

CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of Item:	Equality Objectives Consultation Document 2024-28
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Menna Trenholme, Cabinet Member for Corporate Support
Relevant Officer:	Delyth G Williams, Equality Adviser
Date of meeting:	28 November 2023

1. Decision Sought:

The decision is sought to release the consultation document for public consultation on the Equality Objectives for 2024-28. The Objectives will be included as part of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28.

2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision:

According to the specific duty of Welsh public organisations as part of the Equality Act 2010, a Strategic Equality Plan needs to be created every four years. As part of that work our Equality Objectives for the period need to be reviewed. It is also part of the specific duty to include people with protected characteristics when making our decision.

3. Introduction and Rationale

3.1 Background/Introduction

The Cabinet has already identified Ensuring Fairness for All, the Statutory Equality Plan, as one of the Council's priorities through the Council's Plan. The period of the current Plan, along with the Objectives, is coming to an end shortly and revised objectives need to be in place for early April 2024. We are therefore working to ensure that we have suitable objectives for the period 2024-28.

3.2 Rationale and justification for recommending the decision

To create these Objectives, we have engaged widely with a range of people between April and August 2023. As it is difficult for people to comment on a blank sheet of paper, we have started by asking for their views on our current Objectives and we have then moved on to ask what else they would prioritise. The methods used include a questionnaire in various formats and languages, which has received nearly 600 responses. The equality officers have also met with a range of groups of protected people and characteristics, including, young carers, disabled people, LGBTQ+ persons, etc. The report on the engagement is attached. The engagement was widely promoted, through various means including Newyddion

Gwynedd, press releases, social websites, emails to organisations, handing out QR code cards at events.

We also have a data document called *Equality in North Wales 2023: Data and Evidence* report which collects together widely sourced information. The work, created by Cyngor Gwynedd's Research and Information Service, was commissioned by the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network (with funding from North Wales Public Service Boards), to obtain the information necessary for identifying objectives all in the same place. This document is also attached.

The Welsh Government has also created action plans in the areas of anti-racism and LGBTQ+ which provide us with guidance.

It is only after considering all this evidence that we can adjust our objectives and create a draft for consultation. That is the attached consultation document.

An important part of doing this work is the *Impact Assessment on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh language and Socio-Economic Impact*, which is attached. As the Objectives are intended to improve fairness, the Impact Assessment certainly demonstrates that. But it has also given us the chance to see where our efforts need to be focused and check that there are no unexpected results arising from them.

The Impact Assessment also shows that the Objectives have a positive impact on socio-economic disadvantage, something we are required to look at under the Socio-Economic Duty 2021. Data demonstrates that people with certain protected characteristics are more likely to live in financial poverty or be affected more often or more harshly by factors such as digital poverty or living far from services. The fact that the Objectives have a positive impact on people with those characteristics therefore means that we reduce the socio-economic disparity.

It can also be seen here that the Objectives have a positive impact on the Welsh language, and that specific steps are proposed to eliminate any possible negative effect.

The Impact Assessment also looks at the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It shows that the Objectives, and the way we have operated, comply with the Sustainable Development Duty under the act, meeting the 5 ways of working.

In light of the above, we believe that the document is suitable for publication as a Consultation Document. That said, the document is currently only a draft, and we are fully prepared to amend it following the next steps.

3.3 Next steps

Should the Cabinet accept this consultation document we will hold a period of consultation on the Objectives. We will modify the attached document to make it suitable for different audiences (e.g., questionnaire, different languages, easyread). The intention is to provide a questionnaire in a variety of formats, but also to receive comments via email or letter if that

better suits the respondent. In addition, the equality officers will visit groups of people with equality characteristics, different ones this time, to get their views. We believe the best practice is to visit people rather than waiting for them to come to us. We will strive to reach groups that are under-represented in engagement and/or groups that would otherwise be unlikely to participate.

We expect that the Objectives and Impact Assessment will need to be modified as a result of the comments we receive in the consultation in order to improve the document. Once the adjustments have been made, we will bring the Objectives, as part of the Strategic Equality Plan back to Cabinet for your final decision.

4. Views of the Statutory Officers

4.1 Chief Finance Officer

Nothing to add from the perspective of financial propriety.

4.2 Monitoring Officer

The recommendation to consult on the proposed Equalities Objectives is a key step in creating the Equalities Strategy 24 -28. I am content with the propriety of holding a consultation and the draft Objectives.

List of Appendices

Equality Objectives Advisory Document 2024-28
Impact Assessment on the Equality Characteristics, Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Impact
Report on the Consultation
Equality in North Wales 2023

List of Background Documents