

Bridgend County Borough Council

Report of the Chief Executive

Equalities Committee

21 February 2007

Proposals on Draft Gender Equality Scheme

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the endorsement of the Equalities Committee for the proposal for a draft scheme and community and staff consultation on the Authority's first Gender Equality Scheme.

2. Background

- 2.1 In order to meet the Authority's statutory duty under the Equality Act 2006 and achieve level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in Wales the Authority must put in place a Gender Equality Scheme that covers the specific duties included in the Act:
- To eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment, and
 - Promote equality of opportunity between women and men

This scheme will also need to take into account the employment rights of transgender men and women and individuals who intend to undergo gender re-assignment.

3. Proposal for Gender Equality Scheme

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Gender Equality Scheme be prepared in accordance with the format used for the Corporate Equality Plan and the Disability Equality Scheme to ensure consistency and enable easy referencing between the scheme and the requirements of the Equality Standard for Local Government in Wales.
- 3.2 Further, it is proposed that the key themes of the Gender Equality Scheme be based around the Council's priority areas as set out in the Corporate Improvement Plan 2006 -2009, in the following way:

Priority Area	Themes
Creating learning communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equal access to education and training opportunities• Challenging stereotypes in learning
Children today, adults tomorrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Domestic abuse and support for victims• Bullying and harassment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging attitudes
Realising the potential of our major towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making our towns accessible and safe for everyone
Valuing our valleys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to childcare • Access to learning • Teenage pregnancies
Caring for our future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and support for carers • Carers in the workplace • Gender balance in the caring professions
A diverse and sustainable economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and the skills gap • Access to work related training and enterprise • Equal pay
Supporting our disadvantaged communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and housing • Gender and poverty

4. Consultation Proposal on Gender Equality Scheme

4.1 Citizens Panel Survey:

In June 2006 we asked the Citizens Panel about people's confidence in fair treatment for different groups by the Council. That survey included questions about attitudes towards women in society. In the survey only 32% of respondents said that they were very confident that women would receive fair treatment from the council and 62% agreed that the council should do more to meet the needs of women. To provide a baseline for the scheme it is proposed that the Authority carry out a survey of the Citizens Panel to look at attitudes and experiences of the following areas with a view to repeating the exercise in 3 years time to assess the scheme:

- Taking part in the public, social and economic life of the county
- Access to services and the provision of single sex services
- The impact of parental and caring responsibilities on people's work-life balance
- Access to childcare and care services and support in the county

4.2 'Have your Say' event for the community and staff:

Carry out a 'Have your Say' event in partnership with Bridgend Local Health Board and Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust around the Council priority area themes identified above. This event will be open to the public and to members of staff. In addition staff focus group meetings will be arranged to look at issues within the workplace.

4.3 On-line survey:

An on-line survey will be made available on the Authority's website and intranet to gather the views of the local community on the priority themes identified above.

4. Legal and financial implications

This report contributes to the Authority meeting its statutory duties on gender equality and the financial implications arising from this draft scheme will be assessed by the Corporate Equalities Management Group to support the submission of a report to Cabinet.

5. Recommendations

That the Equalities Committee endorse the proposals for the preparation of a draft Gender Equality Scheme and the consultation proposals.

Jo Farrar
Chief Executive
21 February 2007

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Background papers:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Equality Act 2006
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Government of Wales Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004
- Equality Act 2006
- Work and Families Act 2006
- Equality Standard for Local Government in Wales
- Wales Programme of Improvement Guidance for Local Authorities 2005 (Circular 28/2005)