

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

19 JULY 2010

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

PROPOSAL TO REVIEW CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee that a review will be carried out on the Corporate Equality Scheme by September 2011 and to introduce a presentation from the Policy and Performance Officer on the Equality Act 2010.

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

- 2.1 The Corporate Equality Scheme is a statutory scheme and a cross-cutting issue that impacts upon the work of the whole Council. It contributes to implementing the corporate improvement objectives prepared under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. It is linked to the Community Strategy, Welsh language Scheme and the Council's Customer Care Programme.

3. Background.

- 3.1 The Council published its first integrated Corporate Equality Scheme for 2009-2012 in May 2009. The first annual monitoring report on the Scheme was submitted to the Cabinet Equalities Committee on 12th April 2010. Carrying out the annual monitoring process has highlighted areas where the scheme can be improved.
- 3.2 Also since the scheme was published changes have occurred at the national and local levels which have impacted on the scheme. This report gives a summary of what these changes are and areas for improvement identified by the annual monitoring process and makes recommendations about how the authority can respond to these developments.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 The following changes have occurred at the national level:
- The new Equality Act became law in April 2010. This will impose a single equality duty on the authority and will extend the duty to cover all the protected equality characteristics. The new duty will come into force in April 2011.
 - It is anticipated that new regulations will be introduced in autumn 2010 setting out how the authority should set, consult and review its equality objectives. During the consultation on the Equality Bill the UK Government and Welsh Assembly Government indicated that this secondary legislation will require local

authorities to adopt an equality objective setting process that is evidence-based and integrated into the business planning process of the Authority.

- In addition the *Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009* reformed the statutory basis for service improvement and strategic planning. In discharging this general duty to secure continuous improvement, the authority must have regard to the need to improve the exercise of its functions in 7 aspects of improvement, including fairness. Fairness is defined as reducing inequality in accessing or benefiting from services or improving the social well-being of disadvantaged groups.
- In March 2010 the WLGA published a *Community Strategy Advice Note: Promoting Equality within Community Planning* which advocates the benefits of aligning equality objectives with the vision set out in the Community Strategy.

4.2 The following changes have occurred at the local level:

- The authority adopted a Community Strategy in July 2009 which sets out a new strategic vision for the county borough.
- The authority is currently finalising its Corporate Plan 2010-2013 which will set out the Authority's key improvement objectives for the next 3 years and outlines how our objectives will be taken forward. The plan will set out the Authority's response to the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy '*Better Outcomes for Tougher Times: The next phase of public service improvement*' (December 2009).

4.3 The Corporate Plan is being developed at a time when public services in Wales are facing unprecedented challenges following the global recession and increasing demand for services (for example as older people grow in numbers and social needs become more complex). This will require the Authority to concentrate its resources and action on better and sustainable outcomes for citizens and communities, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

4.3 Carrying out the annual monitoring process highlighted where the Corporate Equality Scheme can be improved:

- The basic framework of the scheme and outcomes of the consultation activities remain valid. However, the authority needs to translate the desired equality outcomes into more measurable objectives with greater clarity about actions and timeframes.
- The delivery of equality and diversity training has enhanced awareness about the authority's equality duties among managers and staff but further communication and engagement is required to build a sense of ownership of the scheme within service areas.
- A better balance needs to be struck in the action plan between objectives being delivered at the corporate level and those being delivered directly by services to our communities.

4.3 Undertaking a review of the Corporate Equality Scheme will ensure that the Authority is achieving its corporate improvement objective to meet its moral and statutory duties in respect of equality and human rights. The aim of the review will be twofold:

- To ensure that the scheme is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

- To align our equality outcomes with the objectives set out in the Community Strategy and the improvement objectives of the authority set out in the Corporate Plan as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

4.4 This approach will ensure that the Authority has in place a robust scheme that operates within the Council's performance management framework to achieve the best possible equality outcomes for the communities we serve in these challenging times.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 report, there are no proposed changes to the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Legal Implications.

6.1 There are no legal implications. This report informs the Committee in relation to the Authority's compliance with its statutory duties.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 Initiatives that are being resourced from current budgets will help the Authority to mitigate exposure to risk over its responsibilities in this area. The review will provide an opportunity to identify potential efficiency savings and funding opportunities to deliver the scheme's objectives.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 That the Cabinet Equalities Committee receives a presentation on the Equality Act 2010 and note that a review of the Corporate Equality Scheme will be carried out by officers and a report will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee setting out the outcomes of the review and recommendations for future action.

David MacGregor

Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate Development & Partnerships

28 June 2010

Contact Officer: Linda Smith
Policy & Performance Management Officer (Equalities)

Telephone: (01656) 643332

E-mail: Linda.Smith@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.

Background documents:

Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Equality Scheme 2009-2012.
Bridgend County Borough Council Welsh Language Scheme 2008-2011.

Equality Act 2010.

Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Better Outcomes for Tougher Times: The next phase of public service improvement
(Welsh Assembly Government, December 2009).

Community Strategy Advice Note: Promoting Equality within Community Planning (Welsh
Local Government Association, March 2010).