

**Notes of a meeting of the Corporate Equalities Management Group held in Level 4 Conference Room, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend on 19 March 2009**

**Meeting commenced at 3pm**

**Present:**

D MacGregor (Chair)	-	Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Development & Partnerships)
G Ennis	-	Head of Central Administration (Communities Directorate)
B Davies	-	Customer Services Manager (Resources Directorate)
L Hutton	-	Transformation & Development Manager (Human Resources section)
J Gregson	-	Children's Partnership Coordinator (Children's Directorate)
J Brooks	-	Professional Support Officer (Health and Wellbeing Directorate)
L Smith	-	Policy and Performance Management Officer (Equalities) (Corporate Development & Partnerships)
R Crocombe	-	Administrative Assistant (Corporate Development & Partnerships)

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from the Children and Young People's Framework Manager.

**2. Notes of last CEMG meeting (6 February 2009)**

The notes were approved as a true and accurate record of discussions.

**3. Minutes of last Cabinet Equalities Committee (CEC)**

It was noted that the CEC had approved the sending out of the draft Corporate Equality Scheme (CES) for consultation.

**4. Matters arising**

It was noted that Jonathan Flower will no longer be attending the 'Towards Equality' event referred to at the last CEMG meeting, as he has to attend a Ffynon event instead.

Further to a recent discussion between the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate Development & Partnerships and the newly appointed Head of Regeneration and Development, the Group discussed the possibility of establishing standing groups for minority staff members.

It was agreed that:

- An advert should be placed in Bridgend, asking whether any minority staff members would be interested in being part of such standing groups.
- Should there be sufficient interest in the formation of such standing groups, the Head of Regeneration and Development should be consulted on how such standing groups in her previous authority operated, so as to determine how to move things forward.
- These groups, if formed, should periodically engage with CEMG to offer their views on pertinent equality related issues.

Should there be no interest expressed by staff in being part of such standing groups, it was suggested that:

- An annual or bi-annual SNAP survey could be distributed to all staff members instead, to gauge views on equalities issues.

Or:

- An internal staff version of the existing BCBC Citizens' Panel, currently used to seek the views of a representative collection of BCBC residents on topics pertinent to the Local Authority, could be formed – which could then be consulted for its views on equalities issues.

The Group were given feedback from the Customer Services Manager who attended the BSL Charter conference this week. They were informed that those attending the conference had been split into 5 working groups to look at the 5 pledges of the new Charter, and that the Customer Services Manager had participated in the working group which focussed on the pledge concerning consultation.

It was reported that other Local Authorities appear to be far ahead of BCBC in terms of their engagement with the deaf community. (It was noted that there are only 4 deaf staff members within BCBC).

The Group were informed that:

- Bristol Council currently has 70 deaf staff members; has employed a deaf equality officer since 2002; and has video phone facilities in use.
- Devon Council holds an annual event for the deaf community.
- Blaenau Gwent has recently received funding for 10 video phones.
- Another Local Authority employs a BSL signer to undertake a weekly 'interpreting surgery' in the customer service centre of its offices, who has access to a video phone etc.
- Other Local Authorities have translated key documents, such as their complaints procedures, into BSL, and made them available for viewing on their websites. These Authorities also offer the option of corresponding with deaf people via BSL (filmed onto a DVD).

It was agreed that:

- The Policy and Performance Management Officer should explore the possibility and costs involved of carrying out a monthly BSL interpreting surgery in the customer service centre of Civic Offices.

It was suggested that:

- the 'Learn to Sign' week due to take place in the second week of October could be used as an opportunity for BCBC to advertise how it is trying to engage with deaf people living and working within the borough.

## **5. Draft Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan update**

It was agreed that:

- To ensure the actions are 'owned' by specific sections and officers, a 'how to' column will be added to the plan.
- With no corporate funding available to help achieve the plan, all actions requiring budget commitment will have to be met from service budgets, therefore how the actions will be resourced is to be addressed in the 'who will' column that will be added to the plan.
- Any further comments on the draft need to be passed to the Policy and Performance Management Officer as soon as possible.
- It is the responsibility of each member of the Group to take the plan back to their directors and ensure that they are aware of what they are committing themselves to within the plan.
- The Policy and Performance Management Officer will amend and update the plan based on the consultation responses received and the comments and revisions suggested. It was noted that a number of the outcomes will require amendment and that the recurring point 'we will evaluate the impact of the activities' will be removed. Instead it was agreed that a statement confirming the review process for the plan would be inserted in the plan instead.
- After making the amendments to the plan as outlined above, and by the end of Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March, the Policy and Performance Management Officer will insert the 'how to' column into the plan and will then redistribute the plan to the Group for them to check through and populate where required. Responses should be received by the Policy and Performance Management Officer by Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March.

It was noted that the draft action plan would be submitted to the Equality Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> April for consultation and to CMB on 7<sup>th</sup> April. It was noted that the committee can't approve the plan, but rather recommend it to Cabinet.

It was further noted that the final report on the Scheme would be distributed to Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> April, for consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May.

It was agreed that:

- The report to the Equality Committee will set out clearly the approval process for the Scheme.

## **6. Consultation programme for Corporate Equality Scheme update**

The Policy and Performance Management Officer reported that the consultation responses received so far had been useful.

It was confirmed that a total of just 22 staff members had attended the 3 staff focus groups held on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of March, but that the results of these focus groups had been valuable, despite the low take-up.

It was also reported that the recent Bridgend Equalities Forum meeting which discussed the Scheme had produced some useful suggestions. It was noted that a suggestion had been made at this meeting that points within the Scheme should be relevant to all sensory impaired groups, not just relevant to deaf people, for example, and that the Policy and Performance Management Officer would be amending the wording to reflect this.

It was agreed that:

- The Transformation and Development Manager will check whether consultation on the Scheme has been tabled for the next meeting with the Trade Unions.

It was suggested that:

- The possibility of Cllr David Sage, Deputy Leader, chairing the Equalities Forum be explored, as it was felt this may help give the Forum direction and help it become better engaged.

## **7. Training programme update**

It was noted that attendance at most of the training sessions had generally been good, and that a good cross section of staff in 'high risk' sections had been reached.

However, it was reported that one of the training sessions for the Children's Directorate had to be cancelled as only 3 staff members turned up. It was also noted that for the 2 forthcoming Children's Directorate training sessions, only 2 staff members have been nominated to take part in 1 of the sessions, and only 7 staff members have been nominated to take part in the other.

The Group were also informed that there has been a poor response from governing bodies in relation to the equalities training sessions being offered.

It was agreed that:

- The Children's Partnership Coordinator request that a message be sent from the Children's Director to heads of service in the Children's Directorate to make it clear that relevant staff members / governors participate in the equalities training on offer.
- The Professional Support Officer will chase up staff nominations for training from the Bridgend Recreation Centre.

- The Policy and Performance Management Officer will circulate the remaining training dates available to CEMG members for them to be clear on how many places, if any, they have left to fill from their directorates.
- The Policy and Performance Management Officer will also send out a reminder that staff members can attend any remaining training session.
- The Policy and Performance Management Officer will liaise with Organisational Development to ensure that the size of venues booked for the remaining training sessions is appropriate for the number of staff attending.

## **8. Reports due to next Cabinet Equalities Committee**

It was confirmed that all reports due to be presented at the next meeting of the Committee are in hand.

It was noted that reports for the Committee don't need to go to CMB for approval beforehand, as it isn't a decision making committee.

It was agreed that:

- The Policy and Performance Management Officer will link in with Committee Section to schedule future meeting dates for the Committee.

## **9. Current and recent consultation responses – WAG Community Cohesion Strategy**

The Policy and Performance Management Officer confirmed that she will be meeting with the Community Safety Officers and would link with the Police regarding the WAG Community Cohesion Strategy.

The Policy and Performance Management Officer also mentioned that Bridgend Campaign Against Racism had contacted the Authority about the possibility of forming FAN (Friends and Neighbours) groups in Bridgend. FAN groups have been piloted in Cardiff. The groups bring together local residents from various racial and religious backgrounds with the aim of building good community relations.

## **10. Any other business**

None.