

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EQUALITIES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON TUESDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2006 AT 2:30PM

Present: -

Councillor C A Green BA - Chairperson

Councillors

M M Bertorelli
D A D Brett
R D L Burns
R G Hughes
R D Jenkins

Councillors

J Radford
K T Rowlands
D Sage
M Thomas
K Watkins

Officers

H Anthony - Executive Director - Learning
S Kelly - Policy & Performance Management Officer
G P Jones - Principal Cabinet and Committee Officer

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors L Davies and L Smith.

26 NON-ATTENDANCE DUE TO OTHER COUNCIL BUSINESS

None

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

28 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP

It was requested that the Director - Regeneration or a suitable representative from the Regeneration Directorate attend future meetings of the Corporate Equalities Management Group. It was believed that the Regeneration Directorate provided front line facilities which were vital in addressing Corporate Equality issues.

- RESOLVED: (1) That the minutes of the Corporate Equalities Management Group held on the 7 September 2006 be noted.
- (2) That the Director of Regeneration be requested to provide a representative to the Corporate Equalities Management Group.

29 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2006 be noted.

30 DRAFT WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

The Executive Director - Learning presented the report which included the draft Welsh Language Scheme. She explained that this revised scheme aimed to contain all the elements necessary to meet the Welsh Language Act and level 1 and 2 of the Equality Standard.

A copy of the draft scheme had been circulated to the Welsh Language Board for comment and a copy of their response was attached to the report. The Executive Director - Learning added that the Welsh Language Board was required to approve the draft scheme before further public consultation could begin. The Welsh Language Board raised 3-4 significant points and a few minor points. She requested that Members review the documents and provide any relevant comments. These comments would be circulated to the Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator in order for her to update the draft scheme and address the issues raised by the Welsh Language Board prior to the next meeting.

Members welcomed developments to increase the use of the Welsh Language within the County Borough but expressed their concerns regarding the additional workload that was anticipated if this scheme was to be fully implemented in a short period of time. It was expected that financial and resources issues would be need to address before implementing a suitable Welsh language scheme.

The Executive Director - Learning explained that some of the comments from the Welsh Language Board could be resolved by simple solutions such as answering the telephone using English and Welsh. Members stated that there were numerous kinds of Welsh and that the true Welsh speakers would be offended if an appropriate response was not received. This also could be seen as paying lip service to the language if it was only the greeting that the operator was able to speak in Welsh. However, it was agreed that telephone calls should answered bilingually. It was also suggested that there was the need for equality for the other languages spoken within the County Borough.

Members were also concerned that procurement may be affected by limitations imposed as a result of the Welsh Language Scheme. Limitations may include the provision of Welsh speakers as part of a contract to provide learning facilities. The Executive Director – Learning explained that organisations bidding for contracts would only be expected to include the need for Welsh speakers and materials when appropriate, and the costs of these services would be included in the tender price.

Other concerns included:

- The inclusion of the Welsh Language Indicators which were not shown in the scheme but needed to be referenced and possibly adapted.
- The details of Welsh Language Training which was planned to be incorporated in the Training Strategy being developed by Human Resources.
- Development of a bi-lingual website, which may be resource intensive if the target dates are not allowed to be staged over several financial years.
- Ensuring that 3rd Party contractors were in compliance with the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme, which was believed to be the contractors responsibility and not that of the Authority. This could be achieved by rewording paragraph 2.2.3 of the comments to be less specific.
- That the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is independent from the Authority and the Authority cannot enforce policy upon it, only request that they adopt it.

- The development of shared translation services.

- RESOLVED: (1) That the comments and suggestions of the Committee be addressed by the Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator and where appropriate the Draft Welsh Language Scheme be revised.
- (2) That the updated Draft Welsh Language Scheme be presented at the next meeting of the Equalities Committee for endorsement to Cabinet.

31 DRAFT DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

The Executive Director - Learning presented a report which requested that the Equalities Committee endorse the Draft Disabilities Equality Scheme and that they recommend it to Cabinet. She outlined the content of the Scheme and the need to aspire to provide services and facilities that were accessible to all. She informed Members of the responsibility of the Authority in the promotion of equal opportunity, elimination of harassment and discrimination, promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage participation of disabled people in public life.

The Executive Director - Learning described the work undertaken by the Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator to produce guidance for the Equality Impact Assessment which will be piloted with the Children and Young Peoples Partnership and The Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This would assist in challenging inequality, improve equality and raise awareness for service providers.

Members raised the following comments on the content Scheme:-

- Page 9 second paragraph should read "Welsh Health Survey"
- Consistency of terms i.e. % or percent.
- Clarification of figures on page 10 in "Bridgend in General" paragraph, first bullet point, which is the correct figure for women?

A query was raised regarding the number of people that were employed by the Authority. It was explained that the 8500 figure related to the previous financial year when a "post count" method was used to count staff. The figures produced by this process included staff with more than one job being counted more than once. From this current financial year, staff are counted using a "head count" method, so that they will only show up once. This produces a figure in the region of 7600.

Members raised their concerns regarding the issue of disabled car parking and blue parking badges. They requested that an item be added to the agenda of a future meeting to look at this issue in greater depth.

- RESOLVED: (1) That the Equalities Committee endorses the Draft Disability Equality Scheme subject to the comments and suggestions being addressed by the Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator.
- (2) That an item regarding "Disabled Car Parking" be added to the agenda of a future meeting of the committee.

The meeting closed at 4.00pm.