

# Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry

*How can the Council improve how it is meeting and embedding the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty for Wales 2011)*



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The Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel  
June 2019

## Why This Matters

Foreword by **Councillor Louise Gibbard**



It was with great pride that I convened the first meeting of this Scrutiny Inquiry in October 2018 on International Day of the Girl. In a year of some important equality anniversaries such as the centenary of some of the first women in the UK winning the right to vote, seventy years since the arrival of the “Windrush generation” and fifteen years since the repeal of Section 28 amongst other significant commemorations.

We chose to look at this issue because it featured highly on the list of suggested areas of scrutiny highlighted by both the general public and councillors ourselves. It provided us with the perfect opportunity, almost ten years on from the passing of the Equality Act, to reflect on how far we have come as a city and a local authority to embed the principles of equality and diversity in all we do.

From the beginning of the inquiry we were determined that we should reach out to the wider community and especially to people with ‘protected characteristics’ to find out from them if we are really putting our policies into practice. I am hugely grateful to every single person that took the time to attend our meetings, submit written responses and share their views. Whilst we have not been able in this report to address every point raised, please be assured we have listened, taken on board and value every comment made throughout the process.

It was encouraging to hear of the very positive work going on across the Council to make Swansea an inclusive environment. When we took part in one of the “Big Conversation” events with learners I was incredibly proud and heartened to learn of the warm welcome one young man, a recent refugee from Syria, had received on moving to Swansea. However, from other discussions particularly those with carers and the Disability Liaison Group, it is evident that at times we have fallen short of expectations and still have some distance to travel in ensuring that as an organisation we are consistently ‘getting it right’ for all our citizens.

We hope that Cabinet will find this report useful and that our recommendations will go some way in helping Swansea Council to become a truly inclusive organisation, both internally and in its interactions with our diverse communities.

I would like to thank the members of the Inquiry Panel who gave their time and commitment and once again, to acknowledge all those people who gave evidence and information to the Panel. A very big thank you too to Michelle Roberts, our Scrutiny Support Officer who has guided us throughout and worked incredibly hard to pull everything together into this final report.

## Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

Find below a summary of the conclusions and recommendations arising from this inquiry. Full detail are in the main body of the report.

### Conclusions

The Inquiry, firstly, looked at whether the Council is meeting its duties under the Equality Act 2010 (and Public Equality Duty for Wales 2011). They concluded:

On balance the Council does have due regard to eliminating discrimination, to advancing opportunity and fostering good relations. Many areas of good practice have been found throughout this inquiry but also areas where the Council could do better.

The Inquiry, secondly, looked at *how the Council can improve how it is meeting and embedding the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty for Wales 2011)*.

The Panel concluded that this could be improved by:

1. Keeping a close eye on the national picture and how this impacts us locally
2. Continuing to build upon the commitment to equality and diversity already evident within the Council
3. Ensuring effective policy, practice and processes are in place that meet and help embed the Equalities Duty
4. Improving the accessibility of council services
5. Improving how we work with and learn from others
6. Continuing to improve how we consult and engage
7. Protecting future generations.

### Recommendations

#### Quick wins

- 1 Implement a high-level cross council Strategic Equality Group.
- 2 Develop a new Equality Plan co-productively. Ensure it is more streamlined and outcome and impact focused. The Council should take up the offer from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Wales to work with us on our Plan.
- 3 Promote "SMART" working with our Equality Forums, ensuring they all have clear terms of reference, work plans and schedules. Ensure better engagement with Council departments and Councillor Champions. Facilitate the establishing of Women's and Inter-Faith Consultative Forums.
- 4 Clarify and further promote the role of Councillor Champions, ensure better engagement with Equality Groups/Forums and establish links with the Strategic Equality Group.
- 5 Clarify expectations of those acting in the Equality Staff Representative role. We would expect those nominated to be able to take part in co-ordinating meetings and training and that they are linked to a wider knowledge base/support network for advice, guidance and support.
- 6 Complete the Carers Strategy as a matter of urgency.
- 7 Complete the review of Recruitment and Selection Policy as a matter of urgency. This should include looking at better promotion of staff vacancies and apprenticeships to different groups, consider advertising these more carefully to promote representation of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority people (BAME), disabled people, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), veterans and women in male dominated roles (and vice-versa).

- 8 Lead positive campaigns celebrating Swansea's diversity and zero tolerance for discrimination. Use the Swansea 50<sup>th</sup> Year as a City Anniversary to launch what will be an ongoing process.

### **Medium Term Actions**

- 9 Review training opportunities to ensure they are fit for purpose. Including:
  - a) Ensuring better uptake of equality related training amongst staff, especially front facing staff.
  - b) Ensuring middle managers have completed training and encourage staff to do so
  - c) Developing training with equality groups where possible.
  - d) Ensuring the opportunities to do the training are repeated regularly particularly around unconscious bias, using alternative formats and making a reasonable adjustment.
  - e) Smarter working with others to meet our duty well by investigating the sharing of some training and consultation activities with other large organisations and/or procure jointly to improve economies of scales.
- 10 Support the continued development of community hubs across the Council area and ensuring that all staff involved have full equalities training.
- 11 Address the significant issues with the Council website as identified in this report. Key aspects should be developed co-productively. Consider use of more 'hover over' facilities for key words where pictures are shown. Be mindful of problems with PDFs/tables for screen readers.
- 12 Develop more easy read and plain English resources.
- 13 Build upon the development of a Co-production Strategy with inclusion of a Toolkit for use by staff across the authority.
- 14 Collect better data on our workforce and develop better resources to encourage staff to give their personal data, for example based upon a toolkit by Stonewall '*what it has got to do with you*'. In future report on 'pay gaps such as disability and BAME, as well as gender.
- 15 Develop an internal communications rolling programme, led by the Strategic Equality Group, to promote training, challenge negative views or attitudes and provide positive messages to staff.

### **Longer Term Goals**

- 16 Continue steps towards Swansea becoming a Human Rights City; explore how we could embed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in the same way as with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ensure these Conventions are reflected in the Councils new Equalities Plan in 2020.
- 17 Develop further opportunities for adults with disabilities, including looking at expanding our social enterprise base.
- 18 Work with teachers and learners to tackle issues around gender stereotyping in schools particularly relating to sporting activities.

### **Recommendation for all Councillors**

- 19 Councillors should increase their visibility amongst equality groups. Consider holding surgeries or discussion aimed at young people, women, BAME, LGBT and disabled residents.

## 4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Panel would like to record its thanks to the following people who came and gave evidence to us:

- 50+ Network
- BME Forum
- Young People through Big Conversation
- LGBT Forum
- Joining the Dots Team
- Disability Liaison Forum
- Swansea Veterans Club
- Carers who attended the focus group
- Head in Wales, Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Cabinet Member for Better Communities (People)
- Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Performance
- Chief Legal Officer
- Chief Digital and Transformation Officer
- Staff Equality Representatives
- Consultation Co-ordinator
- Strategic Delivery and Performance Manager
- Council Directors, Strategic OD and HR Manager
- All those people who contributed to the Inquiry through our public Call for Evidence.

## 5 ABOUT THE INQUIRY PANEL

The **Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel** is a team of Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. Their role is to examine a strategic issue of concern and to make recommendations about how policies and services can be improved.

### **Membership of the Panel**

Louise Gibbard (Convener)  
Lyndon Jones  
Sam Pritchard  
Erika Kirchner  
Terry Hennegan  
Susan Jones  
Yvonne Jardine  
Dr Gideon Calder (Co-optee)

Michelle Roberts from the Council's Scrutiny Unit supported the Inquiry.

### **For further information contact:**

Michelle Roberts, Scrutiny Officer  
Swansea Council  
[Michelle.roberts@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.roberts@swansea.gov.uk)  
01792 637256