

Consultation Report

Introduction and Context

Alongside every local authority in Wales, to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, Caerphilly County Borough Council is required by the Welsh Government to prepare a Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-2024. This needs to be published by April 2020. The Plan has been written to explain to staff, elected members, citizens and stakeholders, how Caerphilly County Borough Council intends to deliver its equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive organisation that does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

Building on the ongoing commitment and previous work of the Council to achieve equality, the Council undertook a range of evidence gathering and pre-consultation engagement to develop the content of the draft Strategic Equality Plan and to develop draft Equality Objectives in a considered way:

- A review of legislative requirements
- A review of external reports and guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- A review of the Council's current Strategic Equalities Plan and associated documents and guidance
- A review of previous consultation exercises undertaken by the Council in relation to equalities issues
- An analysis of local and national datasets
- A review of the Welsh Government and other local authority equalities documents
- Engagement with service delivery managers within the Council
- Discussions with the Welsh Local Government Association, Welsh Government and other local authorities across Wales, regarding key equalities issues which are current and in the future that could be considered equality objectives

The draft equality objectives within the Plan were then subject to a period of formal consultation.

Purpose

The purpose of the formal consultation undertaken was to seek the views of citizens, elected members, staff and other stakeholders on the draft objectives outlined within the draft Strategic Equality Plan and to identify the most appropriate actions to help the Council achieve those objectives, once agreed. This approach will help identify meaningful actions based identified need and is in line with that of Welsh Government.

Specifically, the consultation invited respondents to give their views in relation to each of the draft objectives as outlined below:

1. Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services
2. Improve education opportunities for all
3. Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities
4. Engage with members of the community to participate and have their voices heard when planning service delivery
5. Ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements
6. Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough
7. Reduce the Gender Pay Gap

Views were sought on whether the objectives outlined will help the Council to reduce inequalities in the workforce and assist service access and delivery. Where respondents disagreed with any of the objectives they were asked to give reasons for their views. The consultation also asked respondents to highlight any areas of inequality not covered by the proposed objectives and to then identify key actions the Council should take to ensure that we reduce inequalities in the workforce and assist service access and delivery. Respondents were also asked whether their response to the consultation had been influenced because of any of the protected characteristics as this may have a bearing on the responses given.

Methodology (What we did)

The formal consultation took place over a period of 4 weeks from 11th November 2019 to 6th December 2019.

Supporting documents used in the consultation can be found in **Annex 1**

- [Annex 1a - Summary of Context and Strategic Objectives](#)
- [Annex 1b - Easy read version](#)
- [Annex 1c - Questionnaire](#)
- [Annex 1d - Presentation used at face to face consultation meetings](#)

To enable all those who wished to give their views to take part, all consultation documents were made available bilingually and in a variety of formats including easy read and large print. The consultation was promoted in a variety of ways and made available across a range of platforms. The primary consultation tool was a questionnaire but participants were encouraged to respond in a number of ways. Face to face consultation took place with groups who have a particular interest in this consultation and are harder to reach via other consultation methods.

Staff and Elected Members

The consultation was promoted internally to elected members and employees:

- via e-mail messages
- Service Managers via Management Network
- via the Council's Intranet page and
- paper versions were made available to non-office based staff where requested

Stakeholder groups

Details of the consultation and how to get involved were distributed widely to:

- local and regional organisations with an interest in equalities issues and local public sector partner organisations via e-mail distribution lists for wider circulation
- local third sector organisations via Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) for wider dissemination
- local town and community councils via e-mail. All town and community council's held meetings within or just after the consultation period
- Caerphilly Viewpoint Panel members, Caerphilly People First, the Regional Community Cohesion Officer, Menter Iaith Caerffili, Disability Cando, Caerphilly 50+ Forum, Umbrella Cymru, Stonewall Cymru, Disability Wales, Deaf-Friendly and Caerphilly County Borough's Youth Service and LGBT Youth Group were contacted via e-mail and encouraged to take part

To give the opportunity for in depth feedback, face-to-face focus groups were held with:

Caerphilly People First

Members of staff from the Equalities team attended the County meeting of Caerphilly People First at their offices in Bargoed on 26th November 2019. A presentation was made to the group and participants views were sought in relation to each of the draft equalities objectives.

Caerphilly Parent Network

Members of the Equalities team attended both meetings with both Gelligaer and New Tredegar groups on 3rd December 2019. Details of the presentation were provided as a handout and the group members were guided through a discussion around the proposed equalities objectives.

Caerphilly Deaf Community

During the consultation period, a British Sign Language facilitator met with Deaf people across the county borough and asked their views on the draft plan. A written response summarising their comment was then provided to the Council.

Disability CanDo

On behalf of the Council, Disability CanDo carried out three sessions with

- **Dementia Friendly Café at St Gladwys Church Hall, Bargoed**
- **Mental Health Group at Platform Offices, Oakwood and**
- **Sight Club at Fleur De Lys Community Hall.**

Many of those contacted would not have been able to complete the survey online.

Residents and the wider audience

To reach as wide an audience as possible

- the consultation was highlighted on the front page of the Council's website with a link directly to the consultation documentation and an online survey. A paper version of the survey was also available for printing from the Website or on request in a variety of formats
- details of the consultation were shared via the Council's Twitter feed and Facebook page. The Facebook post reached 4173 people and 187 engagements
- A news release was prepared for the local media and shared on the Council's Website

Results Responses and respondent profile

Overall, 15 respondents completed the questionnaire online. Of these, only two people were under the age of 50. Half of those who completed the survey had a disability, two thirds were female and all identified their ethnic origin as white and English as their main language. A number of those who responded to the consultation indicated that they had first-hand experience of equalities issues.

In addition, three written responses were received, one from representatives of the Deaf community, one from a local councillor and one from a local resident.

In total 12 members of Caerphilly Parent Network attended the face to face focus group discussions. These were split between two separate groups (5 participants in Gelligaer and 7 participants in New Tredegar). All were female and 2 were grandparents.

At the meeting with Caerphilly People First, there were 20 people with learning disabilities 13 men and 7 women. The youngest at the meeting was 22 years old and the oldest 78 years old.

The group sessions carried out by Disability CanDo represents the involvement across the three groups of 38 people with disabilities and 18 carers or support workers. Those with disabilities were between 40 and 60 years of age with a predominance of older people.

Whilst an effort was made to engage with all sectors of the community, it is evident that no responses were received from individuals representing local religious groups or the black and minority ethnic community.

Respondent views and emerging themes

The consultation responses highlighted a number of overarching themes as well as specific issues and barriers in relation to the draft objectives outlined.

A digest of the responses received can be found in **Annex 2**:

- a) Summary of survey responses generated by SNAP
- b) Notes from group discussions
- c) Caerphilly People First Newsletter
- d) Written responses received
 - a. Deaf community
 - b. Cllr. James Pritchard
 - c. Resident response
- e) Response from Disability Can Do

We have incorporated the relevant Equality Objective and Action alongside the feedback that follows to demonstrate how the views of consultees have informed some of the actions.

Context

It was recognised by those who responded to the consultation that Equalities needs to be a high priority for the Council. Whilst not statistically valid due to the small number of responses, there was agreement amongst those who did respond, that the objectives outlined are relevant. The importance of ensuring that measurable actions with clear timeframes are attached to each objective and that progress towards these actions is monitored.

Objective 1: Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

Barriers identified:

- A lack of knowledge of how the Council works and what and how services are provided – often people do not know about services/education and training opportunities that are available to them
- Whilst digital options are useful to many they are not suitable for everyone in particular older people and adults with learning disabilities
- Libraries (and customer services) offer a vital point of face to face contact and resource to local communities in particular parents with young children and older people

- A lack of access to reliable public transport was considered a barrier to accessing services and impacts on the most isolated communities and the most vulnerable residents within those communities. Some feel very isolated as local facilities are being removed with no means to access services further afield
- Physical access can be a barrier (areas of Council responsibility in relation to this include maintenance of pavement surfaces, tree maintenance and street lighting)
- A lack of understanding of disabilities, mental health issues and other areas of equalities is seen to act as a barrier

What people think we should do:

- Information should be provided in formats and language choice (including BSL) to ensure that it is accessible to all. This is particularly important in relation to key Council services (e.g. refuse and recycling) and not just targeted services within Social Services (*Equality Objective 1 – Action 3*)
- Council employees should have equality and diversity training (*Equality Objective 3 – Action 2*)

No further comments came out of the consultation relating to this objective

Objective 2: Improve education opportunities for all

- Ensure that the education is a priority for the Council to ensure that all pupils are afforded the opportunity to learn in a cohesive environment
- Need to ensure adequate educational support for those with additional learning needs and consider the impact of the Additional Learning Needs Bill
- Need to improve employment opportunities for those with disabilities including autistic adults and those with learning disabilities
- Increase participation by removing barriers and ensuring that opportunities meet the needs/interests of residents

What people think we should do:

- To improve educational opportunities, there is a need to understand the difficulties people with disabilities have in accessing and maintaining employment and the impact a change of circumstances regarding employment can have on the lives of people with disabilities.

No further comments came out of the consultation relating to this objective

Objective 3: Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

- On the whole, participants in the consultation feel safe and included within their communities although with those with both physical and mental health conditions expressed that they had encountered discrimination

- There is a role for Elected Members in galvanising community cohesion
- The important role of the voluntary sector in facilitating community cohesion needs to be fully recognised

What people think we should do:

- Provide staff training to raise awareness of equalities and Welsh language issues to empower staff to identify and tackle discrimination and stereotyping (*Equality Objective 3 – Action 2*)
- Work with third sector organisations to identify ways in which we can work together in delivering our equalities duties (*Equality Objective 3 – Action 4*)

No further comments came out of the consultation relating to this objective

Objective 4: Engage with members of the community to participate and have their voices heard when planning service delivery

- Consideration of Equalities issues should be a key factor when making decisions in relation to service development and change. Carrying out a thorough Equality Impact Assessment and the appropriate consultation is fundamental to this process
- Well informed communities are able to engage more effectively therefore communication is the key. Communication needs to be appropriate to all audiences and face to face engagement was considered to be very important to those taking part.
- We need to engage with our communities in a *meaningful* way (face to face) and not “pay lip service” to equalities issues
- We need to feed back to our communities to ensure that they recognise how their views are taken on board and empower them to get involved further
- In considering the needs of one protected group, ensure that this does not have a negative impact on other protected groups
- Ensure that we utilise local data sources to reveal patterns of inequality that may be addressed
- We need to engage with staff at all levels within the organisation as they are key to ensuring that services are communicated and delivered effectively to residents and service users

What people think we should do:

- Review and strengthen internal processes for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments and related consultation (*Equality Objective 4 – Action 7*)
- Keep respondents and the wider community informed about the progress of the Plan and other consultations that are undertaken

Objective 5: Ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

- Whilst not of direct relevance to participants, they recognised that a rise in the number of younger Welsh speakers means that this objective will be of increasing importance moving forward

What people think we should do:

- The Council needs to ensure that the development of Welsh language education provision remains a priority

No further comments came out of the consultation relating to this objective

Objective 6 and 7: Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough and Reduce the Gender Pay Gap

- Whilst considered important by those who responded to the consultation, it was recognised that these are complex issues that the Council should take a lead on
- Diversity should be reflected in both the workforce and amongst Elected Members

What people think we should do:

- The Council should take the lead in identifying reasons for the gender pay gap and work with others (in particular Welsh Government) to set out proposals on how to reduce the gender pay gap

No further comments came out of the consultation relating to these objectives

Is there anything missing from the draft Plan?

- Ensure that Elected Members gain an awareness of equalities issues and ensure that there is clarity on the role of Elected Members in helping to deliver on equalities issues (*Equality Objective 3 – Action 2*)

Next steps

The outcomes of the consultation will be considered alongside feedback from staff and Service managers and will help to inform a revised version of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 before it is approved and adopted in April 2020. Actions identified as part of the consultation will be included within the final Strategic Equality Plan.

Annex 2: Digest of comments

Comments have been redacted to protect anonymity of respondents

[Annex 2a SEP Survey Summary 11.12.19](#)

[Annex 2b SEP Consultation – Parent Network Notes New Tredegar](#)

[Annex 2b SEP Consultation – Parent Network Notes Gelligaer](#)

[Annex 2b SEP Consultation – Caerphilly People First Notes](#)

[Annex 2c SEP Consultation – Caerphilly People First Newsletter](#)

[Annex 2d SEP Consultation – Response Cllr Pritchard](#)

[Annex 2d SEP Consultation – Response Deaf Community](#)

[Annex 2d SEP Consultation – Response Resident](#)

[Annex 2e SEP Consultation – Response Disability CandDo](#)