



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - Equalities**

Remotely via Teams

Thursday, 28 January 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

S M Jones

Councillor(s)

T J Hennegan

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine

Other Attendees

L S Gibbard

Cabinet Member - Supporting Communities

Officer(s)

Rhian Millar

Consultation Co-ordinator

Lee Wenham

Head of Communications & Customer Engagement

Michelle Roberts

Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): None

1 Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interest

None

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

4 Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry - Impact and Follow up report

Cllr Louise Gibbard the Cabinet Member for Better Communities, Lee Wenham the Head of Communications and Marketing and Rhian Millar the Consultation Co-ordinator attended the Panel meeting and presented a report outlining progress made against the recommendations arising from this scrutiny inquiry. The following was noted:

- A new Strategic Equality Plan for 2020/24 was developed and published in April 2020. The plan was developed in line with EHRC guidance and incorporates the key recommendations from the Scrutiny Inquiry
- A new Strategic Equality and Future Generation Board has been established. The board will have a key responsibility for the actions and recommendations within the Strategic Equality Plan and Scrutiny Inquiry. The board will also have responsibility for the Future Generations (especially the seven areas of change

identified by the Act). This a key change in the structure to the delivery of Equalities and Future Generations across the Council. A post to support the board has also been approved and we are due to make an appointment in the coming months.

- The Covid-19 pandemic has brought significant challenges to the Council. During the past 10 months officers have had to shift focus to ensure that Council services were maintained and those most vulnerable were supported during the crisis. This switch in focus has resulted in some areas of work being put on hold or suspended which may affect how some of the actions have been progressed to date.
- Some examples of the work that has been done to support communities and vulnerable group in Swansea over this period includes for example:
 - 4,500 Council staff moved to work from home using digital technology
 - 221 redeployed and over 300 repurposed Council staff into essential / support services
 - Emergency child care hubs created in 60 school locations
 - Free school meals services established
 - Social care packages of care reviewed to limit unnecessary contact
 - Over 140 extra social care workers available
 - Two additional emergency care centres opened
 - PPE supply chains bolstered and new suppliers identified
 - PPE supply arrangements established to support Swansea bay social care locations
 - Emergency homeless support established
 - Food supply and distribution networks established
 - Over 1,400 local volunteers recruited
 - Shielding support services established including dedicated helpline, food and medicine delivery, local area workers.
- There is a lot from the recommendations that is still to implement and many will never be fully complete as they are ongoing consideration and improvement.
- Covid has opened up avenues of new opportunity too including the increased use of virtual contact, engaging and consulting the public. Lots of lessons have been learnt from these new ways of working.
- The Strategic Plan is being put in place but some of the actions associated with this will never be 'done', it will be about continuous improvement.
- There is always changes and evolution in the equalities agenda so we need to continue to move with it.
- The panel agreed that there has been positive moves forward with the recommendations especially the creation of the new Equality and Future Generations Board and associated support. This and the other work done so far will provide a good foundation for moving forward out of Covid and to drive improvements in the medium and longer term.
- The Panel agreed to meet again in November 2021 to look in more detail at the progress made and impact of the inquiry.

The meeting ended at 2.30 pm