

CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES - 23 MAY 2011

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES HELD IN
COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON MONDAY,
23 MAY 2011 AT 10.00AM

Present: -

Councillor D Sage, Deputy Leader - Chairperson

Councillors

A E Davies
H J David
L C Morgan

Invitees:

Councillor N Clarke	Councillor P A Hacking
Councillor P A Evans	Councillor R M James
Councillor C A Green	Councillor M Thomas
Councillor M Gregory	

Officers:

D MacGregor	- Assistant Chief Executive - Performance
P Williams	- Human Resources Business Partner
S Pryce	- Head of Regeneration and Development
J Davies	- Community Safety Team Leader
B Neville	- UNISON Representative
P Gavigan	- Legal Officer
A Rees	- Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
R Ronan	- Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Invitees:

D Ralph - VALREC

105 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Councillor M E J Nott	- Other Council business
Councillor P White	- In hospital

106 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

107 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2011 were approved as a true and accurate record.

108 DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2011-14

The Chairperson introduced Satwant Pryce, Head of Regeneration and Development and John Davies, Community Safety Team Leader who would be giving an overview of the Community Cohesion Strategy and Action Plan (CCSAP).

The Head of Regeneration and Development outlined the background to the National Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales and explained that the CCSAP was a local response to this strategy. The strategy is being developed by Safer Bridgend in partnership with other public, private and voluntary sector bodies with the involvement of the wider community. In order to develop the strategy various consultation exercises had been undertaken which included interviews, workshops, residents' surveys and focus groups.

The Head of Regeneration and Development then went on to outline and expand on the main themes that had emerged during the consultation process. The Community Safety Team Leader informed the Committee that the consultation process had produced very positive feedback and demonstrated that the development of the strategy was seen as having value by the communities.

To give a context as to why the CCSAP was being developed the Head of Regeneration and Development informed the Committee that the Authority received £50,000 per annum from the Welsh Government to support community cohesion work and the CCSAP would shape our priorities and inform how the money would be spent.

To illustrate the aims of the CCSAP the Head of Regeneration and Development asked the Committee to consider if the idea of being "Welsh" was easy for people who moved to the country to buy into and subsequently what factors shaped a person's sense of belonging and community.

In response to this Members commented that it was important to avoid stereotypes of what it was to be Welsh or of how the indigenous Welsh viewed people who moved into their areas. The Committee suggested that it would be useful if work could be carried out to gather information in relation to this issue. The Head of Regeneration and Development advised that one possible method currently being considered is via Council Tax billing as people have to notify Council Tax when they are moving into the area. A "Welcome Pack" to include details of local facilities etc. was proposed and it was possible that a questionnaire could be included in the pack.

The Committee noted that there was no mention of the Cabinet Committee or schools or young people in the diagram on page 4 of the report and suggested that links be shown with Bridgend Youth Council and local schools. The Head of Regeneration and Development explained that in the body of the main document various youth groups were included and had been part of the consultation process. She explained that the structure diagram shown on page 4 of the report had not intended to map everyone involved, it was simply a stakeholder diagram from which an action plan would evolve.

The Committee suggested that there was scope to develop the Citizenship Ceremonies to use them to promote a sense of belonging and community. The Chairperson advised that representatives of local primary schools now attended the

ceremonies and that that it was a good opportunity for the children to meet people from different parts of the world. The Chairperson invited the Head of Regeneration and Development and the Community Safety Team Leader to attend a future Citizenship Ceremony.

The Committee questioned whether in relation to residents quality of life social landlords such as V2C were involved in the consultation process. The Community Safety Team Leader advised that social landlords, Public Protection and the Police would all be part of the consultation process in order to address issues such as noisy neighbours and hate crime.

The Committee requested that in relation to paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of the report they be provided with a map of the process that was being followed and that this be reported back to Cabinet over the summer.

The Chairperson thanked the Head of Regeneration and Development and the Community Safety Team Leader for their overview and for answering the Committee's questions.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet Committee - Equalities noted the process for developing the Community Cohesion Strategy and Action Plan 2011 - 14 (CCSAP)

The Cabinet Committee – Equalities noted the key evidence and emerging findings

The Cabinet Committee - Equalities noted the proposed Governance Structure and next steps.

109 CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME - DRAFT ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2010 - 11

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance introduced the annual monitoring report on the Corporate Equality Scheme.

He advised that Appendix A gave the details of the scheme and confirmed that improvements have continued to be made in a number of areas as detailed in the bullet points.

He explained that within the current scheme, the vast majority of actions had fallen within the Corporate Centre but it had been recognised that there needed to be more involvement with services, as equalities had not been mainstreamed enough. In order to move forward and ensure that the new strategic equality plan took on more meaning across the Council as a whole it was important to develop equality objectives and publish these by April 2012. It was intended to engage with a wide range of equality groups over the next six months in a meaningful manner and this would then form a good basis on which to draft the plan.

To conclude the Assistant Chief Executive - Performance advised that there had been a steady improvement in the Authority's overall delivery of the equality scheme and it was hoped that the development of the strategic equality plan would further support this.

Members questioned why points 3 and 4 on page 11 of the report had not made as much progress as had been planned and agreed that they considered access to information a key element in the process. The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance assured the Committee that providing guidelines on accessible information was seen as a priority and that the Website had already been enhanced with "Browse Aloud" and other tools to assist the visually impaired such as the ability to alter font size.

The Committee agreed that it was important to ensure that the consultation on the strategy was fully inclusive and that all local stakeholders were invited to participate and give their views.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet Committee - Equalities approved the Corporate Equality Scheme - Annual Monitoring Report 2010 - 11.

110 WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME - DRAFT ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2010 - 2011

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance introduced the annual monitoring report on the Welsh Language Scheme. He advised that the annual monitoring report is required to be submitted by the Welsh Language Board, and explained that he was pleased to report that significant progress had been made especially in relation to the website. The Authority continues to build a positive relationship with the Welsh Language Board and it was important that this was maintained.

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance summarised the main points from the report and advised that it was interesting to note that the Bridgend Youth Council had increased its number of Welsh Speakers within the past year and the ratio of Welsh Speaking staff within the Authority had also increased. He informed the Committee that the Authority had received no complaints regarding the use of Welsh nor regarding the provision of services via the Welsh Language medium under the corporate complaints procedure or the Social Services Complaints procedure.

The Committee pointed out that the spelling of the new Welsh medium secondary school on page 2 of the report was incorrect and asked that this be rectified.

The Committee welcomed the increase in Welsh speakers both in staff employed by the Authority and as members of the Bridgend Youth Council. They did however point out that the Youth Council website needed to be bilingual and they felt that it was important that links with the BCBC website should also be made.

The Chairperson acknowledged the work that had been undertaken to produce such positive results and congratulated all involved on the major progress that had been made.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approves the annual monitoring report and approves its submission to the Welsh Language Board.

111 ACCESS TO THE WELSH LANGUAGE PAGES OF THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance presented a report the purpose of which was to inform the Committee about the use of the Welsh Language pages of the Council's website. The report explained that the content of the website is very expansive and therefore it was extremely positive to see that on the service information pages 50% were now in Welsh. He noted however that a number of service pages are hosted by other organisations e.g. May Gurney and are not in Welsh.

For information pages that are still to be translated into Welsh the website shows a generic 'holding' message explaining that Welsh content will be provided shortly.

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance concluded by saying that he felt the report highlighted the significant commitment being shown by the Authority to develop a bilingual website.

Members of the Committee said that they were disappointed to see that the percentage of hits on the Welsh pages was still relatively low and that the majority of people still preferred to access information in English. This raised concerns about the value for money in relation to the cost of translation and upkeep of the Welsh Pages.

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance conceded that the majority of public will still prefer to read information in English however, the Council is obliged to provide a bi-lingual service and bearing in mind the percentage of Welsh speakers within the County Borough a high usage rate was never expected. He informed the Committee that approximately £20,000 had been spent to date on bringing the Welsh content up to its current level and the ongoing costs for maintaining the Welsh pages was not expected to be high.

The Committee considered that as more Welsh medium schools were being opened within the County Borough the number of Welsh speakers could possibly increase in the future and agreed therefore that it was important to maintain the commitment to offering a bilingual facility on our website.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet Committee - Equalities noted the content of the report and approved its submission to the Welsh Language Board.

112 SIX MONTHLY REPORT ON EQUALITY IN THE WORKFORCE

The Business Partner - Human Resources presented the six monthly report on equality in the workforce the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with background data on the Council's workforce and work being undertaken to promote equality in the workplace. He summarised the data detailed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and pointed out some of the main trends.

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance said that he was struck by the number of young people who were applying for jobs within the Authority, over half the applicants are under 25 and two thirds are under 35. Paradoxically however, the age mix within the employed workforce is not changing. The Committee questioned whether it was possible to receive information on how far the young applicants were getting in the recruitment process and what aspects of their applications they fell short on i.e.

experience, skills. It was agreed that HR would investigate whether this information was available and return to the Committee with the findings.

Members asked about the background to the number of resignations detailed on page 3 of the report and information on the main reasons for resignations was provided. The Business Partner - Human Resources also indicated that a percentage of the resignations related to seasonal employees. In light of this query and the previous one in relation to young applicants the Committee requested that in the next six monthly report there was more expansion provided on the raw data to make the statistics more meaningful.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet Committee - Equalities received and noted the information contained in the workforce report.

113 BRIEFING ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTIES UNDER THE EQUALITIES ACT 2010

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance introduced the report and a briefing paper on the public sector equalities duties under the Equalities Act 2010. He explained that the report and appendix summarised the specific duties and key points for public authorities and advised that these duties came into force on 6 April 2011.

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance advised the Committee that a workshop will be arranged for officers to discuss how best to move forward with the Strategic Equality Plan and that the intention was to be proactive rather than reactive.

RESOLVED: (1) The Cabinet Committee - Equalities noted the information in the briefing paper and awaited the publication of the guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

(2) The Cabinet Committee - Equalities receive a further report at its next meeting on the implementation of the new public sector duties.

114 WELSH LANGUAGE (WALES) MEASURE 2011

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance updated the Committee on the position as regards the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. His report detailed the background to the Measure and he explained that the Committee had previously received a report and presentation on the proposed Measure in April 2010 and that the Committee had contributed to the subsequent public consultation. Paragraph 4.3 explained that Bridgend was one of only three local authorities to respond to the public consultation. The Committee questioned whether the WLGA had provided a response to the consultation as they considered that it should be a key part of their role to lobby on such matters at a national level before a decision is made. The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance informed the Committee that he would check whether the WLGA responded and report back.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet Committee - Equalities received the report.

115 THE WORK OF VALREC IN BRIDGEND: DELIVERY AGAINST THE SLA

The Chair introduced Darren Ralph of the Valleys Regional Equality Council (VALREC).

The Assistant Chief Executive - Performance introduced the report of VALREC setting out activities it had undertaken in the Bridgend area as shown in Appendix A.

The VALREC representative thanked the Committee for inviting him to the meeting and went on to give some background to the support that VALREC offer individuals in the County Borough.

He informed the Committee that in 2010/11 VALREC officers supported 52 individuals across the County Borough. Casework was varied and wide ranging and due to ongoing promotional work and referrals from BCBC and the Police he reported that there had been a steady increase in referrals.

The VALREC representative informed the Committee that he had recently met with the corporate training unit and that equalities training would be provided for elected Member within the Member Development Programme.

He added that a management forum had now been established called Valley Voices which would bring together a number of voluntary organisations and minority groups.

The Chairperson thanked the VALREC representative for his presentation and said that it was important the Committee was given information on the varied amount of work that was carried out by the organisation.

The Committee questioned whether the casework detailed in Appendix A was typical of cases that had been referred and whether there was any particular type of issue that was prevalent. The VALREC representative informed the Committee that although casework can vary they were still seeing racism being reported in Maesteg and the Valleys. Reporting of Homophobic hate crime was also increasing although this may not be an increase in actual crime but a reflection of people becoming more aware of reporting mechanisms. Crimes were also now more clearly categorised for example homophobic hate crime may previously have been simply classed as anti-social behaviour and police officers were being trained on what constitutes a hate crime. These factors were likely to have an impact on the overall figures.

The Chairperson thanked the Committee for their comments and said that it was encouraging to see such an interest in this item.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet Committee - Equalities received and considered the information contained in the report.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm.