



Report of the Cabinet Member for Resilience & Strategic Collaboration

Council – 26 March 2020

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24

Purpose:	To adopt a Strategic Equality Plan containing the Council's Equality Objectives for 2020/24 in line with the requirements set out by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
Policy Framework:	Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The Strategic Equality Plan 2020/24 is adopted.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council has a general duty under the Equality Act 2010 to consider how to eliminate discrimination and positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities
- 1.2 The Council also has an obligation under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to publish a revised Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives by 1st April 2020. Prior to publishing, the Council is also required to consider the relevant information that is held and is needed and to engage with relevant stakeholders.

2. Methodology for developing the Strategic Equality Plan

2.1 Sources of evidence and information

2.1.1 Work commenced in 2019/20 on the revision of the Council's Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) for 2020/24. The starting point was a review and drawing together of existing evidence, reviewing best practice from across Wales and applying recent learning from Swansea to draft provisional Strategic Equality Objectives. The following were primary sources of information and evidence:

- **Equality and Human Rights Commission - *Is Wales Fairer?* Report**
Is Wales Fairer? 2018 identifies the key inequalities in Wales in the areas of Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security and Participation. It offered a framework for analysis to identify and address the most pressing and persistent equality challenges facing Wales and to identify and shape initial draft Strategic Equality Objectives.

- **Swansea Council Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry**

This landmark review aimed to understand how the Council could better implement its equalities duties in Swansea. An extensive engagement programme collected evidence between October 2018 and March 2019. The evidence gathering activities undertaken included:

- Overview of subject and Q&A with Cabinet Member for Better Communities (People) and Chief Legal Officer
- Consideration of relevant key policies, strategies and documentation including Swansea's Equality Plan and the Equality Impact Assessment screening process
- Question and Answer session with individual Directors and the Strategic Organisational Development and Human Resources Manager
- Departmental staff representatives.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Equalities Community/Partner Groups including Carers, BME Forum, Young People through the Big Conversation, LGBT Forum, Disability Liaison Group, Joining the Jots Team, Veterans and 50+ Forum
- Survey of Council staff.

The Report's recommendations were accepted at Cabinet on October 2019 and, as a result, the recommendations were fully incorporated into the SEP subject to further engagement.

It has been widely suggested by participants that this recent extensive engagement exercise is utilised as a foundation for engagement regarding the Strategic Equality Objectives and Plan to avoid duplicating information and respect the views so recently expressed by key stakeholders.

- **Swansea Council's Corporate (Well-being) Plan**

This plan sets out Swansea Council's well-being objectives and the steps we will take to achieve them. Many of these steps already address

equality and diversity issues. The close correlation between the new Equality and Well-being Objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan is evident as we pursue closer integration between the two sets of plans and objectives and the steps to meet them.

- **Swansea Public Services Board Local Well-being Plan**
This document sets out Local Well-being objectives such as Stronger Communities with a sense of pride and belonging with steps that align with equality and diversity priorities for Swansea.
- **Previous Strategic Equality Plans and Reviews**
We looked at what worked and what could be improved in previous Strategic Equality Plans and Reviews.
- **The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015**
Swansea Council applied the sustainable development principle's five ways of working to develop a Strategic Equality Plan that helps create a more equal, prosperous, healthier Swansea of cohesive communities with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.
- **The Social Services and Well-being Act (2014)**
This legislation seeks to improve the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support. The West Glamorgan Regional Partnership's Area plan and Population Assessment has influenced the development of the Strategic Equality Objectives.
- **The Foundational Economy Approach**
Swansea Council is committed to exploring opportunities for prosperity offered by the Foundational Economy and ensuring all groups in society benefit from Wales becoming the first country in the world to embrace the foundational economy approach. This focuses on developing the local provision and procurement of the goods and services that we all need. Swansea is the first local authority in Wales to have successfully bid for Welsh Government's 'Foundational Economy Challenge Fund' to improve local supplier development.
- **Swansea Equalities Statistics Review 2020**
The Council collated an evidence base of statistical information relating to protected characteristics in a Swansea context. The commentary and analysis helps us understand the diversity of Swansea's population, how it has changed and (as far as possible) how it may develop in the future. This information is attached at Appendix D.

2.2 Engagement and Consultation

- 2.2.1 The engagement and consultation process involved all stakeholders at each stage of the Strategic Equality Plan's development.

- **Stage 1 – pre-consultation engagement and evidence**
The process used the extensive engagement work undertaken as part of the Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry and its recommendations as a foundation for the involvement process. This and other pre-consultation engagement and evidence was used to draft broad objectives as a starting point for discussion.
- **Stage 2 – consultation on draft Equality Objectives**
The draft Strategic Equality Objectives were shared with the public and with stakeholders so they could replace, remove, change and add so we could make sure the right objectives for Swansea were identified. The engagement also enabled more detailed information on actions relating to the objectives to be collected so that in line with the National Principles for Public Engagement people could be genuinely involved at the earliest stage and throughout the process. The Council also engaged with over 100 intermediaries so that they could encourage their service users, members and staff to respond. Drop-in sessions and events were arranged and promoted via social media.
- **Stage 3 – consultation on draft Strategic Equality Plan**
The information gathered through consultation was used to draft the Strategic Equality Objectives and draft Strategic Equality Plan. The document was then open to the public and stakeholders so that comments and views could be taken into account and improvements made.

2.2.2 A separate and draft consultation report outlining this process is attached at Appendix C.

3. Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plan

- 3.1 Six Equality Objectives were identified following the review of information and evidence and after engagement with the public and stakeholders:
- **Education:** *Ensure an inclusive learning experience and that gaps in levels of attainment and other post-education outcomes are narrowed.*
 - **Work:** *Reduce pay gaps and create a more inclusive workforce that is more reflective of Swansea's diverse communities.*
 - **Living standards:** *Tackle poverty and help support independent living.*
 - **Health:** *Seek to promote good physical and mental health and reduce health inequalities through the provision of sport, culture and leisure opportunities and a healthy built and natural environment.*
 - **Fairness, dignity and respect:** *Ensure that people and communities have their rights respected and feel safe from violence and abuse.*

- **Participation:** *Improve how we engage with and involve people and communities in matters that are important to them and in decisions that we make.*

3.2 A brief summary of the Strategic Equality Plan:

- Section 1 - outlines the purpose of the plan in terms of meeting our obligations under the Equality Act.
- Section 2 - describes the demographic profile of Swansea based on the latest available information.
- Section 3 - contains a summary of how we developed our Equality Objectives through three main stages. Sets out each Equality Objective including the steps the Council will take to deliver them
- Section 4 - A fuller list of the sources that we used to identify evidence and develop the plan

3.3 A copy of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020/24 is attached at Appendix A.

4. Equality and Engagement Implications

4.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

4.2 Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

4.3 The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 was screened for relevance for an EIA. The screening determined that a full EIA was necessary. The EIA has indicated that the Plan would have a positive impact on people with protected characteristics, as well as other positive impacts on equality.

4.4 Our approach to equality seeks to recognise the impact of intersectionality where people who share more than one protected characteristic are at risk of multiple disadvantage, inequity, discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

4.5 The promotion and use of the Welsh Language is not included within the Equality Act, and is instead covered by the requirements set out in the Welsh Language Measure 2011. However, we have included a consideration of the Welsh Language alongside the wider protected characteristics in terms of our approach to equality. The impact on the

Welsh Language is examined in our Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) used during the process of Council decision making.

- 4.6 The Welsh Government are currently consulting on the commencement of the socio-economic duty within the Equality Act (2010). This will require public bodies, when taking strategic decisions to have due regard to reducing the inequalities in outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage. We have built upon our consideration of socio-economic disadvantage and equality outlined in our second Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20. Tackling poverty continues to be one of our Corporate Well-being Objectives and our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process has incorporated a number of equality-related issues such as poverty and social exclusion and children's rights.
- 4.7 We are continuing to embed Children's Rights into key Council policies, plans and practice. We became the first Council to embed the UNCRC into our Policy Framework and have developed a Children & Young People's Rights Scheme, which sets out our arrangements to ensure compliance with the due regard duty.
- 4.8 We are also continuing to explore steps towards Swansea becoming a Human Rights City and how we could embed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in the same way as with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.
- 4.9 This year the Council was awarded a Silver Award by charity Chwarae Teg in their Fairplay Employer scheme. We want Swansea Council to be a workplace where everybody is able to achieve their full potential regardless of their gender. We've been working on policies and initiatives to promote gender equality in partnership with leading gender equality charity Chwarae Teg. The FairPlay Employer benchmark will support us to deliver gender equality in our business, giving us the benefits of a truly balanced workforce.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations Act

- 7.1 The sustainable development principle's five ways of working were applied to develop the Strategic Equality Plan that helps create a more equal, prosperous, healthier Swansea of cohesive communities with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

- 7.1.1 *Long term – The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard long-term needs.* While the Strategic Equality Plan has a four-year focus. It is written taking into account the impact our actions will have on improving life and reducing inequalities experienced by future generations.
- 7.1.2 *Prevention – How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.* The Strategic Equality Objectives are intended to address priority areas in order to stop inequalities getting worse but also address root cause of unfairness so discrimination and inequity can be avoided in the future.
- 7.1.3 *Integration – Considering how our well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on other objectives or the objectives of other public bodies.* We have avoided unnecessary duplication wherever possible and aimed to integrate and apply the findings and evidence of existing recent equalities work. There is a close correlation between the Council's Well-being and Equality Objectives. There is close alignment between many of the steps to deliver both the Council's Well-being and Equality Objectives as we pursue integration, seek to improve well-being and strive towards a more equal Swansea and a more equal Wales.
- 7.1.4 *Collaboration – Acting in collaboration with any other person (or with other parts of the Council) that could help us meet our well-being objectives.* We have engaged with services across the Council and our partners to best use our skills and relationships to engage with a variety of audiences in different ways.
- 7.1.5 *Involvement – The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area that the body serves.* We have tried to involve people that reflect the diversity of our community including those with protected characteristics. In particular we have applied the National Principles of Public Engagement and Children's participation Standards in planning and implementing engagement.
- 7.2 The Act also places a duty on Swansea Council to maximise its contribution to each of the national well-being goals. We do this by illustrating in the SEP how each Equality Objective correlates with the Council's Well-being Objectives, which contribute to the national goals.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

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| Appendix A | Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24. |
| Appendix B | Equality Impact Assessment. |
| Appendix C | Draft Consultation Report |
| Appendix D | Swansea Equalities Statistics Review 2020 |