

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2019

REFERENCE FROM LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2019

“ WELSH GOVERNMENT’S STRATEGIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVES – DRAFT CONSULTATION RESPONSE (MD) –

The Corporate Equalities Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to allow Members of the Scrutiny Committee to consider and contribute to the Council’s draft response to the Welsh Government’s Consultation on its Draft Strategic Equality Objectives.

The Welsh Government had set out a series of draft equality objectives in the context of long term aims:

- Elimination of inequality caused by poverty.
- Strong and progressive equality and human rights protections for everyone in Wales.
- The needs and rights of people who share protected characteristics are at the forefront of the design and delivery of all public services in Wales.
- Wales is a world leader for gender equality.
- Elimination of identity-based abuse, harassment, hate crime, and bullying.
- A Wales of cohesive communities that are resilient, fair and equal.
- Everyone in Wales is able to participate in political, public, and everyday life.
- The Welsh public sector leads the way as exemplar inclusive and diverse organisations and employers.

The Welsh Government believed that these longer term aims may assist the Welsh public sector to make progress through adopting some or all of the same aims if appropriate for them to do so. This would provide opportunities to advance equality together in an integrated and strategic way, wherever possible and practical to do so.

There was a strategic equality objective for each of these long term aims and an associated measure. For each of the objectives, Welsh Government proposed that there would be a small number of key actions to demonstrate how the objective would be achieved over the period 2020 - 2024. The equality objectives were 'intersectional', recognising that people have overlapping protected characteristics. They would also be cross-cutting and interdependent. In this way the Welsh Government aimed for its work to be as inclusive as possible.

As part of the Welsh Government's consultation, respondents were asked to consider what were the greatest barriers facing those with protected

characteristics in Wales; and, whether its draft equality objectives adequately captured and addressed these challenges when responding to the specific questions.

The Welsh Government was seeking to strengthen and advance equality and human rights in Wales. In this context, it intended to commence the socio-economic duty in Part One of the Equality Act 2019, to require certain Welsh public bodies (including local authorities) to consider the impact of their strategic decisions on the poorest people and groups. It also intended to review the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure it was up to date, proportionate, and effective.

The Council's draft response could be found in Appendix B to the report. The draft response was broadly supportive, highlighting that the review was timely and how this had the opportunity to inform the review of the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives which were currently underway. A report on the draft Strategic Equality Objectives for the Council would be presented to Committee in due course and would consider both the Welsh Government's objectives and the recommendations in the 'Is Wales Fairer? 2018' report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

To enable the response to the consultation to be submitted on time, it was recommended that the views of the Scrutiny Committee were referred to Cabinet and that Cabinet then considered the draft response to be submitted to Welsh Government by 19 November 2019.

Cabinet would consider the views and recommendations of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2019.

A Committee Member in referring to Appendix B and question 2 – Do you think there are any areas of inequality that are not addressed by draft Equality Objectives and that are of particular importance to you, stated that there was not much mention or specific reference to mental health, particularly in relation to these individuals finding work. The Committee agreed that this should be referred back to Cabinet.

Subsequently, it was

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the content of the Welsh Government's Consultation document (Appendix A) and the Council's draft response to the consultation (Appendix B) be noted.
- (2) T H A T Cabinet be advised of the Scrutiny Committee's view that the equality objectives for 2020-2024 should have greater consideration and reference to mental health as an area of inequality.

### Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having considered the content of the Welsh Government's Consultation document and the Council's draft response.
- (2) So that there is greater consideration to mental health as an area of inequality, particularly in relation to those individuals seeking employment."