

MEETING	Scrutiny Committee – Corporate
DYDDIAD	4 February 2015
TEITL	Strategic Equality Plan
PWRPAS	Reducing inequality between people who share an equality characteristic and society as a whole.
AWDUR	Cllr Ioan Thomas
SWYDDOG CYSWLLT	Delyth G Williams, Policy and Equality Officer

1 The Report’s Purpose

1.1 To scrutinise the Strategic Equality Plan before it is adopted, and offer suggestions regarding the draft plan

2 Introduction

2.1 The purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20 is to reduce inequality between people with equality characteristics and the rest of society. These characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Race - including ethnic or national origin, color or nationality
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion or belief - including lack of belief
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

(Equality Act 2010)

2.2 What Gwynedd Council wants to do is place the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. Appropriate arrangements to ensure equality are of vital importance in order to do that. It will not be possible to provide a consistent service to all otherwise.

3 Relevant Considerations

3.1 Why these four objectives?

We believe that these 4 objectives are the ones that need addressing in order to ensure that equality is central to the Council’s work:

Objective 1: To improve our arrangements to discover and use the opinion of people who share equality characteristics

Listening to people is important in order to ensure that the services we provide are appropriate for them. There is enough anecdotal evidence to demonstrate that the people of Gwynedd feel that this is a priority, e.g. saying that they believe that a decision has been made before consultation. We are aware that our contact with some groups has lapsed, e.g. the decline of the Disability Core Group

Objective 2: To improve our equality impact assessment arrangements

Although impact assessment arrangements have been developed as part of the previous Strategic Equality Plan, we have identified, from the assessments that we have seen, that there is room to improve their consistency and development. The Equality and Human Rights Commission together with the Older People's Commissioner emphasise the importance of such assessments.

Objective 3: To create the circumstances for people from different backgrounds to represent the people of Gwynedd by standing in an election to become an elected member

The Equality Commission has identified that further work is required in the field since there has not been much improvement in political representation by individuals with equality characteristics over the past five years. The Local Government Act (2012) also places a duty on us to increase diversity.

Objective 4: To identify any employment and pay inequalities and to take action to reduce them

The most recent pay audit has demonstrated that the Council has acted to ensure that basic pay is equal. What requires attention is to identify if there are barriers preventing any group from receiving opportunities to develop within the work.

At the moment only 46% of staff have disclosed information about equality characteristics. Whilst accepting the rights of the individuals not to disclose, more complete information would make it easier for us to identify inequalities.

3.2 Are there additional resources to carry out these projects in Gwynedd? What additional resources are available, and will this be sufficient to realise the changes?

No additional resources are available to address equality issues. Equality is something that every member of staff and elected members should consider when undertaking their day to day work and there is a statutory duty on the Council to do so. We believe that by giving due regard to the contribution and

experience of people with specific characteristics we can provide services more effectively and efficiently.

3.3 Equality is an area that needs to be considered by each service. Are arrangements in place to raise awareness of the plan and its contents to the officers, and the duties of each officer?

We intend to contact staff through Internal Communication to inform them of the consultation.

The Plan's objectives are relevant to each Department and Service. As it is intended that the departments include specific work in their business plans it should be a natural part of every services' work.

It is our intention to look at training needs in this area, following the successful training on impact assessments (in terms of numbers and feedback) in the months of July to September 2015.

3.4 In the same way, are there any plans to raise awareness of the scheme and the role of elected Members in equality?

Information on the consultation will be given to Members via Rhaeadr.

See point 3.5 regarding training.

3.5 What is the procedure for ensuring equality training for Members and officials? How many members who have been on the equalities training so far?

As officials, we need to review the provision in the field. Your Responsibility for Equality training was held before Christmas and 22 Members attended. Eight Members attended external training on Gypsy and Traveller Equality organised by the Welsh Government over the same period.

3.6 What will be different within a year of adopting this plan?

Within a year, we expect that equality issues will be incorporated into Departments' business plans. We expect that links with specific characteristic groups will have strengthened and we will be able to input feedback into impact assessments. We will also have better information about the equality characteristics of the workforce and about any issues preventing people from standing as Councillors

4 Reasons for Recommending the Decision

4.1 Scrutiny will add value to the consultation

5 Next steps and Timetable

5.1 Continue with the consultation on the Strategic Equality Plan and take the final report to the Cabinet on 15 March 2016.

6 List of Appendices / Bibliography

6.1 Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20

6.2 Strategic Equality Plan Equality Impact Assessment