

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

**18 DECEMBER 2013**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES**

**VALREC - Overview of service remit and delivery**

**1. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the services provided by VALREC (independent advocate for equality and human rights,) in Bridgend County Borough.

**2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities**

2.1 The Strategic Equality Plan is a statutory plan and a cross cutting issue impacting on the whole of the council. It is linked to the Customer Care Programme and supports the community cohesion agenda.

2.2 This report also supports the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017:

- **Priority 2:** Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement;
- **Priority 3:** Working with children and families to tackle problems early;
- **Priority 5:** Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles;
- **Priority 6:** Working together to make the best use of our resources.

**3. Background**

3.1 In July 2010, Cabinet Equalities Committee agreed to receive reports and presentations on topic areas relevant to their remit. This includes community representatives presenting on relevant topics for members to gain a broader understanding of issues faced in our communities.

3.2 An update on the casework carried out by VALREC in Bridgend County Borough was added to the committee's forward work programme in line with the recently agreed Service Level Agreement.

3.3 Bridgend, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen are all members of VALREC, some contributing a level of grant funding in its specific area.

3.4 VALREC's organisational purpose is to provide leadership and promote good practice in the fields of equality, diversity and human rights. It is an organisation that works in partnership to deliver its objectives and to add value to the work of others.

3.5 VALREC works to promote equality across the mandates of age, disability, gender, race, religion and/or belief, sexual orientation, transgender and human rights.

- 3.6 VALREC's objectives are to be an independent advocate for equality and human rights, and to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations and protect human rights. It challenges prejudice and disadvantage and ensures equality and human rights remain top priorities for public service providers. VALREC has a dedicated officer for Bridgend and attends the community cohesion and hate crime groups, the Bridgend Equality Forum and undertakes specific work in BCBC schools.

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

- 4.1 Bridgend has worked with and part-funded VALREC since 2008. Elected Members and officers require robust reassurance that such arrangements as those with VALREC afford value for money particularly in the current economic climate.
- 4.2 VALREC undertakes unique casework and provides support services across the protected characteristic groups within the Strategic Equality Plan 2010 (age, disability, gender, race, religion and/or belief, sexual orientation and transgender).
- 4.3 The Service Level Agreement between BCBC and VALREC is in place for the next three years.

#### **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 The report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but is required to effectively implement the council's statutory duties in relation to equalities and human rights.

#### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

No equality impact assessment has been carried out as this report provides the committee with information that will positively assist in the delivery of the authority's equality duties.

#### **7. Financial Implications.**

None in this report.

#### **8. Recommendation.**

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Equalities Committee receives and considers this report.

**Ness Young**  
**Corporate Director – Resources**  
**Date: 27 November 2013**

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**Background papers:** None.