

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON MONDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2009 AT 10.00AM

Present: -

Councillor D Sage - Chairperson

Councillors

H J David
A E Davies

Councillors

L C Morgan
J C Spanswick

Invitees:

Councillor N Clarke
Councillor P A Evans
Councillor C A Green
Councillor M Gregory
Councillor R M James
Councillor R D Jenkins
Councillor M Wilkins

Officers:

D MacGregor - Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate Development and Partnerships
L Hutton - Transformation and Development Manager - Human Resources
L Smith - Policy and Performance Management Officer (Equalities)
S Kelly - Policy and Performance Officer
A Bracey - Group Manager - Support at Home - Wellbeing Directorate
C Branford - Cabinet and Committee Officer

46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M E J Nott (Leader) who was unable to attend due to other Council business.

47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

48 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2009 were approved as a true and accurate record.

49 NOTES OF THE CORPORATE EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP

The notes of the meeting of the Corporate Equalities Management Group held on 11 June 2009 were noted.

50 CARERS' STRATEGY UPDATE

The Group Manager - Support at Home presented a report informing the Committee of progress on the Carers' Strategy in Bridgend. She explained that the development of the Strategy was the continuation of a process to ensure that Carers were valued as equal partners in the provision of care. The Strategy built upon the priorities identified by WAG's Carers' Strategy for Wales (2007). She advised that a draft Strategy had been drawn up during 2007 by Bridgend Carers' Forum with the involvement of carers and representatives from the NHS, the LHB and the voluntary sector. As a result of feedback from a consultation event held in March 2009, it had been agreed to have fewer priorities and objectives in the Strategy. It was originally intended that the Carers' Strategy would be launched in January 2010, but as the carers had requested a longer consultation period, it was unlikely that this timescale would be met. Training on undertaking assessments was planned for social workers and care management staff and an Equality Impact Assessment would also be undertaken. The Legislative Competency Order for carers which was due to be passed shortly, would impose a duty on Health and Social Services providers to carry out assessments. She advised that there would be a cost implication to the work identified in the report which would be met from existing resources.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the progress made in developing the Carers' Strategy.

51 HALF-YEARLY REPORT - IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL'S WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME 2008 - 2011

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced a report updating the committee on progress on implementing the Council's Welsh Language Scheme 2008 - 2011. He explained that as the Council procured an increasing amount of its services from third party contractors, it was important to raise awareness of BCBC's Welsh Language Scheme and to provide advice and guidance. An e-learning programme had been developed for staff which would form part of the corporate induction process, and updated pages had been prepared for the Bridgend's intranet which would be uploaded before the end of October 2009. He advised the Committee that there had been slippage on some of the key milestones but there had also been key developments such as the website which was being translated into Welsh on an ongoing basis and the 'browsealoud' facility which was available in English and Welsh. Welsh language training was ongoing and had been successful to date. The bespoke 'Welsh in the Workplace' training organised for the Welsh speaking staff in the customer service centre had been recognised as an example of good practice by WAG, and it was hoped that schemes like this would result in the mainstreaming of the Welsh language into all areas of the Council's work.

Members welcomed the progress made and supported the steps being taken to give advice and guidance on the use of the Welsh language.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the progress made in implementing the Welsh Language Scheme action plan.

52 REPORT ON EQUALITIES IN THE BCBC WORKFORCE

The Transformation and Development Officer presented a report providing the Committee with information on workforce data as at 30 June 2009.

The Chairperson advised that the total headcount figure given in the report was in fact incorrect and the total number of BCBC employees was 7225.

The Transformation and Development Officer confirmed that this was the case and explained that in instances where one person held two posts at BCBC, that person would be counted twice. She explained that there were a number of ways of extracting data from the TRENT system, but one method had now been agreed upon which would produce a consistent set of figures for all data presented to Members. She explained to the Committee that unfortunately, copies of this report had initially been distributed in black and white which had made the charts and graphs difficult to interpret, but colour copies had been distributed to all Members at the start of the meeting.

She advised that Appendix 3 of the report provided the Committee with data on the number of BCBC employees in the 16-25 age category in response to Members' requests at the last meeting. She provided the Committee with a breakdown of the types of job roles undertaken by 16 - 25 year olds within each Directorate, as follows:

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| Children's Directorate | - Teachers, Supply Teachers, School Support Roles. |
| Communities Directorate | - Seasonal ground maintenance staff, Clerical posts. |
| Corporate Development and Partnerships | - Human Resources administrative support. |
| Legal and Regulatory Services | - Administrative staff. |
| Resources Directorate | - Cleaning staff, Customer Care, Administrative staff. |
| Wellbeing Directorate | - Social Care, Homecare, Lifeguards and Casual Sport and Recreation Service staff. |

Members observed that many of these posts were seasonal or casual and suggested that this information highlighted the need to implement workforce succession planning, and to put an Apprenticeship Scheme in place.

The Transformation and Development Officer explained that an Apprenticeship Scheme had been drafted for the Building Maintenance Section as this area had been identified as having an acute ageing workforce. She explained that the Scheme would be reported to Corporate Management Board this month and it was hoped that a pilot scheme would be pursued initially. The Cabinet Committee - Corporate Parenting would soon be receiving a presentation from RCT CBC on the Apprenticeship Scheme which they had implemented, which could assist BCBC in developing and implementing a scheme, but highlighted that this would require a

considerable financial investment. She advised that Trent did not hold information on qualifications, so it was not possible to identify the graduates/professionals among the 16 - 25 age group without interrogating each individual employee's record.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee - Equalities consider the quarterly workforce data report produced as at 30 June 2009, and carry out comparative analyses of the Council's workforce for past and subsequent quarters over the past twelve month period.

53 REPORT ON WAG CONSULTATION ON SPECIFIC EQUALITY DUTIES ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN WALES

The Policy and Performance Management Officer presented a report to seek the views of the Cabinet Committee - Equalities on WAG's proposals to develop specific equality duties for public sector organisations in Wales.

She explained that the Equality Bill which would be passed by the UK Government in Spring 2010 was intended to simplify the law, would introduce a new generic public equality duty across equality characteristics, and would also introduce a new strategic duty on public bodies to reduce socio-economic inequalities. The law would also protect those associated with someone who was protected by current equalities laws, such as someone with a disabled child.

The Policy and Performance Management Officer advised that as part of WAG's consultation exercise, a discussion paper had been drafted which consisted of seven questions to which BCBC were required to provide responses. These questions and responses were set out in the report and the Committee were asked to suggest any amendments or make any additional comments.

The Committee expressed concern over the potential impact of the proposed specific equality duty on public procurement and suggested that this may result in tensions between the sustainability agenda and the equalities agenda. The Policy and Performance Officer advised that similar issues had been raised at a consultation event she had attended and that there were concerns about imposing a specific equality duty on a complex area such as procurement.

She suggested that the equality duty in relation to procurement should be interpreted as meaning that local authorities should seek to procure services from businesses which had positive employment practices. The Committee suggested that BCBC's response be reworded to incorporate their concern.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee - Equalities consider the issues raised in the report and that their comments be incorporated into the Authority's response to question 4.7.

54 REPORT ON EQUALITY IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced a report to inform the Cabinet Committee - Equalities about developments with the WLGA Equality Improvement Framework (EIF). She explained that the EIF sat within the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) and was linked to the Local Government (Wales) Measure. There were also clear links between the EIF and BCBC's Community Strategy. The Authority had approved its first Corporate Equality Scheme in May 2009 and the report demonstrated the steps BCBC was taking to develop and carry out the self assessment process it had committed to in line with WLGA guidance. The outcomes from this process would be reported back to the Committee.

The Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate Development and Partnerships explained that it was important that the proposed steps were realistic and that BCBC could deliver on those proposals. He advised that the challenge was to make equalities a live issue across the organisation and not simply a tokenistic one; to embed equality and fairness into the performance management framework and engage service managers through training events. He explained that what the Authority needed to evidence in order to be assessed as 'improving' or 'achieving' involved a substantial amount of work, but he was confident that 'improving' status could be achieved in 2010. The self-assessment process should address the three key headings of Corporate Governance, Equality Outcomes and Managing Equality. Other local authorities were yet to report on their status and at present all Councils were in a similar position.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee - Equalities note the information provided in this report.

55 VALLEYS REGIONAL EQUALITY COUNCIL (VALREC) - ANNUAL MEETING

The Deputy Leader - the Authority's representative on VALREC - presented a report informing the Committee of information arising from its Annual Meeting. He explained that much of VALREC's work covered the Bridgend area and this was documented in the annual report and the newsletter. He advised that he would report back regularly to the Committee on VALREC's work, particularly as it impacted on the Bridgend area. He explained that VALREC had recently carried out some work in various comprehensive schools in the County Borough where, unfortunately, there had been some racist incidents.

The Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate Development and Partnerships advised that BCBC was currently in negotiation with VALREC over funding and service provision. He suggested that Bridgend needed to be more proactive in its approach in order to ensure that it was obtaining the maximum benefit from membership of VALREC. Information had been requested from VALREC on the casework which related to Bridgend in order to enable an assessment to be made of what activities had been undertaken in which communities, and to obtain data on referral rates.

The Policy and Performance Officer advised that a new fund had recently been made available by WAG: the Community Cohesion Fund, which provided an additional means by which the Community Safety Partnership could tackle some of the issues in the community. Big Lottery Funding and Convergence Funding had enabled VALREC to recruit two additional staff who would be delivering a programme in the Bridgend

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area on increasing employment opportunities for those from black and minority ethnic groups. An additional exercise would be carried out on mapping awareness of equalities and human rights issues across the County Borough in conjunction with voluntary sector organisations such as BAVO.

The Committee agreed that it was important to ensure that VALREC was suitably positioned to address any issues in the Bridgend area and to recognise that Bridgend was made up of many different communities with representatives from a wide range of ethnic groups.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee - Equalities notes the content of the report.

The meeting closed at 11.35am.