

## FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** **CABINET**

**DATE:** **TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**REPORT BY:** **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**SUBJECT:** **ANNUAL MONITORING REPORTS: STRATEGIC EQUALITY  
PLAN AND WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME**

### **1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To endorse the annual monitoring reports for the period 2012 – 2013 for both the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme, prior to publication and distribution to the relevant regulatory bodies. The reports are available in the Members' library.

### **2.00 BACKGROUND**

2.01 The Council has a statutory duty to produce annual monitoring reports for its Strategic Equality Plan and its Welsh Language Scheme.

2.03 The Equality Act 2010 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

2.04 The Council published its four year Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) in April 2012 which sets out the steps that will be taken to achieve the equality objectives. This is the first annual monitoring report for the SEP for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

2.05 The Council's Welsh Language Scheme, which was prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993, sets out how the Council will treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality, when providing services to the public, and in the conduct of its internal business. The Welsh Language Scheme is both a statutory Scheme and a corporate policy document on bilingualism.

2.06 The Council is required by the Welsh Language Act 1993 to submit an annual monitoring report to the Welsh Language Commissioner. It has been agreed with the Welsh Language Commissioner to submit the monitoring report in September 2013. The Welsh Language Commissioner has set out the information which must be included in the report. She will respond to the report and may request additional evidence and make recommendations for

improvement.

- 2.07 Both the annual monitoring reports highlight the Council's progress in implementing the SEP and Welsh Language Scheme (WLS) for the period 2012-13 and show case examples of good practice. These reports also include a self assessment RAG status, assessing overall progress and confidence in achieving the equality objectives and Welsh language targets.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **3.01 Annual Monitoring Report: Strategic Equality Plan.**

Over 80 actions were due to be completed by March 2013. Progress to meeting these actions is set out below:

- 41 actions have been completed on time
- 21 actions are in progress
- 13 actions have not been completed/started

- 3.02 Overall good progress is being made, achievements that have been identified during the first year of the SEP are set out in the annual monitoring report; they include:-

- Awarded "Most Improved Welsh Employer" by Stonewall Cymru in recognition of the progress being made to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the Workplace. Improving the workplace for lesbian, gay and bisexual employees improves the workplace for everyone, regardless of their background.
- The development of "Changing Places" facilities in two Leisure Centres which will increase accessibility for disabled people.
- Physical alterations were made to four secondary schools and four primary schools, including fire exits, science laboratory, toilets and external ramps to support disabled pupils access the full curriculum.

In total:

- twelve out of 72 primary schools are now fully accessible
- one out of 12 high schools is fully accessible
- two of the six other schools/units including special schools are fully accessible.

The remaining schools are partially accessible

- All of the Council's libraries (13) were audited for disability access; eight of these are now fully accessible. A plan is being developed to improve the accessibility of the remaining libraries.
- The interpretation and translation facilities continue to be used consistently; there were 115 requests for information in alternative formats, such as Braille and large Print, and 194 requests for information in different languages during 2012- 2013.

- 3.03 There remain areas for improvement. The purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan is to reduce known inequalities for the protected groups identified in the

Equality Act. Capturing baseline data is critical to being able to measure improvements and to check whether specific inequalities have been reduced by 2016. As this is the first full year of reporting, baseline data is still being collated. The future 2013 -2014 annual report should be complete with data for analysis, benchmarking etc. and targets set for improvement.

**3.04 Annual Monitoring Report: Welsh Language Scheme**

The Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report 2012-13 shows that although the Council is successfully implementing many of the Scheme's commitments, some of the targets have not been met. Of the 42 actions due to be completed by March 2013:

- 15 have been completed on time
- 12 are in progress
- 13 have not been completed / started

**3.05 There are signs of improvement :**

- In 2010- 2011, monitoring of a sample of contracts revealed that only 25% complied with the requirements of the Council's Welsh Language Scheme. In 2012-13, 93% of a sample of contracts complied with the Welsh Language Scheme.
- Social Services for Adults are working towards "More Than Just Words", Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care which has been developed by the Welsh Government. The Framework aims to strengthen Welsh language services; implementing the Framework will support Social Services for Adults to mainstream Welsh language provision and meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme.
- Continued investment has been made in the development of employees; supporting them to improve and enhance their Welsh language skills enabling them to provide public services through the medium of Welsh.
- An audit of the Welsh language skills of all employees is currently being undertaken. The aim is to achieve 100% data by March 2014. This will help to prioritise and develop a workforce plan to ensure training is targeted to employees where Welsh language skills are essential to the post

**3.06 The Council received more complaints / comments in 2012 -2013 (14) compared to 2011-12 (9) about the Welsh Language Scheme. However, the number and percentage of complaints dealt with in accordance with the corporate standards was higher in 2012-13, both in terms of type of response and overall. These complaints related to lack of bilingual communication or service provision and technical issues. These types of complaints should be reduced as staff awareness and understanding is developed through the provision of Welsh language skills training and Welsh language awareness training.**

3.07 Although there has been some improvement, some of the actions from the Welsh Language Scheme remain outstanding from 2009, when they were identified as improvement areas by the Welsh Language Board. Incorporating all actions within Service Plans should help accelerate progress.

3.08 **Moving Forward**

Although there has been progress in both the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme, there has been inconsistent progress across Directorates. Focussing on the links between the equality, Welsh language and the Improvement Plan will contribute to integrate them within the Council's Business Planning processes and mainstream into employment practice, service design and delivery. The relevant actions from both the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme will be incorporated into Service Plans to ensure that they are implemented and monitored regularly. This will facilitate easier reporting for Directorates in the future and support new post holders in awareness of their responsibilities. Future Service Performance Reports will provide progress reports on both the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme.

**4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 Cabinet endorse the annual monitoring reports for the period 2012 – 2013 for both the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme prior to publication and formal submission to the relevant regulatory bodies.

**5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 There are no financial implications to this report; the annual monitoring reports set out progress that has been made to achieve targets and commitments within the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme.

**6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 Achieving the equality objectives will have a positive impact on people from protected groups who experience poverty.

**7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 None.

**8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 Implementing the Strategic Equality Plan and the Welsh Language Scheme will have a positive impact on all protected groups and Welsh speakers. The Strategic Equality Plan annual monitoring report will be published in a variety of formats including Easy Read to ensure it is accessible to the Council's diverse community.

## **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 There are no direct personnel implications associated with this report. However, the effective implementation of the Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme is dependent on staff having an awareness and understanding of their requirements and how they impact on their posts.

## **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 None required.

## **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 Directorate Equality Representatives were consulted in order to update both the action plans and provide information for the annual monitoring reports.

## **12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 Appendix 1 Annual Monitoring Report 2012-2013 Strategic Equality Plan (available in Member's Library)

12.02 Appendix 2 Annual Monitoring Report 2012 -2013 Welsh Language Scheme (available in Member's Library)

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.

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