

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON MONDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2013 AT 10.00AM

Present:-

Councillor D Sage - Chairperson

Councillors

M E J Nott  
H J David  
M Gregory

Councillors

L C Morgan  
P J White

Invitees:-

Councillor M Butcher  
Councillor C Jones

Councillor C Reeves  
Councillor H Townsend

J M Morgan - Student Wellbeing and Safeguarding Officer, Bridgend College  
N Johns - Student Support Services Manager, Bridgend College  
J Forse - Bridgend College Students Union  
S Nash - Bridgend College Students Union

Officers:

E Winkley - Marketing and Engagement Manager  
P Williams - Equality and Engagement Officer  
B Davies - Customer Service Manager  
A Rees - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:-

Councillor C A Green - Unwell  
Councillor D M Hughes - Work commitments  
Councillor C L Jones - Work commitments  
Councillor C Rees - Work commitments

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor H Townsend declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(i) – Issues facing the Local Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community as her sister is Samantha Nash of Bridgend College Student's Union and Jordan Forse is part of her officer team of Bridgend College Student's Union.

26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee - Equalities of 6 December 2012 were approved as a true and accurate record.

27 ISSUES FACING THE LOCAL LESBIAN, GAY, BI-SEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) COMMUNITY

The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the Committee that the Council had developed a close working relationship with LGBT people in Bridgend College and that representatives of the College were present to give an overview of some of the challenges the community faces. He stated that the Council is a member of the Wales LGBT Excellence Centre and meetings between the Council and the Excellence Centre had highlighted a range of issues LGBT people face in their day to day lives such as discrimination.

The Student Wellbeing and Safeguarding Officer outlined to the Committee the services available at Bridgend College from the Student Wellbeing Team. Support and advice was offered to students on issues such as housing, finances, personal and relationship issues and alcohol and substance misuse. The service was committed to supporting students to enable them to reach their full potential.

The Committee received a presentation by Jordan Forse and Samantha Nash of Bridgend College Student Union on issues affecting the LGBT community. They outlined the different definitions of LGBT and how people saw themselves and how other people saw them. They outlined the problems helped by the LGBT community with issues of fear, shame, and loss of relationships, prejudice and discrimination. The LGBT community could also feel marginalisation and exclusion which could give rise to issues such as homelessness, legal issues, the need to have medical treatment and a lack of understanding.

The Committee was informed that LGBT students at the college held weekly meetings in a safe environment. The Students informed the Committee that 80% of students had suffered from homophobic remarks and the LGBT group within the College focussed on getting people to report those remarks anonymously. The Group received the support of the Student Wellbeing and Safeguarding Officer with the College having a zero tolerance policy on hate crime. The College Student Union was running a campaign to educate staff and students to highlight the problem the use of offensive language and homophobic bullying which itself is a hate crime. It was hoped to create events for lasting change with the introduction of LGBT classes in schools. The students stated that the introduction of social media had helped LGBT students and ensured support on a 24/7 basis. The College also had a twitter account and a Stop the Hate campaign on Thunderclap. The College was shortly to have an awareness raising event on 28 February 2013 featuring live performances.

The Committee thanked the students for the excellent presentation.

The Student Wellbeing and Safeguarding Officer commended the Council on its excellent support to students with regard to the Housing Service and its work with partners such as Llanmau and Yellow Wales.

The Students highlighted the support from the Police for the LGBT community who have displayed window stickers at police stations and the rainbow flag. The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the Committee that the Council had purchased a rainbow flag and was awaiting its delivery and stated that the Council was developing a closer working relationship with LGBT people. The Committee was informed that the Chief Executive of Stonewall Cymru, Mr Andrew White was the guest speaker at the recent Holocaust Memorial Day and had spoken at the event of his experiences growing up in Bridgend. The Committee considered that there was a need to undertake some awareness raising of LGBT issues at schools and that Bridgend

College could assist in this process and help with signposting for support services against bullying.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

28 WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2011/12 – RESPONSE FROM THE WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER

The Equality and Engagement Officer reported on feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding the Council's Annual Monitoring Report 2011/12 on the Welsh Language Scheme. He stated that the Council is required to report to the Welsh Language Commissioner annually to outline progress made on implementing its Welsh Language Scheme and was also required to report on how improvements would be made over the 2012/13 period. The Commissioner would then provide the Council with feedback to support delivery of the scheme and to make recommendations to make further improvements.

He reported that written feedback had been received from the Commissioner in December 2012, with the Council being commended for its positive work during this period, together with positive developments and examples of good practice. There were some concerns expressed and recommendations for improvements given. He highlighted the changes or improvements made by the Council during 2011/12, with concerns expressed by the Commissioner that Welsh Language indicator WLI 1 was not reported on. In the Annual Monitoring Report 2010/2011, the Council reported that work was on-going to allow reporting on this indicator this year. The Commissioner had asked for an explanation of the level of consideration given by the Council to the Welsh Language Board guidance 'Contracting Out Public Service Contracts' Since receiving the Commissioner's response in December the Council had now made progress in developing an action plan to allow reporting on this indicator which has been shared with the Commissioner.

Following a question from the Committee, the Equality and Engagement Officer undertook to look into the availability of sign language being used in funeral services being conducted through the medium of Welsh at the crematorium.

The Equality and Engagement Officer informed the committee that he and the Marketing and Engagement Manager would be meeting the Commissioner's Office on 18 February to progress the action points.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that the training plan for Welsh language skills also covered Welsh language medium schools.

RESOLVED: That the feedback received by the Welsh language Commissioner be noted.

29 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12 ON THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN

The Equality and Engagement Officer reported on an update on the work being done to develop the Council's first annual report on the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP). He stated that the Council had a general duty under the Equality Act 2010 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 share it. He outlined the protected characteristics in being.

He informed the Committee that the first draft annual report covered the period 6 April 2011 to the 31 March 2012, with it being unique in that following the introduction of new duties, equality objectives were only required to be published by 2 April 2012. The Council's SEP 2012-15 was not published until this date and therefore fell outside the reporting period. He stated that the SEP Annual Report 2011/12 was currently in draft form and would be presented to Cabinet on 5 March 2013.

He highlighted the purpose of the annual report which was to assist public authorities to meet the aims of their own specific equality objectives as well as the three aims of the general duty as required under the Act. He stated that the Annual Report provided an opportunity to monitor and review progress and effectiveness and to review objectives and processes and engage with stakeholders. He outlined the specific requirements set out in the report. The annual report would cover a wide range of issues of interest to multiple audiences. The style of writing had been carefully considered to tailor the report accordingly and therefore extending the scope of the content beyond compliance would ensure the annual report is interesting and useful to a range of internal and external stakeholders. Progress made by the Council on each of the equality objectives and themes would also be reported on.

RESOLVED: That the progress made on the Strategic Equality be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.33am.