

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EQUALITIES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON MONDAY, 17 MARCH 2008 AT 10:00AM

Present: -

Councillor C A Green BA - Chairperson

Councillors

R D L Burns
E P Foley

Councillors

R G Hughes
M C Voisey

Invitees

Cllr M M Bertorelli
Cllr L Davies
Cllr R D Jenkins
Cllr J Radford
Cllr M Thomas

Officers

L Smith - Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator
P Miles - Pay and Reward Officer
S Kelly - Policy and Performance Management Officer
M A Galvin - Senior Cabinet and Committee Officer

68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor D A D Brett - Unwell
Councillor K Watkins - Unwell
Mr T Garthwaite - Other Council business

69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

70 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Equalities Committee dated 5 December 2007, be approved as a true and accurate record.

71 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP (CEMG)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the CEMG dated 24 January 2008, be approved as a true and accurate record.

72 REPORT ON EQUALITIES IN THE BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL WORKFORCE

The Executive Director – Resources submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to provide the Equalities Committee with workforce data as at 31 December 2007, on the

equality strands identified in the Council's Equality Plan and Schemes detailed in paragraph 1.1 of the report.

Attached to the report for Members' information, were the following Appendices:-

- Appendix 1 - Statistical overview of the current workforce within the Council as at 31 December 2007.
- Appendix 2 - Further analysis showing data for the Council as a whole.
- Appendix 3 - Data for the Council excluding schools.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report then proceeded to give information regarding data, encapsulating employees in one of four categories, namely full-time, part-time, multi part-time and casual/relief.

Paragraph 4.2 then explained that the above data would give the Council an opportunity to carry out further analysis to look at how representative the workforce is of the wider community, to identify opportunities to promote equality and to assist in ensuring the workforce meets the changing needs of the community. Areas to be further analysed were shown in bullet point format in this paragraph of the report.

The Pay and Reward Officer confirmed that future report dates would fall in with the Authority's Quarterly Business Review (Q.B.R.).

Members posed a number of questions or queries on the report, for example:-

- The 304 unpaid carers – How are these made up?
- Certain terms referred to in the Appendices could be broken down more and made clearer, e.g. does the term "casual staff" include Agency Workers?
- Are unpaid carers employed by the Council?

The above questions and queries were responded to satisfactorily by Officers.

It was added that the Trent system had ensured smooth process of the figurework and data shown in the attached Appendices.

The Cabinet Member – Resources added that large strides had now been made with the Trent system in terms of the production of improved and relevant data information.

The Corporate Equalities Co-ordinator concluded by stating that there was likely to be further case law regarding Human Rights legislation and how this would affect unpaid carers in the future, in terms of their employment.

RESOLVED: (1) That approval be given for workforce data to be produced at the end of each quarter (March, June, September and December), to facilitate comparative analysis within the Council's workforce and as a means of developing and improving the data held for equalities

reporting, through effective recording within the Trent Human Resources payroll system.

- (2) That it also be approved that Human Resources Officers continue to work with the Equalities Co-ordinator to look at potential areas for development, which include:-
 - (i) Identifying certain groups who are under/over represented within our workforce against local and national comparators.
 - (ii) Analysing whether there are policy implications resulting from the data revealed.

73. REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY MONITORING

The Executive Director – Strategic Change submitted a report so as to update the Equalities Committee on arrangements to monitor employment equality across the Council, which included a basic comparative report with local and national population profiles.

The report also set out proposals on how the Council would seek to improve the employment data held for equalities reporting and the format and frequency of future reports for Committee consideration.

The report gave some background information including guidance that under the Race Relations Act 1976, (Statutory Duties) Order 2006 Act, the Authority were required to put in place arrangements to monitor its workforce by ethnicity in areas of current workforce, recruitment and selection, training, performance assessment, promotion and progression, grievances/disciplinary and finally staff ceasing employment.

Appendix 1 to the report, showed a basic comparison of the Authority's workforce with local and national population profiles by categories such as gender, ethnicity, disability, age, Welsh skills and unpaid carers.

The report then gave details regarding the Business Process Review, Equality Data Audit, Data Conversion, Data Integrity reports, proposals to improve awareness on employment monitoring and proposals on production of employment monitoring reports.

The Equalities Co-ordinator confirmed that the new version of Trent would go live in the next month or so and that the works required in the report would then be phased after that, so as to improve the system and plug gaps in any data.

Members raised some concerns in that they felt there should be more emphasis on communication with people for who English is a second language, i.e. enhanced linguistic skills, and that staff should be trained to achieve this.

It was also suggested that job application forms should be laid out in an improved bilingual format to that which currently exists, in Welsh and English format.

There was a further comment made on having regard for literacy levels among the general population and making reasonable adjustments to the application and recruitment process for disabled people.

Following discussions on the report, it was

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the contents of the comparative equality analysis set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.
 - (2) That the Equalities Co-ordinator continues to work with the Human Resources Officers and Trent/Payroll Team to implement the measures set out in (1) above and to in turn report to the Corporate Equalities Management Group on progress made.
 - (3) That the Equalities Co-ordinator continues to work with the Human Resources Officers and Trent/Payroll Team to identify ways to improve reporting in line with statutory requirements.
 - (4) That quarterly anonymised employment equality monitoring reports be produced and submitted to the Equalities Committee.

74. REVISION OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

The Executive Director – Strategic Change submitted a report to provide the Committee with an update on progress made in revising the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme, which set out proposals on the draft revised scheme for the Committee to consider, with a view to gaining the approval of the Welsh Language Board.

The Equalities Co-ordinator stated that the Welsh Language Board had requested that the revised Scheme included a commitment to make the Authority's website progressively bi-lingual from a specific date.

To this end, it was proposed that a review of the total content of the website was required to achieve this and that phased plan could then be drawn up. This would also give consideration to the possibility of employing a Welsh translation officer. The website plan would hopefully be completed within a three year period.

It was acknowledged that the Bridgend County Borough Council was not in the forefront with other Local Authorities in Wales in terms of bilingual website provision and that to this end progress in this area needed to be made.

It was considered that it may be advantageous to link in with other Local Authorities in Wales, as a benchmarking exercise, to drive the use of bi-lingual practises forward.

It was recommended that a single bilingual application form be produced and that both should be downloadable from the IT system to ensure equal access. It was added that Officers take this up with the Human Resources Department.

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It was agreed that the proposed a briefing on the new WLGA sponsored Equality Improvement Framework be sent in due course to all members of the Equalities Committee.

It was also requested that the Committee receives an update regarding customer care issues in the Authority and that consultation regarding this should take place with the Executive Director – Strategic Change.

RESOLVED: That the proposals set out in the report be adopted as the basis for further discussion with the Welsh Language Board with a view to achieving approval of the Authority's revised Welsh Language Scheme.

The meeting closed at 11.39am.