

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2013**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

SUBJECT: **EQUALITY UPDATE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To present the draft revised Diversity and Equality policy for approval to Cabinet before it is published. The policy is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.02 To endorse the 2011/12 Annual Equality Report. The report is available in the Members' library.
- 1.03 To provide an update on the first 6 months of the implementation of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 The Council's Diversity and Equality was revised to reflect changes in equality legislation brought in by the Equality Act 2010. In July 2012 Members agreed that the amended draft Diversity and Equality policy could be circulated for wider consultation with the public, stakeholders and employees. The consultation has been undertaken and the results have now been reviewed and incorporated into the policy.
- 2.02 The Diversity and Equality policy is supported and linked to other Council policies, strategies and schemes. These include the Welsh Language Scheme, Dignity At Work policy and Strategic Equality Plan.
- 2.03 Cabinet have previously received reports outlining the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, the public sector equality duty and the requirement to publish a Strategic Equality Plan.
- 2.04 The public sector equality duty places a general duty to promote equality; this came into force in April 2011.
The general duty to promote equality means that public authorities, must in carrying out their functions have due regard to:
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 2.05 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has only recently confirmed the requirement for all public bodies to publish an annual equality report by 31 March 2013 for the year 2011/ 2012. This is available in the Members' library and covers our arrangements for meeting the general duty.
- 2.06 The Equality Act also placed a specific duty on public bodies which requires them to :-
- draw up a strategic equality plan by April 2012
 - prepare and publish equality objectives by 2 April 2012
 - publish objectives to address pay differences
 - produce an annual report by 31 March each year
- 2.07 The Council published its 4 year Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) in April 2012 and is required to publish an annual report setting out the progress it is making to achieving its equality objectives. The first report for the SEP for the period April 2012- March 2013 is due by 31 March 2014. An update on the first six months of implementing the SEP is provided in paragraph 3.08.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 **Diversity and Equality Policy**
Consultation on the draft Diversity and Equality policy has resulted in greater references to Welsh language and the future Welsh language Standards in several sections including the section relating to Contractors.
- 3.02 Valuing diversity and promoting equality is integral to good practice in employment and service delivery with responsibility for the policy being an integral part of every employee's role, wherever they work. As with any Council policy it is important that managers and employees understand how to apply the policy and their responsibilities to each other and customers.
- 3.03 To promote awareness, understanding and to demonstrate to stakeholders, employees and members of the public the Council's commitment to diversity and equality, it is proposed that a variety of methods will be used to cascade the new policy over the next few months. It will also be available in Easy Read and as a summary.
- 3.04 Monitoring the implementation of the policy will be undertaken through:-

- workforce diversity monitoring
- reviewing complaints about discrimination and incidents of bullying and harassment in the workplace
- reviewing customer complaints about discrimination
- monitoring the diversity profile of customer experience

This will identify if there is any difference in satisfaction levels or complaints from different sectors of our community and if there are areas of potential inequality in employment or trends relating to bullying and harassment in the workplace.

3.05 **Annual Equality Report 2011-2012**

This annual report sets out the Council's progress in meeting the general duty to promote equality. There have been several areas of improvement which demonstrate the Council's commitment to equality. These have been identified in the annual report and include:-

- continued physical alterations to buildings to ensure they are accessible for disabled people
- a significant increase in the use of interpretation and translation facilities from two requests in 2004 -2005 to 163 requests for alternative formats and 94 requests for different languages during 2011- 2012.
- the One Community project, developed in partnership with Barnardos, has continued to provide information and advice to migrant workers; over 1000 Black and minority ethnic people used this service and over 800 White indigenous community accessed this service during 2011- 2012
- an increased number of Traveller pupils have accessed secondary education.

3.06 Although progress continues to be made there are still remain areas of improvement in relation to collating and analysing employee and customer equality data. This information is important in helping to understand the make up of employees and customers, the impact of policies and practices upon them and to identify future equality objectives. This has been identified as an action within the Strategic Equality Plan.

3.07 **Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016 Update**

Good progress has been made during 2012/13 on the actions contained within this plan.

3.08 Key areas of progress:-

- Social Services for Adults and Social Services for Children have systems in place to capture the diversity profile of their customers and undertake analysis of the data.
- Progress has been made in HR to ensure the diversity profile of employees is captured to meet the employment duty of the

Equality Act; and arrangements are in place to analyse the data and publish the workforce information report.

3.09 Of the 14 actions which were due to be completed during the first six months:

- 5 are complete
- 7 are in progress
- 2 not yet started (or not started by all Directorates)

Half of the 12 actions due to be completed by 30th March 2013, have been started.

Six of the actions without a confirmed completion date have now been completed.

3.10 **Future reporting**

Actions contained in the SEP will be contained within the relevant Service and Directorate plans. Reporting on progress will subsequently be reported in the Quarterly Performance Reports starting with Quarter 1 for 2013/14.

4.00 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Diversity and Equality policy before publication and wider promotion.

4.02 Cabinet endorse the 2011/12 Annual Equality Report.

4.03 Cabinet note the progress made in relation to the implementation of the Strategic Equality Plan 2012/16.

5.00 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 There will be costs to promote the policy both internally and externally; these will be met from in - year budgets.

5.02 Costs for training employees will be met from in - year budgets.

6.00 **ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 Making progress in equality will benefit those disadvantaged groups who experience poverty.

7.00 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 Promoting equality and implementation of the SEP will improve accessibility to the natural and built environment.

8.00 **EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.01 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that equality is at the heart of all way that the Council's employment practices and in the way it carries out its business. The policy takes into account the needs of diverse groups and people with a protected characteristic; it aims to eliminate discrimination and harassment, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.
- 8.02 The policy and summary will be available bilingually (English and Welsh) and published in different formats on the website, such as British Sign Language DVD and Easy Read.
- 8.03 The Strategic Equality Plan identifies specific equality objectives which will address discrimination and harassment and will have a positive impact, improving outcomes for Flintshire County Council employees and Flintshire residents.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 Workforce implications are identified in the SEP.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

- 10.01 No further consultation is required on the Diversity and Equality Policy. Consultation is included within relevant actions in the SEP.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 11.01 Consultation on the Diversity and Equality Policy has been undertaken with a range of stakeholders including employees, members of the public, Town and Community Councillors and other public bodies. Directorates were consulted in order to update the Strategic Equality Plan and provide information for the 2011/2012 Annual Equality Report.

12.00 APPENDICES

- 12.01 Appendix 1 Diversity and Equality Policy

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Report To Executive 27 March 2012 Strategic Equality Plan 2012 - 2016

Report To Cabinet 10 July 2012 Diversity and Equality Policy

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