

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**Cabinet
10th May 2016**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor John Powell
Portfolio Holder for Equality**

SUBJECT: PCC Strategic Equality Plan 2016/20

REPORT FOR: APPROVAL

1. Summary.

- 1.1 Powys County Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2012 – 2016 has now come to an end and the purpose of this report is to seek agreement for the 2016 – 2020 plan.
- 1.2 It provides information on how the local authority is meeting its requirements in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and more specifically, the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

2. Background and Additional Information.

- 2.1 The aim of the public sector equality 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. It is an integral and important part of the mechanisms for ensuring the fulfilment of the aims of the Equality Act 2010. 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.
- 2.2 In exercising their functions, 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.
- 2.3 The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality of opportunity in the second aim involves:
- removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people

- encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

2.4 The Act describes fostering good relations in the third aim as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Meeting the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others, as long as this does not contravene other provisions within the Act.

2.5 The nine protected characteristics are:

Characteristic	Description
sex/gender	being male or female
age	being a certain age; but often being younger or older
race	being a particular colour, ethnic origin, national origin or nationality
religion or belief	having a recognised religion or belief or a lack of belief
pregnancy and maternity	women who are pregnant or on maternity leave
disability	all disabled people, both physically and mentally
gender reassignment	people who change their gender from the one assigned at birth
sexual orientation	how people feel as well as act, in respect of people of the same sex, people of the opposite sex, or both sexes
marriage and civil partnership	being in a marriage or civil partnership

3. The Specific Public Sector Equality Duties for Wales.

3.1 The specific duties underpin the General Duty, and specify duties that public bodies must undertake to support better performance of the general duty. The Welsh Government introduced the 'Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011' setting out the requirements for Wales, developed around four main principles:

- Use of evidence
- Consultation and Involvement
- Transparency
- Leadership

3.2 One of the specific duties for public bodies in Wales is to set Equality Objectives and publish a Strategic Equality Plan. Another is to publish an equality objective to address any gender pay gap identified or else publish reasons why it has not done so.

3.3 The Equality and Human Rights Commission guides provide an overview of the equality duty, including the general equality duty, the

specific duties and who they apply to. They cover what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. These can be found on the Commissions web page or by accessing the following link <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/private-and-public-sector-guidance/public-sector-providers/public-sector-equality-duty/guidance>

4. Strategic Equality Plan 2016 - 2020

4.1 The proposed Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020 can be found in appendix a. In it we outline how we will promote equality and diversity for the next four years, some of the practical steps we will be taking to put our commitments into practice, the importance of data and how we will monitor our performance and effectiveness.

4.2 The process of how we set our objectives is explained fully in the plan with the following evidence being carefully considered when deciding upon the key objectives.

- 'Is Wales fairer?' published by the Equality and Human Rights commission in December 2015
- Our joint collaboration engagement work that was conducted autumn/winter 2015.
- Our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and development work done since e.g. The JSNA poverty focus.
- 2012-2016 SEP actions and measures.

4.3 As far as is practically possible, the development of equality objectives have been integrated into the council's standard corporate planning process whilst ensuring the council remains compliant with the requirements of the duty.

4.4 There are seven Equality Objectives for the Council as set out below, and in the plan under each one are a number of actions the Council will take to fulfil those objectives. The detailed on how these actions will be achieved, will be contained within various Services Team plans, Service Improvement Plans, Powys One Plan, the Hearts and Minds Delivery Plan or the Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan.

- Objective 1. Close attainment gaps in education.
- Objective 2. Encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment including the statutory gender pay objective.
- Objective 3. Improve living conditions in cohesive communities.
- Objective 4. Increase access to justice and encourage democratic participation.
- Objective 5. Improve access to mental health services to people experiencing poor mental health. Note: Joint Objective and actions with PTHB. All under Hearts and Mind Delivery plan.

- Objective 6. Prevent abuse, neglect and ill-treatment in care.
Objective 7. Eliminate violence, abuse and harassment in the community.

4.5 Measures to see how well we are doing against tackling the key issues of inequality have been developed and feature underneath each objective and its actions. This will help us to evaluate how well we are or aren't doing.

5. Monitoring and Governance

5.1 In order to improve the governance arrangements for ensuring the council's Strategic Equality Plan is implemented to plan, half yearly monitoring arrangements that were put into place last year, will continue to work alongside standard performance reporting into review meetings between Portfolio Holders, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service and subsequent reporting into Management Team and Cabinet. Visibility of progress against the plan is important.

5.2 As every effort was made to align the Strategic Equality Plan with the corporate planning process, monitoring arrangements will be co-ordinated via the council's arrangements to monitor the One Powys Plan and Service Improvement Plans and will be reported to the Strategic Overview Board on a 6 monthly basis.

5.3 The bi-annual report and the annual monitoring update report will be published on our webpage.

6. One Powys Plan.

6.1 The purpose of this report links directly to the One Powys Plan as it is one of its guiding principles. The report informs members, council employees, citizens of Powys and other stakeholders about the progress made against the Strategic Equality Plan.

6.2 One of the specific duties for public bodies in Wales is to set Equality Objectives and publish a Strategic Equality Plan as well as annually report it.

7. Options Considered/Available.

7.1 Delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan is a statutory requirement.

During the first few years of the 12-16 plan visibility of progress was quite light (only assessed on an annual basis) however during the later years we moved to half yearly. Currently with the commitment to align with the corporate planning process and majority of actions reporting via the OPP, SIPs, BAU and partnership plans, the option of reporting on a half yearly basis is still considered to be the best option.

7. Preferred Choice and Reasons.

7.1 Reporting on a half yearly basis was considered to be the best option for providing visibility of progress to plan and ensuring the council meets its statutory requirements.

8. Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc.

8.1 Equalities is a cross cutting theme that needs to be considered by all services and policies.

9. Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing.

9.1 Objective 1 to 7 of the Strategic Equality Plan each have at least one or several actions which aim to improve the Wellbeing and Safeguarding of Children and Young People.

10. Local Member(s).

10.1 This is the council's Strategic Equality Plan and is applicable to all areas of the county.

11. Other Front Line Services.

11.1 The appropriate front line services have all engaged in producing this proposed plan.

12. Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services).

12.1 The appropriate services have informed the report.

Legal - Comments being sought.

Finance – The contents of the report have been noted.

13. Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc.

13.1 Strategic Equality Plan is ultimately the Authority's plan but linkages with key partners exist where appropriate.

13.2 Objective 5. Improve access to mental health services to people experiencing poor mental health is a Joint Objective and actions with PTHB. All under Hearts and Mind Delivery plan.

13.3 4 actions are part of the Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan.

13.4 Key organisations operating within Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys worked collaboratively to deliver a joint engagement exercise which helped develop the plan.

14. Corporate Communications.

Proactive communication is required.

15. Statutory Officers.

The Strategic Director Resources (S151 Officer) notes the comments made by finance.

Monitoring Officer - Comments being sought.

16. Members' Interests.

16.1 Monitoring Officer - Comments being sought.

Recommendation: That cabinet approve the Strategic Equality Plan 16-20.	Reason for Recommendation: To comply with statutory requirements and good business practice.
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Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	

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Background Papers used to prepare Report: