BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES

1 OCTOBER 2013

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR RESOURCES

6 MONTHLY UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide members with a progress report on the objectives within the Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan

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. Welsh Government introduced specific duties for public authorities in meeting the general duties under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. One of these was a duty to publish equality objectives and a Strategic Equality Plan. The Action Plan outlines how the council plans to address the most pressing issues for each of the protected characteristic groups and achieve its equality objectives.

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

4. Current situation/ proposal

4.1 The Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan was approved in September 2012. Implementation and review of the objectives is ongoing Actions are focussed around improving current services or developing new accessible services for our citizens. Progress is listed under each of the strategic equality objectives below:

4.2 Transportation

- Regular meetings with public transport companies set up promoting equality and diversity training for drivers.
- Quarterly Bridgend taxi forum established promoting an increase in the number of wheelchair accessible taxis and hackney carriages in use and general equality and diversity issues.

4.3 Fostering good relations

- Calendar developed mapping public awareness days/weeks (e.g. UK Older People's Day, IDAHO day) Calendar is used to mark and support these national campaigns on a local level.
- Ongoing review of bank of publicity images representing all of the protected characteristic groups.
- BCBC membership of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Excellence Centre (LGBT Excellence Centre was a charity which has since closed down following funding withdrawal)
- The Rainbow Flag was flown twice in 2013 - marking the end of LGBT History Month, and IDAHO day.
- BCBC had an information stand at Swansea Pride (jointly with Swansea Council) and Cardiff Mardi Gras (jointly with Bridgend College) and is planning to have an information stand at Swansea Sparkle in November 2013.
- Holocaust Memorial Day 2013 made clear reference to all of the groups of people who faced persecution during the Holocaust.

4.4 The council's role as an employer

- On-going development of basic and advanced equality and diversity training courses which targets managers and front line customer-facing staff.
- Induction process being updated to include information which reflects the council's fully inclusive approaches to employment.
- Successful assessment for the "two ticks" disability symbol.
- Autism awareness e-learning module developed and available to employees to help with understanding issues that affect customers and employees.

4.5   Data

- Data collection exercise began October 2012 capturing equality and personal / sensitive data of all employees.
- New Equality Impact Assessment toolkit introduced with EIAs published on the BCBC website.
- Standard equalities monitoring questions covering all of the protected characteristics have been developed, and rolled out to all service areas, who are encouraged to include these questions as part of consultation activities.

4.6   Communication, consultation and engagement

- British Sign Language (BSL) videos continue to be produced on key areas of information such as: how we handle complaints; social services complaints; customer services charter; corporate complaints; get yourself heard and the recent 'disability benefits myth busting' leaflet produced by the Bridgend Equality Forum.
- BSL interpreters attend council hosted events such as those at Bryngarw and council meetings such as the Bridgend Equality Forum.
- In September 2012 the council was successfully assessed by Action for Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) and 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.
- Start to Sign training delivered to a number of employees and further requests have been received from employees at the Customer Contact Centre to undertake BSL training.
- Basic guide to 'accessible communications' developed and made available to employees. This will be further developed to create a more detailed and advanced guide.

4.6   Following approval and publication of the Strategic Equality Plan in April 2012, equality objectives have been mainstreamed into directorate business plans and progress will be monitored via the Cabinet Equalities Committee.

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

None in this report

8.   Recommendation

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

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Background documents:
None