

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON WEDNESDAY, 12 JUNE 2013 AT 10.00AM

Present:

Councillor D Sage - Chairperson

Councillors

Councillors

M E J Nott
H J David

L C Morgan

Invitees:

Councillor M W Butcher Councillor M Thomas
Councillor C A Green Councillor C Reeves
Councillor C Jones Councillor H Townsend

H Pitt – Manager, Bridgend Carers Centre

Officers:

D Mepham - Chief Executive
S Kingsbury - Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
P Williams - Equalities and Engagement Officer
E Winkley - Marketing and Engagement Manager
B Neville - Trade Union Representative
J Monks - Democratic Services Officer – Committees

The Chairperson welcomed the Chief Executive to the meeting.

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor M Gregory - Other Council Business
Councillor D M Hughes - Hospital
Councillor P J White - Holiday

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

32 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee - Equalities held on the 4th February 2013 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Councillor Townsend reported that the Authority had flown the Rainbow (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)) flag outside Civic Offices during LGBT Adoption Week and International Day against Homophobia and Trans phobia. The Deputy Leader commented that the Authority was one of only 15 local authorities in the UK to fly the rainbow flag.

33 SUPPORT TO CARERS IN BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH

The Equalities and Engagement Officer presented a report, submitted jointly by the Corporate Directors for Wellbeing and Children, to update the Committee on the following:

- Support to Carers in Bridgend County Borough
- The requirements of the Carers Strategy (Wales) Measure 2010
- Progress concerning the Carers Information and Consultation Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2016, attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

He took Members through the report and explained that it had been written by the Group Manager – Wellbeing, who was responsible for overseeing the work of Carers, and advised that it had already been presented to both Cabinet and Scrutiny.

In order to improve provision, advice and support for Carers in Wales, the Measure had recommended all local authorities and health boards to develop information and consultation strategies, which the Authority had already put into action as outlined under Appendix 1.

The Equalities and Engagement Officer explained that there was a connection to the Corporate Improvement Plan and other Council priorities, particularly with regard to healthy living, strong communities and the sustainable social services for Wales framework. It was also a priority under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill. The key aim of the Carers Strategy was to provide equal rights for Carers in line with the people they care for.

A Carer is defined as an individual, whether adult or child, and could be a friend, family member or neighbour of the person they are caring for. There were currently over 350,000 unpaid Carers in Wales; paragraph 3.3 of the report contained a table showing the number of Carers in Bridgend, based on the 2001 and 2011 Census data. Current data from the Status Office was awaited.

The Equalities and Engagement Officer advised Members of the new Carers Emergency Card Scheme, which triggers an emergency response for the cared-for person in the event of an emergency concerning the Carer. He explained that anyone can phone the Carers Centre to alert them of a problem, and the Centre then identifies the person the Carer is looking after to ensure they are alright. He advised that the Authority worked closely with the Carers Centre to provide support, and in line with Welsh Government guidance a Local Partnership Group was formed, which comprised BCBC, the local Health Board, Bridgend Carers Centre and voluntary sector representatives from Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea areas.

The Consultation Strategy was submitted to the Welsh Government last October and formal approval had been received. Feedback in relation to the strategy, and the work which had already been completed to date, had been positive. He advised that the strategy was not a fixed plan, but a starting point to take forward a number of priorities over the next three years.

He concluded by advising the Committee of an awareness event which had taken place this week, targeted at school staff. Unfortunately, attendance at the event was poor and a programme was being developed to promote it in Carers Week next year.

In response to one Member's concern in identifying young carers, the Manager, Bridgend Carers Centre explained that the Group Manager – Wellbeing was carrying out training with young carers, who had developed their own booklets and, which would be distributed throughout the Borough. Also, as part of the current training for schools, a DVD was being developed to demonstrate to teaching staff how to identify a young carer. She informed Members that the idea for the content of the DVD had come from young carers during the Carers Conference last year, where they took part in role play and wanted to develop a DVD around their own relationships and what was happening in schools.

One Member was concerned as to what happened to the young carers who had not been identified. She also referred to the fact that carers could not change a hospital appointment for the person they were caring for, due to data protection, which proved difficult for a carer.

The Manager, Bridgend Carers Centre advised that there were 18,000 carers in Bridgend, and 2,000 of those had been identified by the Authority. She was hopeful that through the Carers' Measure the situation would improve, with the Health Service referring young people to the Carers Centre.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People suggested contacting the Health Board regarding the issue of carers not being able to change an appointment for someone. He stressed that it was not just about appointments, but ensuring that patients were properly represented.

One Member suggested that some young carers may choose not to be identified through fear of being placed in care, and if so whether there was a way of reassuring them that it was support they were offered and not to remove them from their homes.

The Manager, Bridgend Carers Centre advised that the Centre was dealing with adults who did not identify themselves and had visited awareness raising sessions organised by the Carers Centre at Boots the Chemist and Bridgend town centre. The Centre was also connected to the Heronsbridge School, where coffee mornings were held to raise awareness.

Members felt that due to the importance of the subject, Officers from the Wellbeing and Children's Directorates should have been in attendance at the meeting.

The Cabinet Member – Children advised that Council had received a presentation and report on young carers during the last administration and elected Members would benefit from that information again, particularly as there was concern around support for young carers.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Manager, Bridgend Carers Centre for attending the meeting. He commended the Bridgend Carers Centre for the support he had received whilst he was a carer, which he expressed had meant a great deal to him. He asked whether the changes being brought about through Welfare Reform had put pressure on the Centre.

The Manager, Bridgend Carers Centre advised that the Centre had received a number of calls from carers who were struggling and a Benefits Surgery was set up with MacMillan Cancer Support, who had achieved approximately £50,000 in unclaimed benefits for the carers who had visited the Centre. Also a local solicitor, who specialised in community care law, held a surgery for carers. She further advised that one to one support for carers had improved over the last year, with 185 attending the Centre and

120 home visits to carers being carried out. The Centre, which was on Facebook, was also able to offer carers various forms of respite

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Carers Information and Consultation Strategy and Action Plan.

34 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Corporate Director – Resources submitted a report to provide the Committee with a proposal for a Forward Work Programme (FWP) for next year, attached at Appendix 1.

One Member highlighted that despite the fact that the Committee should be receiving six monthly reports from VALREC (Valleys Regional Equality Council), it had been almost a year since they last reported.

The Equalities and Engagement Officer explained that the Authority had an agreement with VALREC under which that organisation received £10,000 a year to enable them to take on some of the Authority's casework. In response to half-yearly reports being received, he advised that in order to formalise the arrangement, two six month updates had been put on the FWP to ensure the Council receives value for money.

The Chief Executive asked whether there was a mechanism in place to ensure the Authority received value for money before December 2013.

The Equalities and Engagement Officer advised that the completion of the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) was expected in mid-July and from that VALREC would be asked for an immediate update on what they had achieved over the last six to 12 months. He explained that the December item on the FWP would be based on the work carried out between March and December 2013.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee - Equalities approved the proposals outlined within the Forward Work Programme attached to the report, subject to the amendments.

35 WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2012-13

The Equalities and Engagement Officer presented a report to outline the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme Annual Monitoring Report 2012-13, and sought the Committee's approval for its submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

He reported that although new measures were expected, there would still be the need to have the Welsh Language Scheme in place and even though the statutory requirements on public bodies may change, there would always be a requirement to produce an annual report. He referred Members to Appendix 1, which outlined the Authority's progress in implementing the Scheme.

He advised that the main topic was the work of the Youth Service who had trained 30 youth members in the usage of Welsh, which would form part of their youth service induction scheme.

The Equalities and Engagement Officer reported that there were a number of Welsh speakers in the Customer Contact Centre and Telephone Contact Centre, providing the opportunity for Welsh speaking callers to speak with a Welsh speaking advisor.

During the last year the Authority received two complaints regarding the implementation of the Scheme. The first related to a piece of artwork outside Asda in Bridgend, accompanied by an English only poem. He explained that the person commissioned to produce the art had sub-commissioned a poet to write the poetry without the knowledge that it would need to be bilingual. The poem was not translated into Welsh as the context would have been lost in translation. The Authority noted the Commissioner's recommendation to commission a separate piece of poetry through the medium of Welsh would have avoided the need for translation, which had been fed back to the service area to be considered in any similar future projects.

The other complaint was from a member of the public who reported that some of the signage on Maesteg Industrial Estate was incorrectly translated into Welsh. However, new signs had been ordered and internal processes had been refined to ensure such instances would not reoccur.

The Monitoring Report also outlined an update on work done on the council's website. The Welsh Language Commissioner had also requested that we include Welsh issues on our Equality Impact Assessment toolkit. . Finally, the Monitoring Report outlined the councils performance in relation to Welsh skills and training by service area.

One Member referred to the fact that only 59 people out of 484 did get to have a conversation in Welsh throughout the whole year and asked whether there were plans to increase the number of Welsh speaking advisors within the Council. There could be more people who want to converse through the medium of Welsh who had perhaps been put off.

The Equalities and Engagement Officer advised that an arrangement had been set up between the Customer Services Manager and HR to ensure that when she is recruiting for her team, it is made known to applicants that an ability to speak Welsh was an advantage.

In response to a question from Members, the Marketing and Engagement Manager informed the Committee that the number of hits on the Welsh pages of the website had been low compared to those accessing the English site. With regard to departments in the Authority publishing information in Welsh, service areas upload their content, which then goes into a workflow. If a service area does not have the equivalent content in Welsh as well as English, then that information would be requested, which creates a time delay in publishing it on the web.

The Chairperson commented that the Authority was responsible for all languages and not just Welsh.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered the Annual Monitoring Report and approved its submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

36 SIX MONTHLY REPORT ON EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

The Corporate Director - Resources submitted a report that provided the Committee with data on the Council's workforce, together with comparative information and an update on developments that are employment related.

The Equalities and Engagement Officer referred those present to Appendix 1 of the report that provided half-yearly data analysis on the contracted workforce from the 30th September 2011 to the 31st March. Appendix 2 provided Members with a summary of

workforce information as at the 31st March 2013, based on gender/pay grade for all BCBC employees, excluding casual/relief employees.

He reported that the first Strategic Equality Plan was produced in March this year, and an Employee Information page on domestic abuse would soon be published on the BCBC intranet. Following deaf awareness training sessions during 2011/2012, employees in the Customer Contact Centre had received further BSL training to improve and maintain their skills. Also a training matrix was being developed to outline equality and diversity training requirements for Council employees. He further reported that the Authority was successfully reassessed for the “2 ticks” Disability Symbol Award in recognition of its commitment to employing, retaining and developing disabled people.

One Member asked if the Authority had a domestic violence policy in place. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised that a domestic abuse policy was in place and Bridgend was one of the first local authorities to implement it and was now on its second edition with the final draft being presented to the Trade Unions for approval in July.

The Marketing and Engagement Manager reported on a press release which had commended the deaf facilities which were available in the Authority.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report.

The Equalities and Engagement Officer advised Members that 27th August date for the Committee to meet had been postponed and Tuesday, 24th September was suggested as a possible alternative date for the Committee to consider.

The meeting closed at 11.42 am.