



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

### **STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES WITH RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR MAUREEN WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER**

**Author(s): Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides information on the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028. This plan highlights the equality objectives the Council will work towards over the next 4 years.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the comments and feedback, following pre-scrutiny by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, attached at appendix 5; and
- 2.2 Agree to the content and publication of the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The SEP has been developed so that the Council can set out how it aims to meet its commitment to equality and how it will meet its legal obligations contained within the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2 Over the last year, internal engagement has taken place with a range of staff across the organisation. This engagement has highlighted that whilst many Council staff have a good experience in the workplace, others are not being afforded an inclusive workplace culture.
- 3.3 The Senior Leadership team have renewed their equality commitment and seek to embed this across the Council.
- 3.4 This internal evidence, along with other relevant data including Welsh Government ambitions outlined in their Anti-Racist Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action plan have led to the development of the equality objectives.
- 3.5 This SEP has an inward focus, with the viewpoint of developing our staff to create inclusive environments, ensuring the community receive inclusive and

fair services and colleagues are valued and respected. To achieve this ambition the equality objectives are:

- We will embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into every aspect of our service delivery;
- We will attract applicants that represent the diversity of our communities, enriching our organisational capability to meet our ambitions;
- We will respect, value and listen to all our employees by embedding a culture of inclusion.

3.6 An action plan has been developed which will be embedded within the Council's Performance Management arrangements.

3.7 In addition to the above it is the intention, as part of the SEP action plan to establish an EDI Steering group to monitor overall progress of the SEP.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, known as the Wales Specific Equality Duties, require public bodies to publish equality objectives every 4 years. The equality objectives can be contained in a Strategic Equality Plan.

4.2 The aim of these duties is to enable better performance of the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

4.3 Whilst there is no statutory direction on what protected characteristics the SEP should cover, apart for the need for focus on Gender Pay, it is generally established that objectives should in some way cover all of the protected characteristics contained in the Equality Act 2010, which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 5.1 The Council must satisfy the Public Sector Equality Duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties, Councils must, in making decisions, have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations based on protected characteristics.
- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached. The Assessment will be published on the Council's website, in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.3 There are 8 positive impacts and 3 neutral impacts indicated in the protected characteristics section. Whilst the 3 neutral characteristics were identified, it is expected that due to the intersectional aspects of these characteristics and the broad aims of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, there will be an overall positive impact on these characteristics.
- 5.4 The socio-economic assessment has been categorised as having a neutral impact. However, engagement with residents and the Disability Forum, along with robust EDI policies and equality impact assessments embedded within the Council's service delivery, it is hoped the equality objectives will have a positive impact on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage..

## **6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached in Appendix B. This will be published on the Council's website together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- 6.2 There are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with this report.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 A 10 week public consultation ran from 12 December 2023 to 9 February 2024. The consultation report is shown in Appendix 1.
- 7.2 Overall, the majority of respondents agreed with the Council's objectives and approach. There were, however, varied opinions expressed in the free text section. Some supporting the Council's aspirations, others not supporting this area of work, and others making suggestions on areas that could be included.
- 7.3 As a result of consultation responses, additional narrative has been added to the SEP and action plan. These additions are highlighted in yellow. As the SEP

is a high-level plan, it has not been possible to add all suggestions as some go into specific detail on particular themes e.g. unpaid carers, loneliness, dropped curbs. Though these suggestions will be re-examined and considered when developing specific areas of work within the action plan.

- 7.4 There were some comments around how the plan will be monitored going forward. This will be considered as part of the EDI Steering Group, which is to be established as a result of the SEP.
- 7.5 Some respondents reflected that communication of the SEP action plan should be consistent across the Council. Communicating with all Council staff can be problematic, therefore there is a Corporate focus to address this issue, with a view to improving internal communication.
- 7.6 The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on [26<sup>th</sup> February 2024](#) and the feedback is attached at appendix 5.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Any financial implications arising from this report will be dealt with by individual service areas, e.g. staff replacement costs to attend relevant training sessions.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

The SEP has been developed to meet the requirements in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, known as the Wales Specific Equality Duties.

## **10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015**

- 10.1 The SEP compliments the Council's new Corporate Plan, in that equality, diversity and inclusion will be embedded across all service delivery plans.
- 10.2 Due regard has been made to all 7 well-being goals and the 5 ways of working, as contained within the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), which requires the Council to think about the long term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

## **11. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS**

- 11.1 This applies to all electoral wards.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 The Council's Strategic Equality Plan has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality & Human Rights Commission.

**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee-***

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

***Contact Officer:***

Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**Item: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028**

**Background Papers**

None

**Officer to contact:**

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