



EQUALITY OUTCOMES AND MAINSTREAMING REPORT 2025-2029

Report by Chief Executive

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to seek approval of the refreshed Equality Outcomes to be adopted by the Comhairle for the period 2025-2029.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 requires all public bodies to publish equality outcomes at least every four years. Equality outcomes aim to achieve specific and identifiable improvements in people's life chances, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations. The cross-cutting themes of sustainability, and fairness and equality are integral to all the functions and activities carried out by the Comhairle to deliver good outcomes and achieve Best Value.
- 2.2 A review of local data, existing corporate plans, improvement plans, and business plans has been undertaken. Corporate Management Team, Chief Officers and officers involved in the current Report 2021-2025 have been consulted with and contributed to the process in respect of their service areas.
- 2.3 An online public consultation exercise was held for four weeks, closing on 6th January 2025. No public feedback was received. Democratic Services also circulated the link to the consultation to the Community Planning Partnership and Community Councils. One organisation responded. Feedback received was considered in the development of the Report.
- 2.4 The proposed Equality Outcomes for 2025-2029 are appended to the Report. The approved outcomes are required to be published by 30 April 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle approve the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2025-2029 at the Appendix to the Report.**

Contact Officer: Johanna Morrison, Organisational Development Officer
Appendix: Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2025-2029
Background Papers: [Report to Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 27 November 2024](#)

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None
Legal	Compliance with the Equality Act 2010
Staffing	Improve disclosure rates and advance equalities
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	An Initial Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Corporate Strategy	<p>Priority 1.1: Strengthen the local economy. Delivering key services to our Island communities by supporting economic development through the Island’s Growth Deal and Crown Estate funding, identifying and supporting new energy sector opportunities, and improving digital awareness and capacity in our communities.</p> <p>Priority 2.1: Support children, families, and young people Equal Opportunity to lifelong learning and teaching with particular emphasis on Gaelic, digital skills, and new technologies, supported by access to childcare meeting the needs of working parents.</p> <p>Priority 3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life. Deliver the Comhairle’s Local Housing Strategy to ensure that residents across the Outer Hebrides have equal access to high-quality, energy efficient and affordable housing.</p> <p>Priority 4.1 Deliver Community Leadership Equality of opportunity is increased by delivering the community-led development programme, support the community planning partnership and engagement with constituents</p>
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	<p>Internal consultation with the Corporate Management Team, Chief Officers and officers with a Service interest in the Equality Outcomes were undertaken in the development of the Equality Outcomes.</p> <p>An online public consultation was held for four weeks, closing on 6th January 2025.</p>

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

- 5.1 The Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”) came into force in October 2010 and consolidated and replaced the previous discrimination legislation for Scotland, England, and Wales. The Act covers discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. These categories are known in the Act as “protected characteristics.”
- 5.2 The introduction of the Act set out the general duties which listed public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

5.3 Subsequently the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 were introduced which set out a number of specific duties which listed Scottish public bodies are required to meet which include a duty to report progress on mainstreaming the equality duty and the duty to publish equality outcomes and report progress.

5.4 In July 2016 the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Scotland) published '[Equality Outcomes and the Public Sector Equality Duty – A guide for public authorities in Scotland](#)' to assist authorities in implementing the duty as it relates to setting equality outcomes. The guidance describes an equality outcome as '*a result which you as an authority aim to achieve in order to further one or more of the needs mentioned in general duty.*' The 'results' identified should achieve specific and identifiable improvements in people's life chances.

5.5 This guidance confirms that the duty is intended to 'operate in conjunction with a public authority's existing corporate systems and frameworks for business planning and public performance reporting'. In addition to this, listed authorities need to involve a range of people in preparing the equality outcomes which should include policy officers, staff groups, individuals, equality groups and communities including taking reasonable steps to involve people with all the protected characteristics.

BEST VALUE

6.1 The [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003](#) introduced a statutory framework for Best Value for local authorities and is framed around seven Best Value themes, including Fairness and equality. Fairness and equality is a cross-cutting theme that should be integral to all the functions and activities conducted by a local authority to deliver good outcomes and achieve Best Value.

COMHAIRLE EQUALITY REPORTS

7.1 The Comhairle first published a set of equality outcomes for the period 2013-2017, followed by a second set of outcomes for the period 2017-2021 and period 2021-2025. Progress against the outcomes is published every two years.

7.2 To meet the specific duties listed in line with the timescales set out in the legislation, the Comhairle are now required to publish a further set of equality outcomes for the period 2025-2029 by 30th April 2025.

EQUALITY OUTCOMES

8.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires all public bodies to publish equality outcomes at least every four years. Equality outcomes aim to achieve specific and identifiable improvements in people's life chances, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations. The new Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2025-2029 including Equality Outcomes for the period can be found in the Appendix to the Report.

8.2 Corporate Management Team, Chief Officers and officers involved in the current Report have been consulted with and contributed to the development of the new outcomes, achievements, and measures, and considerable input was received.

8.3 The Comhairle has a duty to consult in the development of the equality outcomes and therefore an online public consultation exercise was undertaken to allow the public to share their thoughts on the proposed outcomes. No public responses were received. Feedback was received from one organisation (Hebridean Housing Partnership). These views helped shape and influence the development of the final outcomes.

8.4 The Comhairle is required to publish the equality outcomes for the period 2025-2029 by 30 April 2025.

CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Comhairle has a statutory duty to publish Equality Outcomes every four years. Internal consultation with the Corporate Management Team, Chief Officers and officers with a Service interest in the Equality Outcomes were undertaken in the development of the Equality Outcomes. An online public consultation was held for four weeks, closing on 6th January 2025. Feedback received was considered in the development of the Report.
- 9.2 The Comhairle are asked to approve the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2025-2029 and have a statutory duty to publish the Report prior to 30 April 2025.