

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – CORPORATE
DEVELOPMENT & PARTNERSHIPS**

6th APRIL 2009

REPORT ON PROGRESS ON THE CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

1. Purpose of report: -

1.1 To provide a summary of the responses received to the public consultation on the Authority's draft Corporate Equality Scheme and to seek comments on the draft action plan subject to further development by relevant Directorates.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority: -

2.2 The information set out in this report identifies the action being taken to ensure that the Authority can meet its moral and statutory duties in respect of equalities and human rights legislation, including its public sector duties on race, disability and gender. As equalities is a cross-cutting issue this information will support all of the Council's corporate priorities.

3. Background:-

3.1 The Authority's Corporate Plan 2008-2011 contains a commitment to develop and implement a single equality scheme and attain '*improving authority*' status under the new *Equality Improvement Framework for Welsh Local Government* (EIF).

4. Current situation / proposal :-

4.1 Consultation and involvement activities were undertaken between 23rd February and 23rd March 2009 based on the draft Scheme.

4.3 The following consultation activities were undertaken:

- 25 people attended a consultation event hosted by the Bridgend Equality Forum representing 17 local public and voluntary sector organisations, including Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations, Bridgend Campaign Against Racism, Deaf

Association Wales, Bridgend Vis, Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People and Bridgend Women's Aid.

- An executive summary and questionnaire about the Scheme was circulated to over 70 local and national organisations, including town and community councils, all Community First co-ordinators, the Valleys Regional Equality Council and faith groups to seek their views.
- Three staff focus groups were held which 20 people attended and 15 responses were received to our questionnaire.
- Consultation is continuing with Trade Union representatives.

4.4 Initial analysis of the responses received has highlighted the following:

- Respondents strongly agreed with the new equality statement.
- The majority of respondents agreed with the corporate equality objectives and the disability, race and gender priorities.
- Respondents identified the following as being of most importance for the Authority:
 - Produce information about our services in plain language and accessible formats.
 - Promote awareness about the Scheme and train our staff on equality and how to improve access to services for customers.
 - Use diversity data about our community and our staff to improve the way we deliver our services and the way we treat our employees.
 - Be prepared to learn from feedback and complaints from our customers and involve our customers and staff in monitoring and reviewing the Scheme.
 - There was a general view that the action plan should set out how the Authority will carry out its planned actions and timescales for achieving its desired outcomes.

4.5 These points have been addressed in the draft Scheme and the action plan which is set out in Appendix 1 for consideration. The structure of the Equality Scheme and action plan includes corporate equality objectives that aim to eliminate discrimination based on age, disability, gender, gender re-assignment, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. In addition to these corporate equality objectives there are priorities that relate to the Authority's specific duties on disability, race and gender equality.

4.6 A more detailed analysis of the consultation process and responses will be included in the final version of the Scheme.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules:-

5.1 At this stage the report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but the new Scheme will support the effective

implementation of the Council's statutory duties in relation to equalities and human rights.

6. Legal implications:-

- 6.1 The proposals set out in this report will help the Authority to comply with relevant statutory.

7. Financial implications:-

- 7.1 The action plan that has been developed as part of the Scheme reflects initiatives that are being resourced from current budgets and will help the Authority to mitigate exposure to risk over its responsibilities in this area. Additional funding options will be explored as opportunities arise over the lifetime of the Scheme.

8. Recommendation: -

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Equalities Committee consider on the draft Corporate Equality Scheme and action plan which is subject to further development by relevant Directorates.

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Background documents:-

None