

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence

Date: 15 October 2015



Councillor Dan De'Ath,
Cabinet Member for Skills, Safety, Engagement and Democracy,
Cardiff Council,
County Hall
Cardiff
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Dear Councillor De'Ath

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 8 October 2015
Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2016/20

Thank you for attending Committee on 8 October 2015 to help Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the Council's draft Strategic Equality Plan 2016/20. Please can you also pass on my thanks to Marie Rosenthal, Andrew Lucas and Caryle Alleyne for presenting the draft Scheme, and for providing honest and full answers to Members' questions? I will write separately to Martyn Jones of Diverse Cymru to thank him for his independent contribution to the item.

As Chair I have been asked to detail in this letter the Members' comments and observations raised during discussion at the Way Forward. Before I do this, I will also provide feedback on the question on Equality Impact Assessment asked at the meeting by Mrs Sheila Hendrickson-Brown of Cardiff Third Sector Council.

THIRD SECTOR QUESTION: Equality Impact Assessment

Members felt that the inclusion of a Third Sector question on this Committee's agenda, posed by Sheila Hendrickson Brown of Cardiff Third Sector Council, to have been helpful in developing useful and productive debate on the topic.

The question was:

“The Council is having to make very difficult decisions and choices about cuts to local services. There is potential for specific groups of vulnerable people to experience disadvantage as a result of these decisions. Could you therefore give your view on how effective the Council’s arrangements for assessing the equality impacts of these decisions are, how do Equality Impact Assessments feed into and inform service planning, and how is the effectiveness of the agreed mitigating actions monitored once the decisions are implemented?”

We noted from your answer that while you felt that the Council is still on a learning journey in developing its equalities practice, the Council’s practice had improved in recent years. The quantity of assessments undertaken had increased significantly, and the resultant documents provide a good point of reference for Cabinet Members, scrutiny Councillors and citizens campaigning on individual issues to ensure that the Council makes effective, evidence-based decisions.

We also gathered that you felt our process and practice could further improve, and that you were planning to invest effort in ensuring that this happened. Particular points we noted were that:

1. the EIA process should extend beyond the budget process to encompass decisions made at other points in the year;
2. The Council should work to a consistent level of quality in the assessments undertaken;
3. EIAs should evidence the input and advice of third sector organisations and data; and
4. the impacts and mitigation measures identified in EIA documents should be explicitly referred to when decisions were subsequently brought for review and monitoring, so that Scrutiny Committees, officers and Cabinet Members could

see how effective they had been, and so that the EIAs have a legacy through the life cycle of the decision.

You felt that these issues could be picked up by our Strategic Equality Plan consultation, and actions built into our action plan to continue improving our performance in this area.

You also welcomed the suggestion in Sheila's supplementary question to build co-operation between the Council and its third sector partners in working together to proactively identify and manage potential impacts before budget proposals had been published, and generally support the process of co-production.

We support your aims to see improvement in this area, and will seek to monitor the progress of the Council's work on equality impact assessment during the coming budget cycle.

STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016/20

Members were in general supportive of the arrangements set out in the draft Strategic Equality Plan, and wish you success in consulting upon and finalising the Plan in coming months. The points shared by Members at the Way Forward which emerged from Member questioning and evidence received during the item were:

- **Linkage between Objectives and the Corporate Plan:** Members queried the move away from the previous Plan's linkage between the Council's Equality Objectives and the What Matters! Strategy towards linkage with the Corporate Plan priorities. They noted officers' views that the linkage with What Matters! still remains, and that the objectives in question are ones that have tended to remain in place in successive corporate plans, but would want to ensure that our four year Equality Plan objectives will transcend topical administration priorities.
- **Resources to deliver:** I asked whether – given reductions in specialist personnel to drive equality work in recent years – the Council's current and

foreseen financial and resource pressures would be sufficient to deliver the Strategic Equality Plan. Members noted and welcomed your commitment and that of the Director of Governance and Legal Services to drive mainstreaming via managerial and political leadership. We trust that managers and Cabinet Members will deliver that leadership and make the difference in their own areas of responsibility, and will be interested to monitor this when we next review the Council's equality agenda.

- **Martyn Jones' commentary:** Members felt that Martyn Jones made a number of helpful comments in his commentary on the draft Plan. We were pleased to hear that the Council had already undertaken pre-consultation with Diverse Cymru and a number of other local groups, and also his view that the Council's linkage of its equality and scrutiny functions was an exemplar that should be considered by other local authorities.

Please can you take on board the points raised by Martyn about the potential over-emphasis on younger people in the draft Plan, when Welsh Government is developing a more age-neutral approach in its work? Martyn also made helpful suggestions around the opportunities to develop shared equality objectives with local health and criminal justice partners, the learning from Prudent Healthcare and from the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and the need to consider the linkage between equality and socio economic deprivation.

- **Partnership between the Council and the Third Sector:** Picking up on the earlier question from Cardiff Third Sector Council, Members can see the value of the Council working closely with its third sector partners, in providing early intervention to ensure that adverse impacts can be avoided by planning services that are inclusive and meet citizens' needs. We can see that this is likely to save money in the long run and mitigate against the need to incur cost in producing an equality impact assessment. We recognise that this partnership is enshrined in the principles of the Local Service Board, and will be interested to return to this theme when we scrutinise What Matters! Later this year.

More specific to the equalities agenda, we welcome the continuing partnership between the Council, C3SC, Diverse Cymru, Race Equality First and other local charities in delivering the Council's equality work, and hope that this will continue to thrive. We noted from Martyn Jones' evidence that Welsh Government had developed a formal relationship with third sector equality advisors, and would consider a similar forum useful for the Council to develop its strategic approach to diversity. Please could you explore this idea and advise on your views?

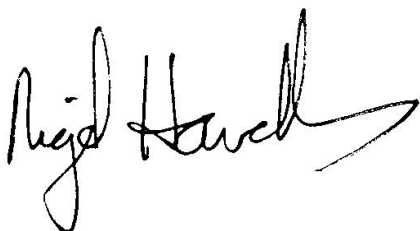
- **Focussing on outcomes:** Members noted your intention that the consultation would allow citizens and local organisations to identify actions that could usefully deliver the Council's Equality Objectives. We welcome this, and acknowledge that the action plan will have a four year duration allowing the Annual Review to measure progress and refine and review next steps. We also feel, however, that – as the equality objectives are not SMART – it will be useful for you and officers to work during the consultation period to identify what success might look like, to optimise the relatively narrow time window between the end of the consultation and the adoption of the final Plan, so that actions are identified and agreed and the Council can “hit the ground running” from the beginning of the Plan period.
- **Reaching seldom-heard citizens and employees:** Members welcome the fact that this Plan is shorter than its predecessor, and that you have produced a six page summary Plan. We hope that you will be able to use this to reach communities and parts of the workforce that have not previously been reached by previous Equality Plans. We note that you will be working through trades unions and staff ambassadors, and urge you to arrange an inclusive and wide-reaching consultation.

The Committee has no further or formal recommendations on this piece of work, but we hope that the points made above will help you to optimise the consultation and finalisation of the Plan. If Committee has agenda time to consider a final version, we will ask for this to come forward to our March agenda. Otherwise we will consider monitoring outcomes in the 2016/17 financial year.

To recap, the Committee is asking you to:

- Reflect on the aspirations you stated for the improvements to equality impact assessment, and factor these arrangements into the equality action plan;
- Ensure that our four yearly Equality Objectives are resilient to and capable of transcending immediate Corporate Plan priorities;
- Ensure that senior management and Cabinet Members explicitly champion equalities work and drive mainstreaming of equalities into everything we do;
- Reflect on the useful comments made by Martyn Jones (summarised above) and factor these arrangements into the equality action plan;
- Continue to develop effective partnerships with third sector expertise, and consider the adoption of a more formal advisory arrangement between the Council and local third sector organisations to shape Cardiff's equalities work;
- Undertake work during the consultation period to gain a clear picture of what outcomes the Council wants to see emerging from the Plan, to facilitate the process of action planning; and
- Do all you can to make the consultation with citizens and employees inclusive and effective.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Marie Rosenthal, Director of Governance and Legal Services
Paul Keeping, Operational Manager responsible for Equality and Diversity
Martyn Jones, Chief Executive, Diverse Cymru
Sheila Hendrickson-Brown, Chief Executive, Cardiff Third Sector Council