

# Report

## Cabinet

---

### Part 1

Date: 11 November 2020

**Subject** **Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2019/20**

**Purpose** This report reflects Newport City Council's progress on delivering its 2016 - 2020 Strategic Equality Plan whilst also reporting on the essential equalities employment information that the Authority is required to publish under the Equality Act 2010.

The Annual Report is required to be published on the Council's website in accordance with statutory deadlines.

**Author** Connected Communities Manager

**Ward** All

**Summary** Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council is required to report annually on the progress it has made against the 9 Strategic Equality Objectives contained within its Strategic Equality Plan. The Equality Act also requires Local Authorities to publish staff equalities data, which this report also contains.

This report is the fourth and final Annual Report on progress towards meeting Equality Objectives set out in the Authority's second four year Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), as approved by Council 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2016. The council's new Strategic Equality Plan has been approved by Council and published on its website in accordance with legal requirements

**Proposal** **To approve the attached final monitoring report and publish it on the Council's website, in accordance with statutory deadlines.**

**Action by** Head of People and Business Change, Heads of Service

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

Cabinet Member for Community and Resources  
The Council's Strategic Equalities Group  
HR and OD Manager

**Signed** Head of People and Business Change

## Background

In March 2016 Newport City Council published its Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), identifying 9 Equality Objectives that the authority would measure itself against over the next four years. The objectives built on the work that had been delivered in earlier Equality Plans and Welsh Language Schemes, and were updated to incorporate new ways of working, outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

As stipulated within the Welsh specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), Local Authorities are required to produce an Annual Report and publish it within 12 months of the end of the financial year. These reports outline the progress the authority has made over a 12 month period against its Strategic Equality Objectives. The Annual Report also captures key workforce data as required by the Equality Act 2010.

This is the final report for the current Strategic Equality Plan, before the council commences its delivery of its Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.

The 9 objectives in the plan are:

- **Objective 1: Workplace Diversity** - The Council's workforce will be representative of the population we service and the workforce are involved in decisions that affect them.
- **Objective 2: Engagement** - We will involve people in the development of Council services that affect them and base Council decisions on what people need.
- **Objective 3: Improving access** - People can access all the Council services and activities that they need in terms of physical access and communication access etc.
- **Objective 4: Tackling Poverty** - We will work to reduce poverty, especially persistent poverty amongst some of our poorest people and communities, and reducing the likelihood that people will become poor.
- **Objective 5: Cohesive Communities** - People have a sense of belonging to the city and feel safe.
- **Objective 6: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence** - People who are subject or witness to domestic abuse are supported by the Council and its partners in their current situation and through any changes they wish to make.
- **Objective 7: Homelessness** - To provide a safe, supporting, empowering and non-judgemental environment for homeless and marginalised people so that they can achieve their potential.
- **Objective 8: Welsh Language** - We will promote our bilingual public services and increase the use of Welsh in Newport.
- **Objective 9: Corporate compliance** - Strategic leadership, governance arrangements, ensuring standards are high and consistent across all the Council and its areas.

The Annual Report demonstrates the positive progress Newport City Council has made over the past year, and the lifetime of the SEP, and looks forward to the implementation of the new SEP, identifying key themes that will continue to be prioritised.

The 2020-24 SEP was approved by Cabinet in July and sets out six equality objectives, each with a number of related outcomes and key actions that will contribute to those outcomes. The objectives relate to Leadership and Governance, Access and Engagement, Representative Workforce, Community Cohesion, Learning Well and Independent Living, and were set as a result of comprehensive community engagement, and review of local and national data.

The effectiveness of the delivery arrangements of the 2016-20 SEP were also reviewed to ensure opportunities for improvement were maximised through the development of the new SEP 2020-2024.

## Legal context

The Equality Act 2010 (Wales) states that a listed body in Wales, including Local Authorities, must produce an Annual Report by 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.

The Act requires that the report must specifically outline progress towards fulfilling each of the Authority's Equality Objectives, provide a statement on the effectiveness of the steps that the Authority has taken to fulfil each of these, and include specified employment information, including information on training and pay (unless it has already published this information elsewhere).

The report should also set out the steps the Authority has taken to identify and collect relevant information and how we have used this information in meeting the three aims of the Public Sector General Equality Duty, which are to:

1. Foster positive relationships between those who share Protected Characteristics and those who don't
2. Eliminate unlawful discrimination
3. Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a Protected Characteristic and those who don't

If relevant information has not been collected a statement on the effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information must also be included.

## Governance and management

Following the approval of the SEP in 2016, the Authority re-convened the member-led Strategic Equality Group (SEG), chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community and Resources as the member with responsibility for equalities.

The group takes a strategic lead on the implementation of the equalities agenda and it is through the SEG that progress on our Equality Objectives is monitored throughout the year.

## Financial Summary

The cost of implementing the Strategic Equality Plan and the Equality Objectives is met out of existing budgets by each relevant service area. The majority of the actions relate to work already identified in Service Plans, for example workforce monitoring, or which occurs in projects that have already been approved and prioritised, such as domestic abuse and hate crime.

	Year 1 (Current) £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £	Ongoing £	Notes including budgets heads affected
Costs (Income)					Not applicable
Net Costs (Savings)					
Net Impact on Budget					

## Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
That the Annual Report is not published	M	L	A draft report has been compiled and taken through relevant governance processes for approval	Heads of Service
That equality commitments are not understood by employees and members	M	M	Equality training for staff and members continues to be rolled out across the organisation, and development of our Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment process has further embedded equalities considerations as part of the Authority's decision making process.	Head of People and Business Change and Elected Members
That Equality Objectives are not implemented and reviewed	M	M	Progress against equalities objectives are reported on regularly to the Strategic Equality Group	Connected Communities Manager

### Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The Council's commitments under the Equality Act and the Strategic Equality Plan are aligned to the Authority's Wellbeing Objectives.

### Options Available

- a) To approve the attached report and publish on the council's website
- b) To not approve the attached report and redraft.

### Preferred Option and Why

Option a) is the preferred option, in order to ensure that the Council remains compliant with its statutory obligations.

### Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial implications associated with the proposal to approve and then publish the SEP Annual Report on the Council's website. The cost of implementing the SEP is met from existing budgets in service areas. Fairness & Equality Impact Assessments are included in business cases during the Medium Term Financial Plan process when applicable.

### Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 the Council is required to publish an annual report setting out progress made and the effectiveness of the actions taken to meet its public sector equality duty and specific objectives. The annual report is also required to set out equalities data in relation to staffing information. The general public sector equality duty requires the Council to have due regard in the exercise of its functions, to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct and to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations.

Regulations made by the Welsh Ministers impose specific duties on local authorities in Wales for the purpose of enabling better performance of these general duties. These include the duty to publish objectives designed to enable the authority to perform the statutory duty, to publish a statement setting out steps taken or intended steps in order to fulfil each objective and how long the authority will take in order to fulfil each objective.

This report provides an update on the fourth and final year of delivery against the Strategic Equalities Plan 2016-2020 and confirms that good progress has been made in meeting the 9 equalities objectives set out in the Plan, but also identifying those areas where further work is required.

### **Comments of Head of People and Business Change**

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

This Annual Report reflects the positive progress made towards implementing our Strategic Equality Plan while also highlighting areas of work that we will carry over into the 2020 Strategic Equality Plan. The publication of the report also meets the requirements to annually publish staff equalities data for the Local Authority, The work delivered over the last 12 months contributes to the delivery of the Council's well-being objectives and the national well-being goals, particularly a more equal Wales.

### **Comments of Cabinet Member**

This report is a summary of the work that has been undertaken during the fourth and final year of the Strategic Equality Plan. It sets out the Council's commitment to a workplace culture and approach to service delivery that values inclusion and difference.

We will continue to progress this work over the next 12 months through the new Strategic Equalities Plan. This was recently agreed by Council and reflects the strategic priorities of the wider organisation and key partners. Thanks to our effective consultation process the priorities set out in our new Plan also reflect the concerns of our citizens. The strategies have evolved significantly since 2016 and in close partnership with service areas, the work continues to develop well balanced priorities and outcomes.

### **Local issues**

Not applicable.

### **Scrutiny Committees**

The report was received by the Overview and Management Committee at its meeting on [30<sup>th</sup> October 2020](#). The full details will be published in the minutes of the Committee meeting on the Council's democracy pages. The following issues were discussed:

- The Committee highlighted our current workforce metrics and whether or not this is representative of the Newport population. Over the last year, work has been ongoing to anonymise applicant data to ensure that a fair and consistent approach is taken to recruitment; work around engaging with underrepresented groups and continuous improvement for our workforce being reflective of our population is continuing.
- Newport has areas with high levels of poverty. Although we have projects and strategies in place to help combat this, work with our external partners should continue and we will look at comparative information with neighbouring local authorities, to ensure we are sharing best practice in our approach and measure of outcomes, to help reduce the impact of poverty within the community going forward and are proactive in our approach. Members also noted the introduction of the socio economic duty.
- It was acknowledged that there is a requirement for increased engagement with people identifying as LGBTQ. An internal staff network is being developed and work with young people and community groups has increased this year. A solid plan of internal communications and external social media posts ensures we celebrate and acknowledge various LGBTQ relevant history and significant dates. We are also an active part of the Proud Councils Network;

partnering with several other local authorities to share best practice and ideas. We are working to ensure that all underrepresented groups are supported.

- The Committee raised that engaging with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, and keeping levels of communication with the police was paramount to enable open discussion and support to those requiring temporary spaces for housing. Although engagement in this area is significant across the Gwent wide project we work with, it is an area that has limited resource available through Wales Government grant funding.
- The Councils approach and commitment to supporting rough sleepers and people experiencing homelessness is encouraging; however from the numerous partnerships we work with, some are faith-based and it was suggested this can cause problems for those who want a non-secular provision and service.
- The Committee were pleased to note the range of work in this important area.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010**

No Fairness & Equalities Impact Assessment (F&EIA) is necessary for the Annual Report. By design, the Strategic Equality Plan and associated Annual Report are the mechanism by which the Authority's Equality Duties are discharged, and therefore have a positive impact on all Protected Characteristics.

### **Children and Families (Wales) Measure**

No consultation was needed for this report.

### **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015, which came into force in April 2016, places an obligation on Local Authorities to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Strategic Equalities Plan represents much of the work that the Authority undertakes to fulfil our Wellbeing objectives to work towards 'a more Equal Wales' and a 'Wales of Cohesive Communities', drawing on much of the research undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission into fairness and inequalities in Wales.

The Strategic Equality Plan and its objectives aim to influence the way that the Council makes decisions that have a long term impact on communities, and engages and consults with diverse and seldom heard groups to ensure they are able to influence the design of service delivery. Early intervention to address issues such as hate crime and the risk of radicalisation prevent escalation of issues which may threaten community cohesion and collaboration with key partners in the delivery of our Equalities Plan ensures an effective, holistic approach. The Strategic Equalities Plan is influenced by national research, local data, and engagement with people in Newport that share Protected Characteristics.

### **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

Not applicable.

### **Background Papers**

[The Essentials – Well-being of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)

Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020

Equalities Annual Report 2018/19

Welsh Language Annual Report 2019/20

NCC Well-being Objectives and Well-being Statement

Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2018-23

NCC Corporate Plan 2017-22

OMSC minutes 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

Dated: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020