

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 24-25

MEETING: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 22 JULY 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an opportunity to examine progress against the commitments made in the Strategic Equality Plan 24-28 during the period March 2024 to March 2025.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members use the report to scrutinise delivery of the commitments made in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

2. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Tackling inequality is one of the Council's biggest priorities. If we are to achieve our ambition, it is important that we value and make the most of the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities, irrespective of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or any of the other characteristics that make us who we are.
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010 was introduced in April 2011. Within its specific duties is the requirement to publish an annual report on the council's performance against the commitments made in its Strategic Equality Plan.
- 3.3 The Council approved the Strategic Equality Plan and objectives in March 2024, covering the period April 2024 to March 2028. This is the first progress report against those objectives and covers the period from April 2024 to March 2025.
- 3.4 The objectives are:
- Objective 1: Give every child the best start in life.
 - Objective 2: Support the creation of fair employment and good work for everyone.
 - Objective 3: Work with partners and residents to build inclusive and cohesive communities.
 - Objective 4: Expand our provision of community-based services that extend people's healthy life expectancy.
 - Objective 5: Ensure our services are accessible to the public.
 - Objective 6: Ensure we have a diverse workforce and a fully inclusive workplace.
 - Objective 7: Reduce the gender pay gap

3.5 The full monitoring report is included as an appendix. Overall, good progress has been made. Some highlights are:

- We have rolled out of universal free school meals. Healthy, free meals at school help all children to learn and thrive irrespective of their background or income. Uptake of meals remains varied across schools. We are working with schools, parents and learners to understand and remove any barriers to take-up.
- We have held several events throughout the year to celebrate and increase awareness of the rich diversity that exists within Monmouthshire. These included a Windrush Day celebration at County Hall and an Outdoor Accessible Adventure Day at Gilwern Outdoor Centre. We have committed to hosting more events at our County Hall headquarters to try make it a building for the wider community, not just our staff and councillors.
- We seek input from young people to support their involvement in council and community decision-making. This year, 3,509 pupils participated in the 'Make Your Mark' survey, highlighting concerns such as the cost of living, health and well-being, climate change, and loneliness. Our youth services used this feedback to adapt their provision accordingly.
- We have commissioned an accessibility audit of attractions and visitor sites and have launched a small grants programme to support access improvements. This included the introduction of an accessible carriage on the miniature train at Old Station Tintern. We have also completed the Welcome Tintern project providing improvements to car parking, tourism signage and visitor welcome and signage.
- We are working with regional partners to develop a data set that will enable regional work on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence to be more intelligence led. This will improve flow of information will enable public sector partners to work more proactively in this area on safeguarding, prevention and early help to improve outcomes for victims and survivors.
- We attained Level 2 Disability Confident Employer status in May 2024 to make our jobs and workplaces more appealing and accessible. We are continuing to work on the three-year action plan and are collaborating with the Department of Work and Pensions to promote the scheme to local employers.

3.6 Tackling inequality runs through everything we do as a Council. All policy decisions taken are accompanied by an integrated impact assessment which highlights the potential impact on groups with protected characteristics and encourages those developing proposals to identify how they could be improved to have a more positive impact.

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

4.1 The actions within the Monitoring Report are presented in a way that enables the reader to understand the impacts of actions taken within the year to March 25. The Strategic Equality Plan is by its very nature a plan that is looking to address, mitigate and positively address identified issues in Monmouthshire that have an adverse impact upon people or groups of people with protected characteristics.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 We are required to publish the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 The annual monitoring report is the way in which the committee is able to evaluate progress against the delivery of the objectives approved by Council in the Strategic Equality Plan

7 REASONS:

- 7.1 To ensure that the authority is able to comply with the legislative requirements of the Equalities Act to produce an annual monitoring report and to

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 There are no resource implications associated with the delivery of the monitoring report.

9 CONSULTEES:

The Monitoring Report provides the roles of officers within Monmouthshire County Council who have contributed.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28

11 AUTHOR:

Pennie Walker – Equality and Welsh Language Manager

12 CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 07813 994768 / 01633 64 (4413)

E-mail: penniewalker@monmouthshire.gov.uk