

Bridgend County Borough Council

Report of the Chief Executive

Equalities Committee

20 September 2006

Citizens Panel Survey – Neighbourhood and Society

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the consultation undertaken by the Authority with the Bridgend County Borough Citizens Panel in June – July 2006 which looked at people's attitudes towards their neighbourhood, towards different groups in society and people's confidence in fair treatment for different groups by the council. The report includes a summary of key findings from the survey.

2. Background

- 2.1** In October 2004 a service satisfaction survey of the Bridgend County Borough Council's Citizen's Panel found that 73% of respondents did not agree that the council treated all residents equally. Since then the council has signed up to achieve level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in Wales by March 2007.

In April – May 2006 Bridgend County Borough Council undertook consultation with residents and local organisations to establish their views on the draft General Equality Statement and Race Equality Statement and further consultation will be undertaken to gain the views of the community and staff on equality statements covering gender, disability, faith, sexual orientation, age and carer status and the draft Corporate Equality Plan.

To supplement this study Beaufort Research were commissioned to carry out a survey of the Bridgend County Borough Citizens Panel to investigate the local people's perceptions and attitudes towards different people within the local community. The research was based on attitude surveys carried out by Cumbria County Council (2004), Stonewall (2004) and the Scottish Executive (2003).

3. Summary of findings

- 3.1** The overall rate of response to the survey was high (73%) and this makes it possible to draw conclusions from the feedback that will inform the authority's approach towards promoting equality, eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting good community relations.
- 3.2** The attached summary report sets out in detail the findings of the survey. The committee are asked to note the following:
- There are indications that perceptions and attitudes towards people from black minority ethnic backgrounds are an area of concern with respondents

indicating less positive attitudes towards particular groups, gypsies and members of the traveller community (44%), refugees and asylum seekers (39%).

- There are indications that perceptions and attitudes towards people from religious minorities are less positive than for other groups (12%).
- There are indications that perceptions and attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) people are also an area of concern with respondents indicating less positive attitudes towards this group (15%).
- These findings correspond with the survey's findings on respondent's perceptions of which groups are most likely to experience prejudice in Britain and Bridgend. There is a marked difference between the level of prejudice perceived to exist at the national level and that at the county level. The following groups are perceived to experience the most prejudice within the local community: Refugees and asylum seekers (53%), gypsies and travellers (57%), and people from black minority ethnic backgrounds (47%), followed by LGBT people (40%) and disabled people (29%).
- The survey indicates that certain factors influence people's attitudes towards specific groups. Personal experience was the most frequently cited reason for feeling less positive towards certain groups (44%) and the role of the media seems to have considerable influence over people's attitudes (40%). 42% indicated that the law and public policy have also influenced their attitudes and this should be considered in the light of the increasing public duties on the council to actively promote equality and positive attitudes towards minority groups and good community relations.
- Furthermore age and gender appear to influence people's attitudes and this should be taken into account when the authority is providing community leadership on equality issues.
- By looking at people's attitudes towards different groups in a variety of social situations and relationships it is possible to see how attitudes may change depending on specific situations. For instance, the vast majority of respondents said that they would be 'very' or 'fairly' comfortable with each group (different ethnic group, women, gay or lesbian, disabled person or Welsh language speaker) in the role of their child's teacher, boss, councillor, MP, AM, or partner of a relative or close friend,. However, 25% said that they would not be very comfortable if their child's teacher was gay or lesbian. Attitudes towards LGBT people demonstrated considerable difference between men and women and among respondents over 50.
- In terms of receiving fair treatment from the council respondents demonstrated a distinct reversal in perceptions of fair treatment by the council compared to their perceptions of prejudice in the wider society. For instance, while 47% of respondents felt that people from black minority ethnic backgrounds would experience the most prejudice within the local community, only 5% were 'not very confident' or 'not at all confident' that people from black minority ethnic backgrounds would receive fair treatment from the council.
- On a positive note, 78% of respondents felt that they would personally receive fair treatment from the council. However people with a long-standing illness or disability and those renting their homes were slightly less confident. Overall for all groups an average of 22% were not confident of receiving fair treatment from the council.
- 49% of respondents expressed the view that the council should do more to meet the needs of disabled people and older people, followed by young

people (41%) and women (24%). The survey showed that although gypsies and travellers and refugees and asylum seekers consistently emerged as being perceived to experience the most prejudice in society and least likely to receive fair treatment from the council 28% of respondents did not support more being done to meet their needs.

- In employment and workplace issues 81% of respondents believe that women find it 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to find work and fit into the workplace. This reflects the views expressed by women respondents. However, respondents believe that older people and disabled people find it 'very difficult' or 'fairly difficult' to find work and fit into the workplace. Again this corresponded with the views expressed by respondents who are over 50 (65%) and disabled people (66%). As a major local employer the council has an important role to play in tackling these issues in line with its statutory duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

This survey provides the authority with baseline information about the nature and extent of prejudice against different groups in Bridgend County Borough which will contribute to the council being able to measure how its Corporate Equality Policy and Plan and its statutory equality schemes contribute to promoting equality, tackling discrimination and promoting good community relations within the county.

4. Legal and Financial implications

This report contributes to the authority meeting its statutory duties to consult with the local community on equality issues. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. Recommendations

That the Equalities Committee note the contents of this report and the summary report on neighbourhood and society (attached at appendix 1).

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Background papers:

- Attitudes to discrimination in Scotland Report, Scottish Executive, 2003
- Cumbrian Attitudes Survey, Cumbria County Council, 2004
- Understanding Prejudice: Attitudes towards minorities, 2004
- Bridgend County Borough Community Strategy 2005 - 2016
- Bridgend County Borough Council Citizens Panel Summary Report – Service Satisfaction (May 2005)
- Bridgend County Borough Council Equality Policies and Schemes Research (Qualitative Findings) Report April 2006
- Welsh Language Act 1993

- Race Relations (Amd) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Equality Act 2006