

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES**

**17 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE - PERFORMANCE**

**6 MONTHLY UPDATE REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN**

**1. Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the implementation of the Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives.

**2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/ other corporate priorities**

2.1 The Strategic Equality Plan is a statutory and cross-cutting plan that impacts upon the work of the whole council.

**3. Background**

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new general duty for public bodies to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not.  
The protected characteristics are:-

- Age (Act applies to over 18yrs)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership (only in relation to eliminating discrimination)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

3.2 In addition to the above, the Welsh Government introduced specific duties for public authorities in meeting the general duties under the Act. These are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 which came into effect on 6 April 2011. One of these was a duty to publish equality objectives and a Strategic Equality Plan by 2 April 2012. The equality objectives set out how the council plans to address the most pressing issues for each of the protected characteristic groups.

#### **4. Current situation/ proposal**

4.1 Work has continued on finalising the Strategic Equality Plan action plan and, during this period, some developments have taken place. These are listed under each of the strategic equality objectives below:

#### **4.2 Transportation**

- Initial meetings with public transport companies have been set up to promote equality and diversity training provision for drivers.
- Meetings will shortly be held with taxi companies operating in the Bridgend area to promote an increase in the number of wheelchair accessible taxis and hackney carriages in use.

#### **4.3 Fostering Good Relations**

- A calendar is being developed which maps the various annual public awareness campaigns related to each of the protected characteristics (e.g. UK Older People's Day). This will assist the council in developing a plan to mark and support these national campaigns on a local level.
- The council is currently reviewing its bank of publicity images to ensure that it is fully representative of all of the protected characteristic groups.
- The council has applied for membership of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Excellence Centre. Gaining membership will enable the authority to access useful e-briefings, newsletters, and factsheets. Equalities officers would also be able to share ideas and good practice with other members via the members' area of their website.

#### **4.4 The council's role as an employer**

- Basic and advanced equality and diversity training courses are being developed, targeting managers and front line customer facing staff.
- The council's induction process is being updated to include information which reflects the council's all inclusive approach to employment.
- The "two ticks" disability symbol has been added to the council's website and jobs pages.
- An Autism Awareness e-learning module has been developed and made available to employees to raise understanding of issues which may affect customers and employees.

#### **4.5 Data**

- A data collection exercise will begin before the end of the financial year to capture the equality and personal sensitive data of all employees.

- To improve the standard of Equality Impact Assessments produced by the council a revised Equality Impact Assessment toolkit is being piloted within all services. Feedback from officers using the new toolkit will help inform further refinements and training. (*An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to examine new or changes to existing policies, services or functions to assess the potential to affect different sectors of society in different ways and whether there are likely to be any negative consequences*). EIA training and support has been provided to those responsible for completing these assessments.
- A set of standard equalities monitoring questions covering all of the protected characteristics has been developed, and will shortly be rolled out to all service areas.
- Service areas are already being encouraged to include this standard set of questions as part of their consultation activities. Recent examples include the consultation exercises on 'Bridgend Together' and the proposal to relocate Bridgend Library.

#### 4.6 **Communication, consultation and engagement**

- Five British Sign Language videos have been produced on key areas of information: How we Handle Complaints; Social Services Complaints; Customer Services Charter; Corporate Complaints; Get Yourself Heard. Some positive feedback has been received from the d/Deaf community.
- British Sign Language interpreters now attend some council hosted events such as those at Bryngarw and, where appropriate, council meetings such as the Bridgend Equality Forum.
- Early in September 2012 the council was reassessed by Action for Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) to be awarded the Action for Hearing Loss Charter, recognising the council's awareness of issues facing customers and employees who are d/Deaf or have hearing loss. The outcome is awaited.
- Start to Sign training has been delivered to a number of employees and further requests have been received from employees at the Customer Contact Centre to undertake BSL training.
- A basic guide to 'accessible communications' has been developed and made available to employees. This will be further developed to create a more detailed and advanced guide.

4.6 Following the approval and publication of the Strategic Equality Plan in April 2012, the equality objectives have now been mainstreamed into Directorate Business Plans and progress will be monitored via the council's Corporate Performance Assessment.

**5. Effect upon policy framework & procedure rules**

5.1 None.

**6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 As this is a progress report, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

**7. Financial Implications**

7.1 None from this report.

**8. Recommendation**

8.1 That Cabinet Committee – Equalities considers the progress being made.

**Vanessa Young**  
**Assistant Chief Executive – Performance**

**11 September 2012**

**Contact Officer:** Paul Williams  
Human Resources Business Partner

**Telephone:** (01656) 643212

**E-mail:** Paul.williams2@bridgend.gov.uk

**Postal Address** Ravens Court, Brewery Lane, Bridgend, CF31 4AP

**Background documents:**  
None