

CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE - 6 JULY 2009

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE HELD IN
COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON MONDAY, 6
JULY 2009 AT 10.00AM

Present: -

Councillor D Sage - Chairperson

Councillors

H J David
M E J Nott

Invitees:

Councillor N Clarke
Councillor P A Evans
Councillor R M James
Councillor M Thomas
Councillor M Wilkins

Officers:

D Sutherland - Head of ICT and Customer Contact
L Smith - Policy and Performance Management Officer (Equalities)
P Miles - Pay and Reward Officer
A Rees - Senior Cabinet and Committee Officer

38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officers:-

Councillor D Brett	- Unwell
Councillor A E Davies	- Other Council Business
Councillor C A Green	- Holiday
Councillor M Gregory	- Work commitments
Councillor P A Hacking	- Family bereavement
Councillor R D Jenkins	- Other Council Business
Councillor L C Morgan	- Holiday
Councillor J C Spanswick	- Other Council Business
D MacGregor	- Annual Leave
L Hutton	- Annual Leave

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

40 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2009 were approved as a true and accurate record.

41 NOTES OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP

The notes of the meeting of the Corporate Equalities Management Group held on 19 March 2009 were noted.

42 THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CABINET EQUALITY COMMITTEE

The Policy and Performance Management Officer reported that the Role and Responsibilities of the Committee were established in 2006 and require updating to bring them into line with changes in the legislation and regulatory framework covering equality. Cabinet at its meeting on the 16 June 2009 approved changes to the role and responsibilities of this Committee. The new terms and reference were set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the amendments made to its roles and responsibilities.

43 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER AND THE SERVICES OFFERED BY THE CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE IN THE CONTEXT OF EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

The Head of ICT and Customer Contact reported on the progress made by the Customer Service Centre since the approval of the Customer Service Charter and the links to the Corporate Equalities Scheme. He stated that the Customer Service Centre opened for business on the 7 July 2008 following an intense training period for staff, who were formally in either receptionists for various services within the Civic Offices and Sunnyside or new recruits. The Customer Service Centre is designed to be accessible to all customers and features self serve kiosks of different heights, desks with hearing loop, or interview rooms accessible to disabled scooters, wheelchairs along with accessible toilets and baby changing facilities.

A Customer Service Charter was produced following consultation with customers and staff which sets out the standards to be met by all staff of the Council for all services. This was the first time the Council had published a set of Corporate Customer Service Standards. Whilst some departments and sections continued to have standards relevant to their area of service delivery, the Customer Service Charter, had been adopted as the overriding statement of the Council's Corporate Customer Service Standards.

He also reported that an equality impact assessment was carried out on the implementation of the Customer Service Centre in June 2008 and this had contributed to shaping the improvements.

He informed the Committee that all customers were treated with respect and dignity and this was measured by customer feedback gathered via a customer satisfaction survey completed by customers following their visit to the Customer Service Centre. Consistently high scores were given for staff being friendly and helpful. All staff had received training on attitudes and behaviours, managing conflict, drink and drug awareness, and Welsh Language and equality and diversity training. The absence of barriers and the pleasant atmosphere has created an environment whereby customers were rarely verbally abusive in any way, which was a tribute to the staff of the Customer Service Centre and the design of the Centre. Welsh speakers wear "Cymraeg" badges and large signs at the front desk advertise that business can be

conducted in Welsh. The Welsh speaking Customer Service Advisers had just begun a ten week bespoke Welsh Course developed by the University of Glamorgan to understand the technical terms used in, for example, the delivery of planning and benefits services. This was to be used as a case study for the WAG "Welsh in the Workplace". He advised that some Customer Service Advisers had spoken Welsh as their first language and others as a second language.

The Government's supplier of telephone interpretation and translation service - "The Big Word" was used to talk to customers using languages other than English or Welsh and staff had access to a network of British Sign Language interpreters for deaf customers.

To meet the commitments made in the Customer Service Centre, customers arriving at the Customer Service Centre were logged into a queuing system to ensure that they were seen in turn and as far as is practicable did not wait longer than ten minutes to have their enquiry dealt with. A total of 5,666 customers were seen during quarter three in 2008/9 (October to December) with the average waiting time at 9.93 minutes and 87% of enquiries were resolved at the first point of contact. A total of 50542 calls were handled during the same quarter with an average speed of answer of 36 seconds, 80.3% of all calls were answered within 30 seconds.

He advised that it was intended to carry out an introductory training course for customer service staff in British Sign Language.

Due to the success of the Customer Service Centre it had experienced a high turnover of staff due to the skills and training staff received which had made them highly marketable. He stated that he hoped that job evaluation would address issues of pay and grading of customer service advisers.

He also informed the Committee that alternative means of managing different types of visitor were being looked at to address large queues of customers arriving at the Customer Service Centre reception which can happen at peak times. He also informed the Committee that the opening hours at the Customer Service Centre were to be reviewed as there was very limited demand for services in the evening. The use of the Customer Service Centre early in the morning was fairly small, but greater than its use in the evening. He informed the Committee that a survey had been conducted on customers preference for visiting the Customer Contact Centre.

He also advised the Committee that the bi-lingual greeting on the single telephone number would be reviewed.

The Policy and Performance Management Officer informed the Committee that the data collected on diversity would be reviewed it was also planned to visit the Deaf Club and contact local disability groups such as Bridge Vis to gain customer feedback. There was a need to inform voluntary groups of the additional opening hours at the Customer Service Centre. There was also a need to raise awareness of the availability of the Big Word telephone interpreting service in the community.

The Committee congratulated the staff of the Customer Service Centre on the excellent service they provide.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the recommendation on sign language training is agreed.

44 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME OF THE CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

The Policy and Performance Management Officer sought approval of the Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2009/10. The Forward Work Programme will assist the Authority in implementing its Corporate Equality Scheme and meeting its equality duties. Under the revised terms of reference for the Committee, its role was to ensure that equality and fairness were values embraced into the work of the Council as a community leader, service provider and employer. The draft Forward Work Programme was intended to support the work of the Committee in carrying out its role and responsibilities, including making recommendations to Cabinet on the development and implementation of the Authority's Corporate Equality and Welsh Language Scheme and monitoring and assessing the Authority's performance against the WLGA Equality Improvement Framework. The Committee was invited to nominate any additional topics for inclusion in the work programme. The Forward Work Programme of the Committee was designed to ensure effective work planning and to ensure a structured approach is adopted.

RESOLVED: That the draft Forward Work Programme appended to the report be approved with the addition of a report on domestic abuse support services.

45 EQUALITY IN THE BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL WORKFORCE

The Pay and Reward Officer reported on equality in the workforce data as at the 31 March 2009. A statistical overview of the current workforce in the Council was found at Appendix 1 of the report which included an analysis of the current workforce based on gender, ethnicity, disability and age. A statistical and graphical overview of comparative employee data for the Council over the twelve months preceding the 31 March 2009 was captured at Appendix 2 of the report. The report also showed an analysis of employee data based on gender/pay grade at Appendix 3, age/gender split for employees including and excluding schools also showing ethnicity, disability, Welsh language skills and information on carers were shown in Appendices 4 and 5 of the report.

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the quarterly workforce data report produced as at the 31 March 2009 be noted and used to carry out comparative analysis of the Council's workforce for past and subsequent quarters over the past twelve month period.
 - (2) That the quarterly workforce data report to be produced at the next meeting of the Committee include additional information about age breakdown of the workforce such as date on 16-18 year old employees.

The meeting closed at 10.55am.