

WIRRAL COUNCIL

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE 16 FEBRUARY 2016

SUBJECT:	Annual Report: Equality Plan 2014-2017
WARD/S AFFECTED:	All Wards
REPORT OF:	Joe Blott, Strategic Director for Transformation and Resources
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Ann McLachlan (Governance), Councillor Adrian Jones (Support Services)
KEY DECISION?	No

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report highlights progress of Council's Equality Plan 2014-2017. The Equality Plan was approved by Cabinet in July 2014, and embracing equality has remained central to the way we have delivered services over the last year, and considered the needs of our employees and customers in the decisions we have made.
- 1.2 This report highlights some of the work we have undertaken to support our priorities. This is an ongoing process and we continue to focus on providing a workplace where employees feel comfortable to be themselves and perform to the best of their ability, and by ensuring we provide services which meet the current and future needs of our diverse residents.
- 1.3 The Co-ordinating Committee is requested to note the progress of the Equality Plan 2014-2017 in its first year of implementation.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Embracing equality and promoting diversity has been a Council value for a number of years now and reflects the approach the organisation takes to consider equality throughout all that we do.
- 2.2 The Equality Plan places a wider focus on equality, bedding this across the Council rather than it being something which stands alone. The 3 aims of the plan are:
 - To eliminate any unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation,

- To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,
- To foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2.3 The Neighbourhoods Senior Manager is the corporate lead for equality and produces quarterly performance reports on key activities.

2.4 The Workforce Equality Steering Group, Chaired by the Strategic Director for Transformation and Resources, receives quarterly performance reports which ensures that we continue to be monitored and challenged to improve.

2.5 Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)

2.5.1 Over the last 12 months there has been significant work involved in preparing the organisation for transformational change. This is an area that is continuously evolving and, as a result, the equality implications of change are considered as part of the process.

2.5.2 During the last 12 months a total of 132 EIA's were completed and published on the Council website. This process is designed to ensure that a policy or project does not discriminate against any disadvantaged or vulnerable people. It also helps us to identify where we can promote equality and diversity more, as well as negative or adverse impacts that can be removed or mitigated against.

2.5.3 We will continue to look for potential impacts of our decisions on our workforce, customers and communities during 2015/2016

2.6 Achievements August 2014 – August 2015

2.6.1 The reasonable adjustments policy has been updated and will be published on the intranet as part of the Attendance Management Policy. £25,000 has also been allocated in a corporate budget code to help staff obtain their reasonable adjustments more quickly. This year, £10,000 of the allocation has funded 'Text Help' software licences so we have a bank ready for when they are needed and staff do not have to wait for a licence to be issued.

2.6.2 The Performance Appraisal and Development form now includes best practice elements of the Equality Framework for Local Government and reasonable adjustments. This means all staff are now asked how they have promoted equality and diversity within their work. Plus, there is an automatic annual review of an employee's reasonable adjustments as part of their appraisal.

2.6.3 The equality profiling form for staff has been updated to include recent changes in the law such as equal marriage and shared parental leave. We have also updated the categories of information we ask for allowing us to meet

the legal requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The information we collect will help to further improve our recruitment and retention practices and lead to a more diverse workforce that reflects the community we serve.

- 2.6.4 An online exit interview has been developed to enable staff to tell us why they are leaving the organisation, without having face to face interviews if they do not want one. This should increase the amount of exit feedback which will help us identify any potential hotspot areas, patterns or trends.
- 2.6.5 An employee engagement panel is being established. We will use this panel to test everything from new policy development, to communication campaigns and e-learning modules. The group will represent all protected groups and all levels of the organisation, leading to a diverse employee network.
- 2.6.6 We have reviewed the last two years' of grievances and now the organisation can clearly identify the nature and type of these issues across directorates. This has led to bi-monthly reports going to each Departmental Management Team with early intervention in any potential hotspot areas and the implementation of the Dignity at Work policy.
- 2.6.7 43 members of staff now volunteer to be Dignity at Work advisors to support other colleagues. This was a key part of the launch of the new Dignity at Work, Grievance and Whistleblowing policies.
- 2.6.8 Wirral Council became one of the first local authorities in the country to ensure staff are paid a Living Wage. The Council also became the first local authority to offer companies discounted business rates if they do the same.
- 2.6.9 The GIRLS project, managed by the Youth Support Service, provides support for the most vulnerable and at risk young women aged between 13-19 years. The project helps them to increase their feelings of confidence and self-esteem. Informal and educational 12 week personal development programmes are implemented aimed at reducing risk-taking behaviour, reducing offending or re-offending, and anti-social behaviour.
- 2.6.10 The Council is supporting Victim Care Merseyside, including a new victims' referral system so people are directed straight to the best placed teams to support them and increase the number of face to face visits. This is to ensure the most vulnerable people get the protection and care they need.
- 2.6.11 More than 1,000 young people benefited from a hard-hitting road safety course, raising awareness of the dangers they face on the road as pedestrians, passengers or young drivers. The overall aim of the course was to reduce the number of young casualties on Wirral's roads.
- 2.6.12 Wirral's Family Intervention Programme achieved remarkable success in turning around the lives of families that have multiple and complex needs. There has been significant decreases in domestic violence, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse turning lives around and reducing the impact on local public services.

- 2.6.13 Award winning 'Takeaway for Change' and 'Eat Well Wirral' campaigns have engaged primary schools, children's centres, and takeaway outlets in the heart of the community. Council officers supported by nutritionists and health care professionals provided educational support sessions for families and children to guide them to make healthy meal choices and opt for healthier options when in the supermarket or eating fast food.
- 2.6.13 Heswall piloted setting up a 'dementia friendly' community as part of moves to reduce social isolation. Public workshops were held where people could learn what it is like to live with dementia, and then turn that understanding into action by becoming a 'dementia friend'.
- 2.6.14 The Wirral West constituency team co-ordinated the 'Stay Safe, Warm and Well' project. 4,000 leaflets and 60 posters, with up to date telephone numbers were produced and distributed to relevant support groups and services. People were referred to additional support groups and services in a co-ordinated way using a single referral form. As a result of the campaign 21 groups were visited and a total of nearly 300 winter warmth packs given out (fleece blankets, flasks, gloves etc.), nearly 200 referrals to additional services were made (42% of referrals were made to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service for services like Home Safety Checks, 24% of referrals were made to Energy Projects Plus for services like fuel debt advice, 20% of referrals were made to existing Council services such as Healthy Homes, Adaptations and POPIN, and 14% of referrals were made to Age UK for services like befriending).
- 2.6.15 The 'Safe in the Town' card was launched in Birkenhead for residents who are uneasy about venturing out into busy places by themselves. If residents get into difficulty or feel anxious in the town centre, they can drop into one of a number of participating businesses or organisations where they will be looked after while the relative, friend or carer named on their card is contacted. The scheme was introduced as a result of partnership between the Birkenhead Constituency Committee, Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, the Pyramids Shopping Centre, Merseytravel, Wirral Met College, and the Wirral Chamber of Commerce. All participating venues display the 'Safe in the Town' logo so people can identify where they can feel safe and get help.
- 2.6.16 Wirral's Older People's Parliament continues to work to provide a way for older people to voice their opinions, inform the Council and influence its decisions. The parliament meets 4 times a year much of their work is undertaken through 8 sub-committees; crime and respect, disability and safety, education and lifelong learning, environment, health and social care, housing, standards and constitution, and transport.
- 2.6.17 The Executive Youth Board acts as Wirral's overarching young people's group for consulting and engaging young people in strategic decision making. Activities undertaken are the Youth Voice Conference and Youth Parliament, shadowing Councillors and advising on matters affecting young people,

shadowing Chairs of Committees, working with Council officers to develop the Youth Offer, advising on the ongoing development of youth participation activities, and consulting with and gaining feedback from young people in Wirral.

2.6.18 The Wirral Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how organisations will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do. Its work crosses the boundaries between the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors and it is proactive in driving forward the duty of all partner agencies in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The WSCB publishes local safeguarding child protection procedures and practice guidance, to advise agencies and professionals in the borough how the inter-agency arrangements should be carried out in working with children and their families.

2.6.19 The Council recognises that carers need to be supported to enable them to continue to carry out their caring responsibilities. Supporting carers is not just about services, it is about providing support, information and advice and recognising the valuable contribution that carers make. It is also about identifying those people who do provide care for another person, even if the majority of those people do not recognise themselves as a carer. A 'Carers Strategy' has been developed with Carers and statutory and social sector organisations which sets the scene locally to respond to the requirement for the council to work with the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, local partners and carers' organisations to ensure that carers are identified, supported and to agree plans and budgets for identifying and supporting carers.

2.7 Planned Activities September 2015 – August 2016

2.7.1 Further supporting partnership approaches to a) monitor immigration and migration levels, b) anti-hate crime activities, and c) support Gypsies and Travellers visiting and settling in Wirral.

2.7.2 Gathering case studies demonstrating the impact of our equality work on individuals from different protected groups.

2.7.3 Collating the equality profile of Wirral's diverse communities.

2.7.4 Sharing our equality best practice and experience with others.

2.7.5 Developing a best practice models for a) addressing under-representation in the workplace, b) gathering customer equality profiling information, and c) engaging more marginalised communities.

2.7.6 Reviewing the online equality and diversity mandatory training package.

2.7.7 Supporting development of the Council's People Strategy.

2.7.8 Reviewing the Council's approach to accessible information, translation and interpretation, and alternative formats.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 There are no risks contained within this report

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 This report is a summary of progress made by implementing the Equality Plan 2014-2017, so no other options need considering.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 This report is a summary of progress made by implementing the Equality Plan 2014-2017, so there is no need for consultation.

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

6.1 None.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 This report is a summary of progress made by implementing the Equality Plan 2014-2017, so no implications for the sector.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 All future activities required to further implement the Equality Plan 2014-2017 will be completed within existing budgets.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 This report is a summary of progress made by implementing the Equality Plan 2014-2017, so no legal implications.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report is a summary of progress made by implementing the Equality Plan 2014-2017, so no equality impact assessment is required.

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 This report is a summary of progress made by implementing the Equality Plan 2014-2017, so no carbon reduction or environmental implications.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 This report is a summary of progress made by implementing the Equality Plan 2014-2017, so no planning or community safety implications.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 The Co-ordinating Committee note the progress of the Equality Plan 2014-2017, and planned activities for the forthcoming year.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 To note progress of the Equality Plan 2014-2017.

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SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – Equality Plan 2014-2017 approval	July 2014