

Report

Cabinet

Part 1

Date: 18 October 2023

Subject Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022/23

Purpose This report reflects Newport City Council's progress in delivering its 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan and reports 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 Head of People, Policy and Transformation

Ward All

Summary Under the Equality Act (2010), the Council is required to report annually on the progress it has made against the 6 Strategic Equality Objectives contained within its Strategic Equality Plan. The Equality Act also requires Local Authorities to publish staff equalities data contained within this report.

This report is the third Annual Report on progress towards meeting Equality Objectives in the Authority's third four-year Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), as approved by Council in July 2020.

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, Policy and Transformation

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation
- The Council's Strategic Equalities Group
- Strategic Director, Transformation and Corporate
- Head of People, Policy and Transformation
- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Signed

Background

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities are required to set Equality Objectives every four years, which assist them in their duty to pay due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, foster positive relationships between community groups and eliminate discrimination. The council's current Equality Objectives are set out in our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 (SEP).

As part of the Welsh-specific duties of the Equality Act, local authorities are also required to produce and publish an Annual Report within 12 months of the end of each financial year. The report highlights the challenges, changes, and progress made throughout the year and measures these against the Equality Objectives in the Strategic Equality Plan. The Annual Report also includes workforce data, a publishing requirement under Welsh-specific duties.

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

This Annual Report demonstrates the progress made during the third and penultimate year of delivery against the council's Strategic Equalities Plan, and work is beginning to draft the new Strategic Equalities Plan for 2024-2028 to be published by April 2024.

Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010 (Wales) states that a listed body in Wales, including Local Authorities, must produce an Annual Report by 31st 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. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

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.

In the first reporting period, Welsh Government also enacted Section 1 of the Equality Act, the Socio-economic Duty (SED), introduced in Wales on the 31st of March 2021. The SED requires specified public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to pay due regard to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. Although the SED does not include a reporting duty, this Annual Report sets out the steps taken this year to ensure that the council meets its statutory responsibilities under this new legislation.

Governance

The Strategic Equalities Group (SEG) considers progress made against Equality Objectives throughout the year. SEG is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation, who also has responsibility for Equalities.

Respective Equality Objective leads provide a quarterly highlight report for consideration and support from SEG members. Specific delivery groups have also been established to ensure operational delivery of each Equality Objective. This report summarises the key achievements from the quarterly updates provided at SEG.

Report Summary

This report details the progress made during 2022-23 so is an historic look back at the actions undertaken against each of the strategic equality objectives contained within the Strategic Equality Plan.

The report lists the achievements against each strategic objectives, with key highlights below.

- Anti-Racism training completed by Elected Members, Senior Leaders, Managers, and wider staff.
- Fairness and Equality Impact Assessments including the Socio-economic Duty are embedded across the council and have been used as consideration for policy/decision making,
- £300,000 of funding has been distributed to 44 community projects, overseen by a representative community steering group, working closely with Newport's Fairness Commission.
- Gender Pay Gap closed from 2.0% to -0.4%.
- Face to Face services reopened at Newport Central Library with improvements to accessibility.
- Staff networks for disabled, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority staff continue to provide a platform for under-represented groups to influence our workplace policy, service delivery and strategic decision making.
- The Education Welfare and Inclusion Service tailored programmes to address the specific and growing needs of learners and schools.
- Floating support schemes supported over 2,800 people to access and maintain their accommodation including adults with learning disabilities, refugees, people escaping domestic abuse and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Developed of a range supported housing schemes, including specific provision for young people, people with mental health conditions and Care Leavers.

As well as the many positives, the report also recognises areas of improvement. The analysis of our workforce data highlights some potential focus areas, including the representation of minority ethnic people, disabled people and people who identify as LGBTQ+. Deep dives into any themes and associated improvements will be undertaken during this financial year.

Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

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 educational and housing priorities.

| | 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

It is important to identify and manage any project or scheme's exposure to risk and have in place controls to deal with those risks.

| Risk Title / Description | Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L) | Risk Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L) | Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect? | Risk Owner Officer(s) 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 | Corporate Management Team |
| That equality commitments are not understood by employees and members | H | M | Equalities training is mandated and regularly delivered to staff and members. The development of our Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) process has further embedded equality considerations as part of the Authority's decision-making process. | Head of People, Policy and Transformation and Elected Members |
| That Equality Objectives are not implemented and reviewed | H | L | Progress against Equality Objectives is reported to and supported by the Strategic Equality Group. | Policy and Partnership Manager and Senior Equalities Officer |

* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

[NCC Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#)
[Corporate Plan 2022-27](#)

The SEP also takes account of the priorities for addressing inequalities set out in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) '[Is Wales Fairer](#)' 2018 review and the Welsh Government's ongoing Cohesion, Equality and Inclusion, and Nation of Sanctuary work programmes.

Options Available and considered

1. To approve the attached report and publish on the council's website.
2. To request further information or not approve the attached report and redraft.

Preferred Option and Why

1. To approve the attached report and publish on the Council's website so that the Council remains compliant with its statutory obligations.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, with the cost of implementing the Strategic Equality Plan and the Equality Objectives being met from existing budgets and external resources held by each relevant service area.

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. As from April 2021, the Council has a further duty under the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. The 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 third year of delivery against the new four-year Strategic Equalities Plan 2020-2024 and confirms that good progress has been made in meeting the 6 equalities objectives set out in the Plan, but also identifies those areas where further improvements are required. Although there is no requirement to report on performance in relation to the socio-economic duty, the report also sets out the steps taken to meet the requirements of this new duty.

Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

This annual report reflects the positive progress made over the past 12 months and highlights some examples of good practice. The report also identifies some areas we aim to improve in the next reporting period.

The continued delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan and work within this area align with and contribute to the achievement of the well-being objectives in the Council's new Corporate Plan and national well-being goals, working towards a Wales of Vibrant Culture and a More Equal Wales.

Scrutiny Committees

The Strategic Equality Report Annual Report 22/23 was presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 9 October 2023.

The full details will be published in the minutes of the Committee meeting on the Council's democracy pages. The Committee noted improvements from the previous year and the following issues were discussed:

- The Committee asked to be provided with further information regarding the number of people who contact the City Contact Centre via phone when they are unable to use the online services.
- The Committee highlighted the importance of ensuring that Newport City Council offers services that are accessible, inclusive, and useable for all residents, including those who require traditional means of interaction with the Council. The Committee highlighted that this was not exclusive to this report but was a wider theme across the Council.
- The Committee recommended that pupil attainment be included in the next Strategic Equalities Plan.
- The Committee recommended that more information about the data used to evidence the need for changes or improvements, and to measure the outcomes, be included in reports.

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

This report assesses progress made by Newport City Council against the six Equality Objectives contained within the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 - 2024.

A full Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) was undertaken on the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 -2024, to which this Annual Report relates. This FEIA considers our legislative responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010), including the Socio-economic Duty, the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure (2011). Therefore, no FEIA has been completed for this annual report.

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**

In terms of the Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act and consideration of the sustainable development principle, 5 ways of working:

Long Term – The delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan, Equality Objectives, and associated actions aim to influence the way that the Council makes decisions that have a long-term impact on communities.

Preventative – The report covers work undertaken to address challenges to equality. This work includes early intervention to prevent the identified problems from worsening and actions to promote equality of opportunity and outcome.

Integration – The continued delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan and work within this area align with and contribute to the achievement of the well-being objectives in the Council's new Corporate Plan and national well-being goals, working towards a Wales of Vibrant Culture and a More Equal Wales, where people can fulfil their potential no matter their background or circumstances, including their socio-economic circumstances.

Involvement – Engagement with key stakeholders in delivering Equality objectives, developing associated policies, and drafting this report is demonstrated through this report.

Collaboration - The actions in the report were undertaken in collaboration with a range of internal and external partners, including the Strategic Equality Group, Equality Objective leads, service delivery groups and community partners. This collaborative approach enables the Council to build expertise and share resources.

Consultation

Not Applicable

Background Papers

[NCC Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#)

[Corporate Plan 2022-27](#)

[Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

[Socio-economic Duty Guidance](#)

[The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)

Dated: 10 October 2023