

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EQUALITIES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON TUESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2006 AT 2:30PM

Present: -

Councillor C A Green BA - Chairperson

Councillors

M M Bertorelli
D A D Brett
L Davies
R D Jenkins
J Radford

Councillors

K T Rowlands
D Sage
M Thomas
K Watkins

Officers

L Smith - Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator
S Kelly - Policy & Performance Management Officer
R Harries - Cabinet and Committee Officer

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor J H Tildesley - prior engagement

19 NON-ATTENDANCE DUE TO OTHER COUNCIL BUSINESS

Councillor R D L Burns
Councillor R G Hughes
H Anthony - Executive Director - Learning

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

21 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP

It was suggested that care be exercised in the use of acronyms in the minutes, to avoid confusion. The Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator clarified that a copy of the draft Welsh Language Scheme, incorporating comments from the Welsh Language Board, should be available to present to the Committee on 19 December 2006.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Corporate Equalities Management Group held on the 7 September 2006 be noted.

22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2006 be noted, subject to the following amendments:-

- (i) That Councillor Brett be added to the list of those present.

- (ii) That minute number 14, paragraph 4 should read "Each member of Corporate Services has access to the Staff Handbook..." (i.e., the word "was" be deleted).

Regarding resolution 2 of minute 17, the Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator advised that a reply was currently being awaited from the organisers of the Youth Council.

23 DRAFT EQUALITIES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator submitted the above report. A copy of the draft work programme was attached at Appendix 1.

The Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator outlined the various elements of the work plan, including progress already made and timescales. She clarified that whilst some timescales were tight, considerable work had already been done in some areas, and that the timescales reflect the statutory deadlines the authority was working to and the policy agreement target deadline agreed with the Welsh Assembly Government. She advised Members that the timescale for "Develop information and guidance for managers, staff and Councillors" should read November 2006. The timescale for "Review strategic service policies/plans and corporate equality" should read April 2007. The timescale for "Review Performance Management Framework to mainstream good practice in equalities" should read February 2007.

Regarding the Gender Equality Scheme, the Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator advised that she was confident the Authority would meet the statutory deadline of April 2007. However, she noted that in order to bring a draft scheme to the Committee in December, further input from Human Resources would be necessary. Members agreed the need to ensure support at senior management level, including the newly appointed Assistant Director - Human Resources.

With regard to reviewing of strategic service policies/plans and corporate equality, Members suggested that a Task and Finish Group be set up to prioritise this issue and liaise with the Corporate Equalities Management Group (CEMG).

With regard to the project to "Review procurement process to mainstream good practice in equalities", Members raised concerns that this would result in an undue burden on suppliers, particularly smaller companies. Concerns were also raised that the Authority should not be asking contractors to meet practices and policies which it was currently struggling to meet itself.

The Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator clarified that this was intended to be an area where the Authority could encourage good practice by influencing the way in which services were provided on behalf of the Authority. However, the Authority does have some discretion as to how to implement this project, within the existing statutory codes of practices and EU regulations. It was not the intention that this should result in additional pressure on smaller organisations, but rather improve the guidance and advice available to small to medium enterprises about mainstreaming equalities into the way they do business.

With regard to "Review[ing] Council policy and mechanisms for dealing with hate crimes, domestic violence and harassment in community and employment" the

Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator advised that this project reflected the Authority's statutory duties, and that these issues would be addressed through key local partnerships, such as Safer Bridgend and the VALREC.

She noted that the policy would apply to users of council services and staff members, in terms of staff being able to make an appropriate response if they became aware of a service user being at risk of harassment and also circumstances in which a member of staff are themselves a victim of harassment or domestic violence.

Regarding "Develop[ing] equality monitoring protocol for service areas", the Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator noted that the Authority gathered a lot of information, but needed to make better use of it to identify possible patterns of inequality in employment or service take up. It was further noted that the introduction of Unified Assessment process in Social Services, in addition to the new TRENT and RAISE systems, should improve this position.

It was agreed that training for staff and Members was crucial, as indicated by the project "Review of staff and Member training and development."

In response to questions from Members, the Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator clarified that positive action i.e. activities to enable and encourage individuals from disadvantaged and under-represented groups to complete effectively for jobs or access services, was not illegal. For instance, where you have identified that a person's needs would be better met by a carer from a particular gender or ethnic background.

RESOLVED: That the Committee endorse the draft Equalities Committee Work Programme.

24 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator advised Members that a consultation event had been arranged for 9.30am on 14 November at Bethlehem Church Life Centre. This will provide a good opportunity for a range of groups and individuals to express their views to inform the Authority's Disability Equality Scheme.

The Policy and Performance Management Officer advised Members that there would soon be information available on the Council website regarding the population of each ward, based on information such as age, gender, disability, ethnicity and so on. This information was based on data from the Census and from the Department of Work and Pensions. It was hoped this information would be useful in identifying where service needs are, and also in redressing some misconceptions.

The Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator advised Members that Stewart Kelly and Rachel Owen had both worked hard on this project and thanked them both for their contribution.

The meeting closed at 4.07pm.

