

SUBJECT: Social Partnership Duty Report

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 16 July 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1 PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Social Partnership Duty Report 2025, setting out how the Council will build on existing practice, and work collaboratively with trade unions, to ensure compliance with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1. To approve the Social Partnership Duty Report 2025, to enable the report to be published, under the statutory duty.

3 KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1. Social partnership is a collaborative approach where government bodies, employers, and trade unions work together to address economic, social, and workplace issues. It works on the principle that more can be achieved by employers and workers, predominantly through their trade unions, working together in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration. Since devolution, the Welsh Government has suggested social partnership as a potential approach to addressing challenges in Wales. In 2021 the Welsh Government made a commitment to establish a statutory basis for social partnership in Wales, culminating in the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.
- 3.2 To ensure compliance with the Under Sections 15, 16 and 18 of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, Monmouthshire County Council must meet four statutory requirements, which will integrate social partnership principles into our activities and ensure that trade unions are actively engaged in decision-making processes, particularly in areas impacting the workforce. One of these statutory requirements is that the Council must prepare and publish an annual report detailing compliance with the Social Partnership Duty. This report also details the other three statutory requirements. The report must either have the agreement of recognised trade unions or explain why an agreement could not be reached.

- 3.3. Developing and agreeing a social partnership framework that encompasses guiding principles like cooperation, trust, and mutual gains will establish a consistent approach to fulfilling statutory duties under the Act. Monmouthshire County Council's Annual Report (2025) includes information on current partnership working arrangements and proposed developments in partnership working arrangements, including an action plan.
- 3.4. Trade union commitment to working in a different way will be important for implementation. Under the social partnership principles, early dialogue at a formation stage is required. Being part of the solution to proposing strategic plans will take time, given the long-standing arrangement whereby managers propose change to the trade unions, and they respond through acceptance or rejection of such change.
- 3.5. Failure to move to a model of involvement, as opposed to one of consultation, will lead to difficulty in fulfilling our statutory duty to report on progress.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 Councils must engage with recognised trade unions when setting wellbeing objectives, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This includes enhanced involvement and collaboration, when making significant strategic decisions, particularly those that impact employees or relate to sustainable development.
- 4.2 Embedding the duty within the identified areas of the Council's work created the opportunity to improve decision-making and ensure a focus on the long-term. Enhanced involvement will benefit all employees, including those who have a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. No implications for safeguarding or corporate parenting have been identified at this stage of implementation.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

- 5.1 The production of the report is a statutory requirement.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- 6.1 The Council must provide an annual report on how social partnership is being embedded in the organisation. These reports are to be submitted to Welsh Government's Social Partnership Council, who have a responsibility to write guidance which public bodies must have regard to. The content of the submitted reports will likely lead to amended guidance with additional requirements if the pace of change is not sufficient. The annual report has been presented to the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) and is available for scrutiny by the authority's committees.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 To optimise collaborative working with trade unions, to ensure compliance with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 The duty places additional responsibilities on officers, including additional reporting requirements. The majority of the activity can be delivered through existing mechanisms, such as regular Joint Advisory Group (JAG) meetings held between the trade unions and the authority. It is therefore anticipated that the duty can be delivered within additional resources. It will be necessary to review the arrangements after a period of time, to ensure the present arrangements for trade union facilities time allow enough time for colleagues on the trade union side to fulfil the expectations placed on them.

9. CONSULTEES:

Cabinet
Strategic Leadership Team
Trade Unions

This report has the agreement of recognised trade unions in Monmouthshire County Council.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

11. AUTHOR:

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12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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