



To:
Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Better Communities

CC: Cllr Alyson Pugh

BY EMAIL

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Date 3 February 2022
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Summary: This is a letter from Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel to the Cabinet Member for Better Communities following the meeting of the Panel on 26 January to look at impact and progress with the recommendations arising from the Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry.

Dear Cllr Gibbard,

Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – 26 January 2022

We would like to thank you and Rhian Millar from the Access to Services Team for attending our meeting. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion and to share the views of the Panel.

You updated us on the progress made with regard to the recommendations as contained in the Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry report and that were agreed by Cabinet on 21 November 2019.

We heard that:

- A new Strategic Equality Plan for 2020/24 was developed and published in April 2020. The plan was developed in line with Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance and incorporates the key recommendations from the Scrutiny Inquiry.
- A new Strategic Equality and Future Generation Board has been established which has a key responsibility for the actions and recommendations within the Strategic Equality Plan and Scrutiny Inquiry. We were pleased that these elements have been included in the work plan for the board.
- A post to support the board has been created and filled and the board meets once a month. Some of the examples of areas the board have looked at to date include

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workforce data, consultation and engagement strategy and positive campaigns around equalities.

- On the 10 December 2021, Swansea Council along with all members of the Public Service Board (PSB) signed their intention to become a Human Rights City. We heard that this is a shared intention and it is important that local communities and the citizens of Swansea are involved. We were pleased to hear that engagement with a large number of people has already taken place, including local community groups. We were informed that there is currently a public survey open, which will run until March and you asked us to promote this in our local communities where we can.
- In order to meet our ambition to become a Human Rights City we will need to make human rights the foundation of our service planning and delivery. A steering committee has been established to drive this aim which includes local authority officers and representatives from all of the PSB organisations.
- In response to the recommendation to improve our workforce data, a new Workforce Equalities Group to support the delivery of equality solutions has been established, to support the Council in being an exemplar employer. Some of the initial activities identified for this Group include, for example, to collect updated data on employee protected characteristics and also being part of the development of the Council's Recruitment and Selection policy and approach to create a more representative and inclusive workforce.

We were also pleased to hear about some more of the other work that has been completed in relation to the 18 recommendations like for example:

- Restarting of both the Councillor Champion and of the Equalities Representatives meetings.
- The ongoing communication with equalities groups throughout the Pandemic, all be it remotely.
- Creation of and progress with the Interfaith Forum.
- Completion of the Carers Strategy which was developed using co-production.
- Refresh of the mandatory equalities training and recognition that next steps will be to monitor uptake and target areas where staff uptake is not complete.
- Completion of the new Swansea Council Website and consultation in the development of this.
- Social services completion of their co-production strategy and the aim to use this learning for improving use of co-production right across the council.

We did recognise the Covid-19 pandemic continues to bring significant challenges to the Council and that many officers have had to shift focus to ensure that Council services were maintained and those most vulnerable were supported during the crisis. We were pleased to see the huge amount of work completed throughout that time, with and for, our local communities.

We were happy with the progress made to date and were pleased with the positive impact that the inquiry and the commitment to it by the Cabinet Member for Better Committees and officers has made in helping to move this important agenda forward in Swansea.

We agreed to finish our follow up involvement with the inquiry after satisfying ourselves that good progress has been made with all the recommendations. We heard that

seven of the recommendations are now complete and that good progress has been made with those recommendations that are outstanding. We were reassured to hear that all the necessary pieces are in place to ensure ongoing improvement in those areas where the recommendations are incomplete.

We would like to refer one area for follow up in the future. This is relating to Recommendation 13 - *Build upon the development of a Co-production Strategy with inclusion of a Toolkit for use by staff across the authority*. We will refer this to the Scrutiny Programme Committee to suggest the creation of a one-off working group to look at the issue of co-production and how it is progressing.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative and welcome your comments on any of the issues raised but do not on this occasion require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

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