

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 24 April, 2017

Report of the Leader

Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2015 - 2016

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval of the Annual Equality Monitoring Report ([Appendix A](#)).

Recommendation

1. That the Annual Equality Monitoring Report for 2015 - 16, attached at [Appendix A](#) to this report, be approved for publication.

Reason for the Recommendation

1. So that progress towards meeting the public sector equality duty and the specific duties for Wales can be published and is available for scrutiny by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and others.

Background

2. The Equality Act 2010 includes a public sector equality duty (the 'general duty') as well as specific duties for Wales. The specific duties include the requirement to publish an annual report by 31 March each year. The annual report must set out:
 - the steps the Council has taken to identify and collect relevant information;
 - how the Council has used this information in meeting the three aims of the general duty;
 - any reasons for not collecting relevant information;
 - a statement on the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information;
 - progress towards fulfilling each of the Council's equality objectives;
 - a statement on the effectiveness of the steps that the Council has taken to fulfil each of its equality objectives;
 - specified employment information, including information on training and pay (unless it has already published this information elsewhere).

3. The Council may include in its annual report any other matter it feels is relevant to meeting the general duty and specific duties.
4. The Council is required to produce and publish a report on progress with equality issues annually by 31 March.

Relevant Issues and Options

Progress since the last report

5. We continue to monitor the protected characteristics of service users in the same services that we have reported in previous years. Last year, there was one exception: corporate complaints. This year, corporate complaints are included in the report. However, in previous years, we have reported on Public Protection Services and this is not included this year. This is because the service was restructured and has become Shared Regulatory Services. The intention is to resume equality monitoring now that the restructure has been achieved.
6. A new form was introduced this year to gather the information needed for the report. The format encourages services to show how they have used the data gathered to make improvements to services.
7. The Library Service has used the information gathered to improve its service for those who want books in languages other than English. It has also used it in consideration of establishing community libraries.
8. Adult and Children Services have found that the information on age, gender and disability is particularly useful in planning services.
9. Housing uses equality data for equality impact assessments which are carried whenever new services are being commissioned and when existing services are being decommissioned or reshaped. Its equality impact assessments have ensured that protected groups are taken into account when implementing any new change in services.
10. For Housing Benefit and Council Tax, age and disability are particularly important for calculating benefits. The data is extracted throughout the year to monitor caseload and trends. This assists with budgetary planning for Council Tax Reduction as this is now a local scheme, and no longer fully funded by central government. This information also helps to plan for the impact of other welfare reforms which may impact on the discretionary housing payments budget.
11. Revenues and Benefits carry out a customer service survey. This could be improved by asking about protected characteristics. This would allow the feedback to be analysed by each protected group to see if there are needs specific to that group which need to be met.
12. The Youth Service has used the trend of equality data from a number of years to support the delivery of a disability youth club at Ysgol Y Deri. It is a specialist youth provision for young people with disabilities.
13. The Registration Service carries out a customer survey and asks people to complete an equality form at the same time. Unfortunately, the equality information has not been used in conjunction with the survey comments to be able to analyse the results by protected characteristic. However, this will be remedied so that this information will be available in the future.

14. The Corporate Complaints Service has carried out a customer survey and analysed the outcome by protected characteristic. The information is being used to make improvements to the service. For example, it was noted that most people returning the equality form were older women. To encourage more young people to use the complaints process, and recognising that they may be more likely to use electronic means to communicate, the Service will promote the mobile app and the on-line complaint form.
15. The Communication Team collects equality data when they carry out surveys. They often do this on behalf of other Services and so it is the Services that will use the data to make the improvements. During 2015 / 16, it carried out 25 surveys. They have regular engagement with protected groups, such as the Vale 50+ Forum, Vale youth Forum and the LGBT Coffee Group. They make sure that the surveys are in accessible formats and collect equality data at the same time. They carry out stakeholder mapping to make sure that they are engaging with key stakeholders including protected groups.
16. We continue to undertake equality impact assessments and there is a section explaining how we do this in the report. It provides a link to our website so that people can view our completed and published equality impact assessments.
17. Between January and April 2016, we ran equality impact assessment training for managers and other officers involved in this type of work. We also made this training available to Members.
18. Our Older People's Strategy Co-ordinator worked with people and businesses to help make Barry a dementia friendly community. This involves people training or businesses meeting standards to become dementia friendly.
19. Leisure Services reported that there were 47 groups that offer sports that disabled people can join in or which are especially for disabled people. A number of these clubs achieved Insport accreditation: 4 at Ribbon standard; 7 at Bronze standard; and 1 at Silver standard.
20. The Human Resource (HR) Service has a workforce plan in place that includes actions to reduce the gender pay gap. In the last two years, it has reduced from 9.95 % to 9.80%. If draft regulations are put in place for public sector organisations in Wales, HR is preparing to report on the gender pay gap in accordance with these from 31 March 2018.

Following the withdrawal of funding for its original apprenticeship scheme, HR has been looking at how we can develop a scheme with other local authorities and external partners. The apprentice levy will come into place in April 2017. HR will look at new national and Welsh Government Schemes.

21. The extent to which data is analysed and used to improve services continues to be variable. This is for a variety of reasons including systems that do not support the analysis of information, gaps in staff knowledge, reluctance of service users to complete more forms and concern that a survey of users may not reflect a true picture. However, there has been progress since we began collecting data. The ability or plans of some service areas to disaggregate customer survey information by protected characteristic is moving us forward. That services are using this information to inform equality impact assessments is also encouraging.
22. The Council does not have comprehensive information on all the areas that it must report on but the report explains what we are doing to address this.

23. Schools are listed public authorities under the Public Sector Equality Duty specific duties in Wales. As such, they are responsible for producing their own annual equality monitoring reports. They have received guidance from the School Improvement Service and the Welsh Local Government Association. This is monitored by the Learning and Skills Directorate.

Strategic Equality Plan Objectives

24. The report shows our position in respect of equality objectives at the end of the life of the Strategic Equality Plan 2012 - 2016. We have retained and further developed these objectives for the current plan 2016 - 2020. The bullet points below summarise our position.
- A number of services continue to collect data and monitor access to services. We continue to use the corporate form so that there is a more consistent approach to gathering information and it is line with Welsh government guidance. We have worked with a group of core services to collect and analyse information about protected characteristics each year. We have increased the number of services that report in this way in the last four years. It is important that we continue to identify areas where data collection is useful and that we improve our analysis and use of this information.
 - To improve access to public documents, we have reviewed the guidance we have and updated it. This has been published on our website for staff to use and we have told them about it in various briefings. We are updating a training course on using plain language. The course will tell people about this guidance.
 - We have been raising awareness of equality responsibilities and the needs of protected groups. We run a training programme for staff, tailored where necessary to the needs of particular teams. This is supplemented by the availability of e-learning modules. We raise public awareness through a notice board in the Civic Office reception area, use of social media and participation in other appropriate events or campaigns, and use of TREV (The Reassurance and Engagement Vehicle) in communities. This work continues.
 - To involve a diverse range of people in policy and service development, we have produced guidance on engagement to ensure we have feedback that will help us understand the impact of our work. There is an e-learning module on equality impact assessment which covers the need to engage with people. We had a programme of equality impact assessment training sessions for all staff involved in the process. .
 - To encourage more reporting of harassment and discrimination, we promoted Victim Support's helpline number. We have put up posters, told people about hate crime at meetings and events, and on our website. We check how many reports of hate crime there are. We have started to look at how many complaints we get from people with protected characteristics. We continue with this work.
 - To increase awareness and confidence in using domestic abuse support services, we continue to work with Atal y Fro and others. We help to promote the service through Safer Vale. We have produced a domestic workplace policy and trained managers on this policy. We have put in place a plan to prevent domestic abuse, support victims and increase awareness and reporting. We have run campaigns like

'Behind closed doors' and White Ribbon' campaigns. We are working on improving data.

- We have included actions to address the gender pay gap in our workforce plan. We also have a job evaluation scheme in place. The employment information section of the report shows that the gender pay gap is less than it was in 2011 and in the last two years it has reduced from 9.95% to 9.8%. We will continue to monitor this.
 - In our annual equality reports, we have reported on a range of employment information: pay for men and women; different age groups, gender reassignment, national identity, race and ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, marital status and Welsh language ability.
25. Equality maintains a high profile as we progress the Strategic Equality Plan and work to ensure that we carry out equality impact assessments of the budget cuts and the 'reshaping services' agenda.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

26. Officer time is needed to collect, analyse and report on equality and employment information on a regular basis. The benefit is a better understanding of how to target resources to deliver services which best meet the needs of users.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

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

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

28. 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.
29. The duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination also covers marriage and civil partnership.
30. 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.
31. 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. If the Equality and Human Rights Commission believes that the Council has not complied with a public sector equality duty, it has the power to seek compliance.

Crime and Disorder Implications

32. The work reported upon in the Annual Equality Monitoring Report will assist in promoting community cohesion by meeting the diverse needs of local people and improving equality of opportunity.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

33. The Annual Equality Monitoring Report sets out how the Council has been working to meet the general duty and public sector equality duty for Wales.
34. The Council is required to collect, use and publish equality and employment information to help understand how its policies, practices and decisions affect individuals who share one or more of the protected characteristics. This process is essential if the Council is to comply with the requirements of the public sector specific equality duties in Wales. The information is required to accurately inform the equality impact assessment process, the Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives.

Corporate/Service Objectives

35. It was a corporate priority, included in the Corporate Plan 2013 - 2017, to work with partners to promote good governance and ensure a coordinated approach to delivering the shared vision for the future of the Vale. Our equality work supports each of the three associated improvement 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.
36. It was also a corporate priority to manage the Council's workforce, money, information and assets efficiently, effectively and securely. Our equality work supported each of the associated improvement 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.
37. Moving forward, this equality work supports the current Corporate Plan 2016 - 2010 and each of the wellbeing outcomes and objectives. In particular, it supports Wellbeing Outcome 3 - an aspirational and culturally vibrant Vale, and Objective 6 - valuing culture and diversity.

Policy Framework and Budget

38. This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

39. Not applicable.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

40. Corporate Performance and Resources

Background Papers

Equality and Human Rights Commission Guidance: Annual reporting, publishing and Ministerial duties: A guide for listed public authorities in Wales

Stonewall's 'What's it got to do with you?' leaflet.

Welsh Government '2012 - Collecting Equality Data and Harmonised Standards Best Practice' guidance.

Equality and Human Rights Commission's Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty Wales

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