

MEETING	Cabinet
DATE	15 March 2016
TITLE	Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20
PURPOSE	To approve the Gwynedd Council Strategic Equality Plan
AUTHOR	Councillor Ioan Thomas
CONTACT OFFICER	Geraint Owen, Head of Corporate Support

1 The decision sought/purpose of the report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to submit the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20 for approval.

2 Introduction

2.1 The purpose of Gwynedd Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20 is to reduce inequality between people who have equality characteristics and the rest of society. The plan has been prepared in accordance with the duty which has been set by the Equality Act 2010 on public authorities in Wales to produce and publish a Strategic Equality Plan, and to consult with the public as part of that.

2.2 A draft version of the plan was approved for consultation by the Cabinet on 19 January 2016.

3 Relevant Considerations

3.1 The plan

The plan notes our Equality Objectives and the steps we will take to realise them. These objectives are based on:

- Internal information
- Voice and participation
- Data on equality characteristics

3.2 The plan:

3.2.1 Demonstrates the emphasis we place on receiving the comments and opinions of people who share equality characteristics and to respond to that which they are telling us when we plan our services.

- 3.2.2 Highlights that we are concentrating on permeating equality matters to the day to day work of the Council in order to provide services which make a difference to people who share equality characteristics.
- 3.2.3 Draws attention to the improvements that we want to make in order to ensure equality impact assessments which are consistent and of the highest standard.
- 3.2.4 Is consistent with the six regional objectives which have been agreed as part of the work of the Council with the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network.

Other matters

- 3.3 The Equality Impact Assessment which has been prepared alongside the plan demonstrates the positive impact of the plan on the people of Gwynedd.
- 3.4 The progress of the plan will be monitored as part of the Council's usual performance management work. In accordance with the requirements of the act, we will publish an annual report which will demonstrate the progress that we will have made towards delivering our four objectives.

Consultation

- 3.5 Consultation was carried out with the following groups of stakeholders between 19 January and 1 March 2016:
- Third Sector and the Voluntary Sector
 - Specific consultation groups, e.g. Older People Group
 - The public, through the press and social websites
 - Council staff, through the intranet
- 3.6 Twenty three responses were received, and everyone is thanked for taking the time to consider the plan and for their comments.
- 3.7 The following comments were received on the specific objectives in the plan:

Objective 1: To improve our arrangements to discover and use input from people who share equality characteristics

There was agreement that our engagement arrangements should be strengthened, face to face communication in particular.

Objective 2: To improve our equality impact assessment arrangements

The comments supported continuing to improve our arrangements in this context.

Objective 3: To reduce the difference between elected member representation and the county's population characteristics

The respondents were of the opinion that circumstances which enable good representation of Gwynedd's population characteristics should exist.

Objective 4: To identify any pay differences and to act to reduce them

There was support for this objective and an opinion that it needed to be tackled

- 3.8 There is a general opinion throughout the comments that the principle of treating everyone the same rather than drawing attention to differences should be embraced. The respondents were also of the opinion that what we learn through Objectives 1 and 2 above should be used to inform the decisions we make.
- 3.9 The plan was discussed with the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2016, and the good work in creating the plan was acknowledged.
- 3.10 To summarise, it can be reported that the comments demonstrate that there is a strong will to reduce inequality in Gwynedd.

4 Reasons for Recommending the Decision

- 4.1 The Cabinet is asked to approve the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20.

5 Next steps and timetable

- 5.1 Following approval of the report, it will be published and communicated using various methods, including social media. The plan will also be available in a variety of formats and languages on request.

6 Appendices List/Bibliography

Appendix 1: Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20

Views of the statutory officers

The Chief Executive:

Nothing to add on this plan which has been scrutinised by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. Obviously, as the Scrutiny Committee stated, as I understand, it will be necessary to monitor progress on implementation in this field carefully.

The Monitoring Officer:

The original plan was adopted in 2012 for 4 years in accordance with the statutory duties of the Council under equality legislation. The report reports appropriately on the results of the consultation and it is necessary to provide appropriate attention to these results together with all other relevant matters. The plan is an important part of addressing the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and I support the recommendation.

The Head of Finance Department:

I welcome this comprehensive Strategic Equality Scheme, which meets the relevant statutory requirement. I am satisfied that the Strategy and its implementation plan are focussed on changing attitudes and behaviours, and that there are no additional financial requirements for achieving this.

I therefore support the decision sought.