

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EQUALITIES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2007 AT 1:30PM

Present: -

Councillor C A Green BA - Chairperson

Councillors

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

Councillors

J Radford
K T Rowlands
M Thomas
K Watkins

Officers

H Anthony - Executive Director – Learning
L Smith - Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator
S Kelly - Policy & Performance Management Officer
R Harries - Cabinet and Committee Officer

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor L Davies - Unwell
Councillor R G Hughes - On holiday
Councillor J H Tildesley - Work commitments

33 NON-ATTENDANCE DUE TO OTHER COUNCIL BUSINESS

None

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

35 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP

Members noted that, as initials were used in the action column of the minutes, it was not always possible to identify which individuals were being referred to. It was suggested that there be more clarity on this point.

Regarding a representative of the Regeneration directorate attending the Corporate Equalities Management Group, it was clarified that this would be decided after the restructure of the Regeneration directorate had been completed.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Corporate Equalities Management Group held on the 8 January 2007 and the 8 February 2007 be noted.

36 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 DECEMBER 2006

Regarding minute no 31, the Executive Director – Learning clarified that there were a number of people, particularly within schools, who held more than one job. The new method of counting meant that individuals, rather than posts, were counted, resulting in a more accurate figure.

Members queried the wording of the resolution of minute no 29, where the minutes of the previous meeting were noted rather than approved. It was agreed that this wording would be checked and amended, if necessary.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2006 be approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the above possible amendment.

37 DRAFT REVISED WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

The Chief Executive submitted a report on the above matter, the purpose of which was to seek the endorsement of the Revised Welsh Language Scheme (attached at Appendix 1), and to provide the Committee with additional information on the specific issues of the development of the Authority's bilingual website and staff training plan.

The Corporate Equalities Coordinator outlined the revised scheme, which incorporated the suggestions made by Members at the previous meeting of the Committee. She advised that, following today's meeting, the Corporate Management Board would consider the scheme. If they considered it to be workable, it would then be resubmitted to the Welsh Language Board.

Members requested that the recommendations of the report be amended to reflect the involvement of the Corporate Management Board in the process.

Regarding bullet point 3 on page 10 of the Draft Scheme (To Plan, provide and evaluate services in Welsh and English), Members queried the level of planning that would be undertaken in Welsh. The Executive Director – Learning advised that there were occasions, such as planning in the Welsh language schools, where this would be appropriate, but this would not necessarily be done as a matter of course in other situations.

Members agreed that the resources available would dictate the level of services that were provided through Welsh as well as English. It was noted that the number of Welsh speakers in the borough would also need to be taken into account when assessing the level of provision needed, particularly when compared to the number of people speaking other languages, such as Polish, for example.

It was agreed that the issues surrounding English Language tuition for migrant workers should be given serious consideration. The need for the Economic Development department to work closely with local employers to facilitate this was also noted.

RESOLVED: That the Equalities Committee:

(1) Endorse the draft Revised Welsh Language Scheme and recommend it to Cabinet, subject to it being

agreed as workable by the Corporate Management Board;

- (2) Endorse the Authority's co-operation with the Welsh Language Board in carrying out a risk assessment process later this year;
- (3) Endorse the proposals set out by the PR Department on the development and management of the Authority's website;
- (4) Endorse the proposals set out by the Corporate HR Department of staff and Member's training.

38 LETTER FROM THE WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD REGARDING WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICE PROVISION – IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The Corporate Equalities Coordinator outlined the above letter, which requested that an initial an initial risk assessment process with the Welsh Language Board be undertaken by June 2007. She advised that it was the opinion of the Chief Executive that it would be more useful for the monitoring report to be submitted later in the year, once a number of issues, such as the HR reorganisation, had been resolved. A date of October or November was suggested.

Members agreed that it would be better to agree a more realistic deadline in order to ensure that any report produced was considered and relevant.

It was clarified that participation in the risk assessment process was voluntary and it was therefore quite acceptable to suggest an alternative deadline.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Equalities Coordinator reply to the Welsh Language Board to convey the views of the Committee and suggest an alternative deadline of October/ November.

39 PROPOSALS ON DRAFT GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

The Chief Executive submitted a report, the purpose of which was 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.

The Corporate Equalities Coordinator advised that the Authority has a statutory duty to provide evidence of how it will meet the new gender equality duty by the end of April. However, following conversations with the WLGA, it was apparent that the deadline for producing a scheme does not apply in Wales. In light of this, it was suggested that the draft scheme be sent out for consultation by the end of April, by way of focus groups and a Citizens Panel Survey, for example.

It was noted that a number of consultations with staff would be taking place in the near future. It was suggested that thought be given to approaching such surveys in a more corporate manner, to avoid overloading the process. The Corporate Equalities Coordinator advised that she would be liaising with HR in order to ensure that any survey or consultation did not exacerbate issues associated with their reorganisation.

The Corporate Equalities Coordinator advised that the proposal for the gender equality scheme reflected the priority areas set out in the Corporate Improvement Plan. Regarding the priority “Caring for our Future”, it was noted that carers were statistically more likely to be female, whereas the longer life expectancy of women would also impact in this area.

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of men teaching in infant and primary schools, and the disproportionate number of male head teachers. The Executive Director – Learning advised that there was evidence that this was due to social attitudes rather than pay levels, as teaching staff were not always willing to take on headships and the additional pressures involved, despite the additional pay. She added that nationally girls performed better than boys in terms of exam results, but were not getting jobs that reflected this.

It was agreed that the theme “Teenage Pregnancies” would be more appropriately placed under the “Children Today, Adults Tomorrow” priority.

It was noted that the points discussed highlighted the breadth of issues to be considered. The need to prioritise issues that were in the control of the Authority to address was highlighted, as was the need for accurate data with which to make informed judgements.

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

40 MAINSTREAMING EQUALITIES INTO PERFORMANCE PLANNING

The Chief Executive submitted the above report, which provided the Committee with an update on how the Authority will mainstream equalities into the performance planning process and seek the endorsement of the Committee proposals.

The Corporate Equalities Coordinator outlined the report, drawing Members’ attention to the new guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government, as outlined in paragraph 2.1. The report also detailed the actions of the Policy and Performance Management Unit (PPMU) and the Corporate Equalities Management Group in response to this. She noted that completed draft business plans were due to be submitted to PPMU by the end of February, when they would be assessed for equalities content.

The Executive Director – Learning advised that the Directorate Management Group for Education, Leisure and Community Services had had been meeting with all group managers and had been encouraged by the level of understanding demonstrated by managers. However, she noted that managers were not necessarily noting and recording all the relevant data, and were also prone to focusing on a particular aspect of equalities, rather than all aspects.

It was agreed that this would be a useful opportunity to identify and share good practice. It was agreed that a report would be submitted to the Committee on the business plan submissions on equality and good practice that had been identified by PPMU, after the issues had been considered by CMB.

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the Equalities Committee endorse the proposals for the mainstreaming of equalities into the performance planning process of the Authority.
 - (2) That a further report on business plan submissions on equality that identifies good practice be presented to the Equalities Committee, following consideration of the issues by CMB.

41 PROPOSALS ON BRIDGEND MULTI-AGENCY EQUALITIES FORUM

The Chief Executive submitted the above report, which sought the endorsement of the Equalities Committee on the new terms of reference for the Bridgend multi-agency forum on equalities. The proposed Terms of Reference were attached at Appendix 1.

The Corporate Equalities Coordinator outlined the background to the report, noting that Bridgend Race Equality Forum was well attended and supported by all the Authority's key local partners. The report proposed that the terms of reference for the group be revised, in order to move to a more generic approach to equalities, in line with the national agenda.

In response to queries from Members, the Corporate Equalities Coordinator clarified that the list of partner organisations was not an exhaustive one. The Executive Director – Learning added that, if it was agreed that the terms of reference be revised, one of the first steps that the group would take would be to re-examine its membership.

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the Equalities Committee approve the new terms of reference for the Bridgend Multi – Agency Equalities Forum (attached at Appendix 1)
 - (2) That a list detailing the full current membership of the Forum be supplied to the Equalities Committee in due course.

42 PROPOSALS ON BRIDGEND COALITION FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

The Chief Executive submitted the above report, which sought the support of the Equalities Committee for the development of the Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People. The aims and objectives of the coalition were attached at Appendix 1.

The Corporate Equalities Coordinator outlined the background to the report. She noted that the current funding for the coalition would be unavailable from April 2007 and outlined possible funding that had been identified in order for the Authority to support the coalition for the next year in terms of costs for meeting rooms and travelling costs.

Members raised concerns that this would mean that the Authority would be the sole source of funding, particularly as there were other partners involved in the coalition.

The Corporate Equalities Coordinator emphasised that the coalition did not wish to be dependent on any one organisation for funding and added that after one year, the

EQUALITIES COMMITTEE – 21 FEBRUARY 2006

coalition would be in a better position to request funding from other sources and partner organisations.

RESOLVED: That the Equalities Committee approve the funding arrangements set out in the report and note the aims and objectives of the Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People.

The meeting closed at 3.17pm