

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES

5 OCTOBER 2009

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

REPORT ON EQUALITY IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

1. Purpose of report: -

1.1 To inform the Cabinet Equalities Committee about developments with the WLGA Equality Improvement Framework.

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

2.2 The information set out in this report identifies the action being taken to mitigate the risk of failure to meet the Council's statutory duties in respect of equalities which was recognised in its Corporate Improvement Plan 2008-11.

3. Background:-

3.1 To mitigate this risk the authority made a commitment to attain 'improving authority' status under the new *Equality Improvement Framework for Welsh Local Government* (EIF). The EIF sits within the *Wales Programme for Improvement* (WPI) and is linked to the Local Government (Wales) Measure. The Measure includes 7 aspects of improvement against which local authorities will be measured, including *fairness* which is defined as reducing disadvantages faced by particular groups in accessing (or taking full advantage of) services or improving social well-being.

3.2 In May 2009 the Authority approved its first Corporate Equality Scheme. This included a commitment to develop and carry out a self-assessment process in line with the WLGA EIF guidance. This guidance was made available in September 2009. A key aspect of the EIF self-assessment guidance is that local authorities co-ordinate their equality and performance improvement agendas. It is based around the principle of outcome-based performance management linked to Community Strategy objectives and corporate planning priorities. This approach is intended to embed citizen-focused community planning and service improvement.

3.3 This message was reinforced at the WLGA Equalities and Social Justice Unit workshop held on 21st of September. The objective of this

event was to advise local authorities on how to implement the self-assessment process. The workshop included a presentation on the EIF self-assessment pilot that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is running in conjunction with the WLGA. The aim of the pilot is to build the self-assessment process into the new business review process being developed by that authority.

3.4 It is important to note that the Local Measure and the revised WPI will not come into effect until Spring 2010 and this will impact on how the timescale for implementing the EIF by local authorities in Wales.

4. Current situation / proposal :-

4.1 The guidance includes a preliminary self-assessment tool (PSAT) and sets out guidelines on what local authorities need to evidence in order to be assessed as an *'improving'* or *'achieving'* authority. The self-assessment should take place at both the corporate and service level of the authority and address the three key headings of:

- Corporate Governance
- Equality outcomes
- Managing Equality

4.2 As a first step it is proposed that the Policy and Performance Management Unit design a PSAT and hold briefings for managers based on the WLGA guidance to embed equality and fairness into the performance management framework and engage service managers.

4.3 Secondly it is proposed that the Policy and Performance Management Unit carry out a corporate self-assessment against the key headings outlined above.

4.4 Thirdly, that the outcomes from the corporate self-assessment process be reported on as part of the Corporate Equality Scheme annual monitoring report, including recommendations for improvement.

4.5 It is also proposed that once further guidance has been issued by the WLGA the Policy and Performance Management Unit explore ways to build the EIF self-assessment process into the business planning cycle of the Authority. This will ensure that the Authority is able to respond positively to changes in the WPI process.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules:-

5.1 The report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but does support the effective implementation of the Council's statutory duties in relation to equalities and human rights.

6. Legal Implications :-

6.1 The proposed actions set out in this report will assist the Authority in meeting its Statutory duties in respect of equalities.

7. Financial Implications :-

7.1 There are no financial implications.

8. Recommendation: -

8.1 That the Cabinet Equalities Committee note the information provided in this report.

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10. Background documents:-

- The WLGA Equality Improvement Framework for Welsh Local Government.
- The Wales Programme of Improvement Guidance for Local Authorities 2005 (Circular 28/2005).
- Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.