

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	28 June 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Julie Matthews, Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities/ Nicola Kneale, Acting Joint Head of BIM
Report author	Carol Evans, Strategic Planning and Performance Officer
Title	Strategic Equality and Diversity in Denbighshire County Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report is about internal arrangements for supporting the equality and diversity agenda.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. In the past 12 months there have been numerous developments on the subject of equality and diversity at a national level (Wales Programme for Government, Race Equality Action Plan, Local Government and Elections Act) and a local level (equality-focused research in DCC's Local Assessment of Well-being). As a consequence the Leader and (informal) Cabinet of the 2017-22 administration recommended that a Strategic Equality and Diversity Group is required to oversee internal arrangements to support and monitor equality and diversity in the current term (2022-27).

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. That Cabinet notes recent developments, and approves the formation of a Member-led Equality and Diversity group (to be reviewed after 12 months to consider whether the Group needs to cease, alter and/or celebrate achievements).

4. Report details

- 4.1. Under the Equality Act 2010 local authorities are required to publish Strategic Equality Plans every four years. We currently have an Interim Strategic Equality Plan for 2021, and we are working to incorporate future equality objectives in the next iteration of the Corporate Plan.
- 4.2. Within the Programme for Government (2021 – 2026), there is a commitment to celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms. Actions which come from all of the work will filter into Denbighshire, but the volume of work will be challenging.
- 4.3. Other developments at national government level have filtered down into local government. These include the recent Race Equality Action Plan: an anti-racist Wales (REAP – which should be available in June 2022), The LGBTQ+ Action Plan, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RES) Statutory Guidance and Code and consultation on Future Funding for Equality and Inclusion Grant Programme.
- 4.4. Additional commitments may arise for the council from the ‘Locked Out’ Report – an independent report commissioned by Welsh Government to a look at disabled people’s experiences of the pandemic with a particular focus on public services.
- 4.5. We have undertaken the local assessment of well-being (for Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) to inform the development of the local well-being plan and our corporate plan. This has highlighted the link between those facing equality issues and deprivation.
- 4.6. The WLGA has an ambitious Diversity and Democracy Programme to try and ensure that council chambers are more representative of the communities that they serve. They have been considering ways in which greater diversity can be achieved following the local government elections in May 2022.
- 4.7. Prior to the 2017 elections Denbighshire County Council had a dedicated Equality Officer; in the interests of mainstreaming equalities in the council’s business, this post was deleted (legislative lead being the Strategic Planning & Performance Team).

- 4.8. The Leader of the 2017-22 administration met with all of the female councillors of Denbighshire County Council on 9th November 2021 for a discussion about their experiences both of the barriers that women may face in standing for election and any improvements that can be made in the way the Council works to demonstrate an open and inclusive culture, and consider the practical steps that may be taken to improve the experience of female councillors.
- 4.9. Until 2017, a member / officer Equalities working group existed, chaired by Lead Member for Equality, with the final meeting taking place March 2017, when this working group ceased. Terms of Reference for the group existed, and they have been updated to reflect a potential strategic equality and diversity group going forward (Appendix A).
- 4.10. In light of the considerations at 4.2 to 4.9 and recommendation from the previous Cabinet, this new Cabinet is asked to agree to establishing a Member-led equality and diversity group supported by a member of the Strategic Planning team. The broad remit of the group would be:
- Deal with equality and diversity-related consultations
 - Oversee performance against equality and diversity strategic initiatives (reporting to Performance Scrutiny)
 - Oversee performance against equality and diversity democratic initiatives (reporting to Democratic Services Scrutiny)
 - Critique key impact assessments to ensure due consideration is given to equality and diversity issues

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1. Equality objectives form our Corporate Plan (future corporate pledges).
- 5.2. Commitment to addressing equality issues and promoting diversity is a consideration in all that we do, and this is supported by the equality section of our Well-being Impact Assessments that accompany significant decisions.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. There is no additional cost associated with this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. This report is for information and to prompt discussion, and does not require a Well-being Impact Assessment.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. This suggestion for a strategic equality and diversity group was first considered at Cabinet Briefing in February 2022 with recommendations that the request was noted and tabled at a Cabinet meeting in the next administration.

8.2. Discussion has further taken place with SLT and at Cabinet Briefing on 14 June 2022.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. There are no significant financial implications arising from the report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. There is a risk that the council's resource for dealing with equality and diversity is limited. If this transpires, a case can be made for additional resource in the future.

10.2. There is a risk that this Group is not effective. Good meeting discipline (e.g. effective planning and Chairing) can help mitigate against this. Also, a 12-month pause and review session is part of the Terms of Reference (consistent with good meeting practise).

10.3. There is a risk that the membership of this group is large and not conducive to effective meetings. This will be considered as part of the 12-month review.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Equality Act 2010.

11.2. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Appendix A

- Terms of Reference for Strategic Equality and Diversity Group 2022