

Please ask for: Councillor Louise Gibbard
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Our Ref: LG/KH
Your Ref:
Date:

Dear Councillor Holley,

Thank you for your letter dated 11th January 2021 and the opportunity to participate in the scrutiny of the Council's Annual Review of Equality and Diversity 2019-20.

In response to your letter, I have provided further written information about the questions you have asked on behalf of the committee which is outlined below:

1. Names of and information about the schools that took part in the Schools Swap case study.

School Swap is a regional participation and engagement project for young people aged 11-18 yrs across the South Wales region including Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, and Bridgend. The aim of the School Swap is to give the participants the opportunity to challenge their own beliefs and the views of others – in relation to race, religion, culture and social background - with respectful curiosity in a safely facilitated environment. The process involved three participant led discussions, workshops and collaborative activities. The schools in Swansea which took part included Bishop Vaughan 6th Form, YGG Gwyr and Pentrehafod School. A number of other young people living in Swansea also took part in the project through their roles as Police Youth Volunteers, rather than directly participate through their school.

2. Outline information about what new steps are being planned, and what assurances can be given to people, for gathering data.

We are continuing to improve the data and information we collect on the protected characteristics of our employees and customers. Work is ongoing in relation to implementing a new cloud-based employee management system to ensure that information is more readily available in the system. In order to encourage employees to supply this information we are planning to produce newsletters/staff information for all staff explaining why we want to collect this information, why it is important, how it will be stored and used in line with GDPR principles. We are also discussing the role the Unions could play in supporting the collation of this information and re-assuring their members of the reasons this information is collected. In addition, we are planning to

make the employee self-service process more user friendly which will be part of the Fusion project and is scheduled to go live in October 2021. We are also in the process of developing a communications and training plan to support the implementation. We are also planning to include the information as a recurring link within the Service Centre newsletter (first issue to be sent in April & then quarterly). We will also continue to develop and roll out our Equalities training which is mandatory for all staff. We will work to quality assure the data and information by ensuring that we adhere to GDPR principles (and staff are aware of this), data is anonymized and access to the database is restricted to specific teams e.g Workforce & HR.

3. Officers undertook to provide more information about funding gaps and how they plan to address pockets of deprivation in every ward.

The Council has undertaken significant lobbying as a Council and via WLGA on budget and local government settlement matters. Swansea Council received an extra £13.2 million as part of its settlement (anticipated and factored into the Council's draft budget). Nevertheless, the outlook is one of significant pressure to Council services if the UK government's austerity programme continues, compounded by the twin impact of Brexit and COVID-19.

We are continuing to use the Council's budget in the most effective and efficient way by targeting services at those in greatest need and making use of local flexibilities and innovative funding solutions where possible – as demonstrated by the delivery of the Swansea Bay City Deal and the regeneration of Swansea city centre. Nevertheless, we are constrained by the way in which we use some Welsh Government grant funding as you described in the meeting e.g Flying Start and Families First which are highly prescriptive and targeted at either geographical communities of need e.g deprived communities, or non geographical communities of need e.g children with disabilities. In order to extend the reach of services we have continued to invest in early intervention and preventions, universal provision and making available dedicated money for community budgets. We have revised the guidance relating to Members community budgets which aims to support the delivery of small local measures that are a priority for individual Councillors and their local community and are not funded by any other Council budgets. We look forward to Councils being granted the general power of competence as part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill which will give us greater flexibility and powers to address local areas of need and inequalities across Swansea.

4. Clarification of what role the Policy Development Committee will have in terms of equality performance and reporting.

The Equalities and Future Generations Policy Development Committee was established following the Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry and considered its report in relation to areas for future policy development, informing the development of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy, the Council's Corporate Strategic Co-production Framework and the priorities for the Council's new Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24.

In line with the recommendations of the Inquiry, it was agreed that going forward a more strategic group was necessary in order to coordinate equality performance and reporting, as well as work towards our ambition to become a Human Rights City. Therefore, a new Strategic Equalities and Future Generations Board has now been established.

The Equalities and Future Generations PDC has now changed its focus in order to support Recovery and Transformation post-COVID but will work closely with the new Board where the need for further policy development is identified.

Of course Scrutiny plays a key role in monitoring performance and I'm very grateful for the work of this panel and others in helping to ensure that equality is embedded across the Council and all the services we deliver.

Yours faithfully

Cynghorydd / Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cyd-aelod y Cabinet dros Gefnogi Cymunedau
Joint Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities