

EQUALITIES COMMITTEE - 6 OCTOBER 2008

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EQUALITIES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON MONDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2008 AT 2:00PM

Present: -

Councillor D Sage - Chairperson

Councillors

H J David
A E Davies
M E J Nott

Invitees

Councillor D A D Brett
Councillor N Clarke
Councillor P A Evans
Councillor C A Green
Councillor M Gregory
Councillor P Hacking
Councillor R M James
Councillor R D Jenkins
Councillor M Thomas
Councillor M Wilkins

Officers

D MacGregor - Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships
S Kelly - Policy and Performance Management Officer (Research)
L Smith - Policy and Performance Management Officer (Equalities)
L Hutton - Employee Transformation and Development Manager
A Rees - Senior Cabinet and Committee Officer

5 ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

RESOLVED: That Councillor D Sage be elected Chairperson of the Equalities Committee for the municipal year.

6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following:-

Councillor L C Morgan - Holiday
Councillor J C Spanswick - Other Council commitments

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

8 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Equalities Committee dated 21 July 2008, be approved as a true and accurate record.

9 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP
- 2 JULY 2008

The Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships presented the minutes of the Corporate Equalities Management Group held on the 2 July 2008. He informed the Committee that the revised Welsh Language Scheme had been adopted by Council. He advised the Committee that the Group had accepted the main findings and recommendations on the Independent Equality Review. The Group had acknowledged there were significant gaps in current data gathering on equality strands and that the Authority would benefit from having better access to management information. A training and development plan on Equality and Diversity was also being drafted. He also advised that the Authority had received complaints concerning access to services for disabled people and Welsh language users and the training programme would be put in place in the New Year targeting front line staff to address those issues.

The Committee identified the importance of training on equality issues being rolled out to school governing bodies.

The Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships reported that better data capture on equality issues was needed across the Authority and this would form part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Corporate Equalities Management Group of the 2 July 2008 be noted.

10 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP
- 3 SEPTEMBER 2008

The Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships presented the minutes of the Corporate Equalities Management Group held on the 3 September 2008. He confirmed that the minutes of the Corporate Equalities Management Group would continue to be reported to this Committee for information, whilst resolutions and actions made by this Committee would be reported to the Corporate Equalities Management Group as part of a two way communication process. It was intended that the Corporate Equalities Management Group become more proactive with a greater corporate focus.

Members expressed a wish that the Corporate Equalities Management Group adopt a practice of using plain English in the use of terminology used across all Directorates.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships informed the Committee that staff with Welsh language skills had been recruited at the Customer Service Centre. In addition the Policy and Performance Management Officer (Equalities) advised the Committee that the Authority had recently entered into a UK government contract for language interpretation and translation services which gave the Authority access to over 150 languages. This service would help customers to conduct business with the Authority in the language of their choice and costs would only be incurred when the service in use. It was noted that call for such a service had been low to date, however the service included management information capability which would enable the Authority to monitor usage and report to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Corporate Equalities Management Group of the 3 September 2008 be noted.

11 EQUALITY REVIEW AND PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

The Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships presented a report on the Authority's progress towards attaining 'improving authority' status under the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Equality Improvement Framework and the structure of the new Corporate Equality Scheme. He reported that an independent review on the Authority's existing equality and diversity policies and practices had helped to identify priorities to secure compliance with relevant legislation and outlined the actions agreed by the Corporate Equalities Management Group to improve the Authority's performance.

The Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships also reported on a meeting with the WLGA Director of Social Justice and Equalities to discuss the issues raised in the context of the Equality Improvement Framework. The meeting was very positive and also drew attention to national policy developments that the Authority need to be mindful of in formulating its new equality scheme.

In response to a question from the Committee concerning how the Authority is meeting the requirements of '*Tackling domestic Abuse: the All Wales National Strategy*', the Policy and Performance Management Officer (Equalities) advised that she would be attending the local domestic abuse forum to discuss this matter as it was anticipated that tackling domestic abuse would be a top priority in the new Corporate Equality Scheme in terms of the Authority meeting its gender equality duties.

To support the report the Committee also received a presentation by the Policy and Performance Management Officer (Equalities) on the '*Equality Improvement Framework for Welsh Local Government*'. The background to the Framework was:-

- To replace the Equalities Standard
- To reflect changes in Equality Duties
- To reflect reform Agenda in Wales
- To work with the Wales Programme of Improvement

The Framework is:-

- A management framework to help the Authority meet its equality duties
- Gather evidence of service improvement for all our customers and our communities
- Identify local risks of inequality
- Target activities to produce equality outcomes
- Annual assessment of progress.

The Committee was informed of the seven improvement aims, eleven improvement elements and the three levels of attainment.

The Policy and Performance Management Officer (Equalities) advised the Committee that the WLGA was holding a elected member Equality Champions meeting on the 31 October 2008 in Llandrindod Wells. The meeting would include a presentation from Kate Bennett, Director of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales. The

Deputy Leader would be attending but other members of the Committee could also attend. Councillor James expressed an interest and it was agreed that details would be forwarded to him.

RESOLVED: That:-

- (1) The Draft Corporate Equalities Scheme contents list set out in Appendix 1 as the basis of the Draft Corporate Equalities Scheme be approved subject to Section 6 being amended to read "our arrangements for monitoring and measuring impact".
- (2) That Officers from the Regeneration and Development Department be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss with the Committee links between equalities issues and the LDP.
- (3) The WLGA Director of Social Justice and Equalities be invited to a future meeting of the Equalities Committee to discuss the Equality Improvement Framework.

12 DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVISED WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME 2008-2011

The Policy and Performance Officer (Research) presented the Committee with an update on progress with the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme (2008-2011) and its implementation. The revised scheme aims to address areas highlighted by the Welsh Language Board as in need of development, based on statutory guidelines. This includes the following key areas:-

- The production of a bilingual website
- Bilingual job advertising
- Staff development (i.e. training to support availability of Welsh-speaking staff in key services)
- Performance monitoring.

The Committee was informed that the new Customer Service Centre in the Civic Offices would be a key element in the enabling Welsh speaking customers to access services.

Progress against the key milestones for delivery during the financial year 2008/9 was summarised in particular, Website development whereby a Project Team had been established to take forward the complete re-design of the BCBC Website, including its translation. A member of Menter Bro Ogwr formed part of the Project Team. The timescale for the implementation of the new corporate website was next Spring.

The Policy and Performance Management Officer (Research) informed the Committee that the Customer Service Centre now had four full time staff who are Welsh speaking. The Welsh Language Forum had visited the Customer Service Centre along with representatives of the Welsh Language Board, with positive feedback offered for the progress made in the Customer Service Centre.

The Policy and Performance Management Officer (Research) reported on statistical data on the number of Welsh speakers, readers and writers for the whole Authority and for each Directorate. He stated that Welsh Language training issues were being

dealt with by the Organisational Development Section and which had been factored into the budget for that Section. It was intended to offer courses to Members and staff commencing in January 2009.

He also reported that Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd had opened its doors to pupils its first pupils in September 2008. The school would provide a boost to the local community especially the growth in the number of welsh speakers that would inevitably result.

In response to a question from Members, the Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships informed the Committee that there was a move to placing bilingual job advertisement which would be offset by the change from full advertisements to sign posting.

The Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships also reported that discussions had taken place with Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council to enter into a partnership scheme for translation services, but that the current arrangements of using independent translators was continuing for the time being.

The Employee Transformation and Development Manager reported that discussions had taken place with other Welsh local authorities and the Council's HR/Payroll software providers as to the possibility of having on line job applications being provided bilingually.

RESOLVED: That the progress made in developing and implementing a revised Welsh Language Scheme be noted.

13 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Chief Executive Corporate Development and Partnerships sought approval for a Forward Work Programme for the Committee which was designed to strike a balance between proactive work and the need to be responsive. To help ensure a structured approach is adopted the forward work programme included the option of quarterly information reports on national developments relating to equality and human rights.

RESOLVED: That:-

- (1) The draft Forward Work Programme be approved subject to the topics scheduled for the meeting on the 5 May 2009 being rescheduled to the meeting of the Committee in June at a date to be arranged.
- (2) That representatives of the Communities Directorate be invited to address the Committee on the links between equalities and the Local Development Plan to the meeting on the 12 January 2009.
- (3) The WLGA Director of Social Justice and Equalities be invited to address the Committee on the 6 April 2009.

14 EQUALITIES DATA IN THE BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL WORKFORCE

The Employee Transformation and Development Manager reported on equalities in workforce data as at the 30 June 2008.

Analysis of the workforce data was found at Appendix 2 of the report which captured data for the Council as a whole, whilst Appendix 3 of the report captured data for the Council excluding schools. The data used for analysis was generated by the Trent Integrated HR/Payroll System and the collation of the data was dependent on employees providing the information, which is not mandatory.

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the quarterly workforce data reports produced (March, June, September, December) be used to carry out comparative analysis of the Council's workforce at the year end and as a means of developing and improving the data held for equalities reporting through effective recording within the Trent HR/Payroll system.
 - (2) A report be presented to the Committee providing information on the number of grievances and complaints received which relate to equalities issues.
 - (3) That a summary workforce report also be provided identifying earnings levels between genders.

The meeting closed at 3.58pm.