

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **EXECUTIVE**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 27 MARCH 2012**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

SUBJECT: **STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2012- 2016**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To agree the Council's set of equality objectives as a basis for the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2012- 2016.
- 1.02 To advise Executive of the requirements to ensure compliance with the public sector equality duties of the Equality Act 2010.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 All devolved public authorities in Wales are required by the public sector equality duties of the Equality Act 2010 to identify and publish equality objectives and produce a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), every four years, and report annually on progress. The equality objectives need to be published by 2 April 2012.
- 2.02 Executive received a report in July 2011 outlining the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty. There are two parts to the public sector equality duty – the general duty and specific duty. The statutory (specific) duties require listed bodies in Wales to:
- Draw up a strategic equality plan by April 2012
 - Prepare and publish equality objectives by 2 April 2012
 - Publish objectives and action plan to address pay differences
 - Publish a statement setting out the steps it has taken or intends to take to meet the objectives and how long it expects to take to meet each objective
 - Produce an annual report on progress
 - Produce by 31 March each year an annual report detailing specified employment information, including information on training and pay
- 2.03 The aim of these duties is to ensure the delivery of positive outcomes for customers, employees and potential employees through evidenced based objectives. The Strategic Equality Plan sets out how the Council will meet the general duty and achieve the equality objectives. The Strategic Equality Plan is attached as Appendix 1. It provides evidence supporting the Council's approach to its content.

- 2.04 The general duty and specific duty also apply to the governing body of an educational establishment maintained by a Welsh local authority; therefore, schools are responsible for producing their own Strategic Equality Plans. Workshops have been held with schools to raise awareness of the requirements of the legislation. "Fact Files" for Governors have also been circulated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Welsh Local Government Association has also provided support material.
- 2.05 The Equality Act 2010 does not include Welsh language. The Welsh language and bilingual commitments are addressed through the Council's Welsh Language Scheme and Welsh Language Skills Strategy.
- 2.06 All public authorities are responsible for meeting the general and specific duties of the Act; the responsibility lies with the groups or individuals who are legally responsible for the authority's acts or failures to act. Failure to implement the Strategic Equality Plan and meet the requirements of the specific duties may lead to the Council being served a compliance notice.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The Equality Act 2010 describes the protected groups as:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Our equality objectives aim to address inequalities in outcomes to these groups.

3.02 Regional and local equality objectives were developed by working in partnership with other public bodies across North Wales and working with local stakeholders. Activities undertaken to identify objectives include:-

- Circulation of a questionnaire to local stakeholders and employees
- Research of national and local data
- Workshops with local stakeholders
- A regional consultation event with both regional and national stakeholders

- Involvement of Directorate equality representatives

3.03 The following key equality objectives have been identified for North Wales:

- Reduce **Health** inequalities
- Reduce unequal outcomes in **Education** to maximise individual potential
- Reduce inequalities in **Employment**
- Reduce inequalities in personal **Safety**
- Reduce inequalities in **Representation and Voice**
- Improve **Access** to information, services, buildings and the environment

Details of the regional objectives and research are available in the Member's library.

3.04 The outcomes from both regional and local engagement activities are consistent and have highlighted similar areas of inequality. However very limited quantitative data has been available and this remains a key action that will contribute to the objectives.

3.05 Flintshire County Council's contribution to the regional objectives is demonstrated through setting local equality objectives, actions and measures. These are contained within our Strategic Equality Plan action plans (included within Appendix 1) and will be published on our website. The Council's Equality Objectives are:

Health

Service users from all protected groups make healthy lifestyle choices

Adults with a learning disability have a health check

Looked After Children have access to health care

Older people who receive social care are treated with dignity and respect

Transgender and Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people are treated with dignity and respect when receiving social care

Education

The gap in educational attainment levels of boys and girls at all key stages is reduced

Young people access increased opportunities for employment

The educational attainment levels of Looked After Children improves

Vulnerable young people i.e. NEETS (Not in education, employment

or training) and young offenders have access to increased opportunities for training and skills development

Children and Young People feel safe at school

Employment

Improve the quality and quantity of workforce data relating to protected characteristics

Employees demonstrate an awareness of diversity and equality issues and the public sector equality duties

There is no pay gap between men and women employed by the Council

Personal Safety

People do not experience hate related harassment or crime in the community.

The LGBT community, disabled people, older people and people from a black and minority ethnic (BME) community feel confident in reporting domestic abuse

Repeat incidents of domestic violence are minimised across all protected characteristics

Representation and Voice

The profile of people who participate in public life and representative bodies, for example, school governors, schools councils, tenants and residents associations and service user planning groups better reflects the make up of the local community.

Protected groups are represented in consultation activities and equality impact assessments

Access to information and services

Customers with protected characteristics can easily access information

Customers with protected characteristics have equality of access to services, transport, the built environment and open spaces which the Council provides or manages.

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring the progress of the implementation of the Plan enables the authority to meet its statutory duties and improve outcomes in employment and services. This ensures that the authority monitors compliance with legislation and targets resources where additional support is needed. To assist with monitoring Directorates will incorporate relevant objectives within their business planning

approaches. The Corporate Management Team will also monitor progress and compliance. An annual report will be presented to Executive for review and endorsement.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That Executive approves the local equality objectives for publication and the Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016.

4.02 That Executive note the requirements of the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 There are financial implications for rolling out a training programme to ensure employees have the skills and knowledge for the Council to meet its statutory duties. A budget for equalities training is held by the Corporate Training Manager and the costs of associated training will be met from this budget. It is difficult to assess the cost of implementing the plan. The costs (if any) of any initiatives undertaken or proposed by Directorates will be expected to be met from existing resources.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 Placing equality at the heart of every thing that we do will contribute to addressing poverty experienced by people across all equality strands.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None identified.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan is to ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duty to promote equality, eliminate discrimination and foster good community relations for people who live in, work and visit Flintshire.

8.02 The Strategic Equality Plan will be published bilingually, in English and Welsh, and in Easy Read. It will also be available in different formats and languages on request.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None identified in this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 All public bodies are required to engage and involve people from the protected groups in the development of the equality objectives and SEP.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 A regional consultation event has been facilitated with public bodies across North Wales to develop a more co-ordinated and efficient way of engaging and consulting with stakeholders.

11.02 In addition involvement activities have been undertaken with local stakeholders and with services.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Report to Executive February 2010 Equality Act 2010

Report to Executive July 2011 Annual Equality Report 2010-2011

Contact Officer: Fiona Mocko
Telephone: 01352 702122
Email: fiona.mocko@flintshire.gov.uk