of the revised Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives ([Appendix A](#)).

### **Recommendation**

1. That the revised Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives as attached to this report are adopted and publicised.

### **Reason for the Recommendation**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Strategic Equality Plan ([Appendix A](#)) and equality objectives contained within it following a period of consultation.

### **Background**

2. 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. 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. The specific duties in Wales cover a range of requirements, including the requirement to draw up and publish a strategic equality plan and include in it equality objectives (including pay objectives).

### **Relevant Issues and Options**

3. 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.

4. 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 and this is the approach we have taken. It must also set out the steps it intends to take to meet each objective and how it intends to monitor progress. The Strategic Equality Plan comments on this.
5. There is also 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.
6. The Council first published a Strategic Equality Plan in April 2012. We are required to review the equality objectives within it not less than every four years. At the end of 2015, we carried out consultation and engagement to find out what people wanted us to do: to carry on working on the objectives, to carry on with changes, or to develop new objectives. The conclusion was that we should carry on working on the objectives already identified with some suggested amendments. There were no suggestions for alternative equality objectives.
7. Taking into account the above feedback and the Equality and Human Rights Commission's updated research 'Is Wales Fairer?', we have retained the original equality objectives with some development, particularly in respect of related actions and added one more equality objective. We have chosen to add an equality objective on closing attainment gaps in education as the Welsh national research lists this as a priority and we have an action within our corporate plan relating to this.
8. Once approved, there can be no significant changes to the equality objectives without further engagement with representative groups and approval of those changes.
9. 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.

### **Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)**

10. As with any area of work, human resources are required to implement the Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives. This includes collecting and analysing information, engaging with the public and providing equality training. The work will be undertaken within existing financial resources.

### **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

11. The equality duty contributes to the sustainable development principle of ensuring a strong, healthy and just society.

### **Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)**

12. The Equality Act 2010 created a public sector duty, replacing the race, disability and gender equality duties. The duty came into force in April 2011. The duty covers age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Under the general duty, public sector organisations must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - advance equality of opportunity between different groups;
  - foster good relations between different groups.
13. The duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination also covers marriage and civil partnership.
  14. The Equality Act gives Welsh Ministers the power to impose specific duties through regulations. The specific duties are legal requirements designed to help public bodies meet the general duty. These were published in April 2011.
  15. The Equality and Human Rights Commission published guidance on the public sector equality duty for Wales on 8 June 2011. It performs a regulatory role to ensure that listed bodies comply with the duty. It carries out an annual monitoring exercise each year to assess the performance of public bodies against the duty.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

16. The Strategic Equality Plan will assist in promoting community cohesion by meeting the diverse needs of local people and creating equality of opportunity.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)**

17. The Strategic Equality Plan sets out how the Council is working to meet the general duty and public sector equality duty for Wales. The equality objectives detail the work that the Council is prioritising to address the concerns raised during the engagement process and the national equality agenda.
18. Implications for protected groups are reflected in the equality impact assessment scoping document and full assessment (Appendix [B](#) and [C](#)).

### **Corporate/Service Objectives**

19. It is a corporate priority to work with partners to promote good governance and ensure a coordinated approach to delivering the shared vision for the future of the Vale of Glamorgan. This plan supports the objectives:
  - to tackle those issues that matter most to local people, with customer focus at the heart of the council's service delivery;
  - to provide leadership in representing and promoting the interests of the local community and engage effectively with citizens and stakeholders;
  - to promote through partnership working greater cooperation with other organisations that deliver services in the Vale, thereby improving the quality of life of its citizens.
20. It is a corporate priority to manage the Council's workforce, money, information and assets efficiently, effectively and securely. This plan supports the objectives:
  - to provide effective corporate management and to improve the use of resources in meeting our strategic objectives;
  - to manage, support and develop our employees to enable them to deliver and maintain the Council's services to the highest possible standard;
  - to make best use of our assets and to procure good, sustainable services and facilities.

## **Policy Framework and Budget**

21. This is a matter for Executive decision.

## **Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)**

22. We have undertaken consultation and engagement to help us review the equality objectives. A report on the outcomes can be found in the appendix to the Strategic Equality Plan. In short, feedback indicated that we should continue working on the same equality objectives but to develop these to move forward.

23. We invited local organisations representative of the protected groups to comment on our equality objectives. There was also consultation with staff and the public through our website.

## **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

24. Corporate Resources

## **Background Papers**

Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plans, A Guide for Listed Public Authorities in Wales (Equality and Human Rights Commission).

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publication/equality-objectives-and-strategic-equality-plans-guide-listed-public-authorities-wales>

## **Contact Officer**

Nicola Hinton, Corporate Equalities Officer

## **Officers Consulted**

Head of Performance and Development  
Head of Human Resources  
Head of School Improvement and Inclusion  
Head of Housing and Building Services  
Operational Manager for Customer Relations  
Senior Media Officer  
Principal Community Safety Officer  
Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Co-ordinator  
Corporate Management Team

## **Responsible Officer:**

Rob Thomas, Managing Director