

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 10.00 AM

Present

Councillor HJ Townsend – Chairperson

HJ David

M Gregory

PJ White

HM Williams

Officers:

Emma Blandon

Paul Williams

103. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officer:-

Councillor M E J Nott JP – Holiday

Councillor C E Smith – Holiday

Councillor M Thomas – Other Council business

S Kingsbury – Work commitments

104. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

105. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Equalities dated 2 April 2015, be approved as a true and accurate record.

106. SUPPORT IN BCBC FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Corporate Director Resources submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to inform Committee of the issues faced by victims of Domestic Abuse, Violence against Women and Sexual Violence in our communities, and to outline support avenues available for these problems in society.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report gave the definition of Domestic Abuse, which could be encompassed without being limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional pressures.

By way of background information, the Early Intervention and Prevention Co-ordinator confirmed that the organisation that supports the above problems were called Calan DVS (formerly Bridgend Woman's Aid) which was a recognised Integrated Domestic

Abuse Service. There were 60 staff that supported the organisation which covered not only BCBC but also the Western Bay area.

She proceeded to advise, that two women a week were killed in the UK as a result of Domestic Abuse, and there had been no change in this statistic within the last 15 years, though this was attempting to be addressed by the support of emerging agencies forming a more holistic approach to address these issues.

The report then gave information which confirmed that victims were not necessarily confined to one particular gender or ethnic group, and for example, aside of these other victims of potential abuse were the disabled, age related or lesbian, gay, bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T).

A Member enquired if there was usually a particular pattern that was followed in respect of Domestic Abuse, such as hereditary or genetically.

The Early Intervention and Prevention Co-ordinator that in respect of past generations, if young people seen this type abuse with their parents, it could affect the children in a number of ways. If that was a daughter, then that person could perceive themselves as being submissive, but that may go the opposite way if the child was male. It could also have an effect whereby the children in the family would think that treatment such as this is normal, or they could see how wrong it was, and go the opposite way as they develop and get older. Children and parents needed not just support, but also to be educated in intervention and prevention methods, that would assist in problems perhaps not starting in the first instance.

A Member confirmed that the life expectancy of a person living in the Llynfi Valley, was on average 20 years less than some more affluent areas of the County Borough. A project had been established made up of a number of streams to resolve and/or support people living there, and one of these streams was looking to educate children in schools on how to achieve a healthy relationship.

A Member stated that Bridgend like other areas of the UK was developing into a multi-cultural country, and that thought should be given to having the medium of English being taught to people who had none or limited communication skills in this language. She asked if consideration had been given to this, to which the Early Intervention and Prevention Co-ordinator replied she did not know. The Member asked if this could be followed up outside the meeting to which Officers replied that it would.

The Deputy Leader stated that it would be interesting to see how the Llynfi Valley Project would progress, particularly the work to be undertaken in schools. If this element of the Project was successful, perhaps it could then be rolled out to other schools throughout the County Borough, if resources were permitted to allow this.

The Early Intervention and Prevention Co-ordinator confirmed that the training given by organisations such as Calan DVS was not compulsory, and it was up to the particular school to agree to have organisations such as this allowed in the school for the purpose of the training. She added however, that Welsh Government were looking more closely at educating children through schools in terms of relationships and problems associated with abuse.

The Community Safety Team Leader confirmed that resources needed to be fed into organisations who supported people who were the subject of abuse, and the problem was, that some of the organisations that assisted here were voluntary and often relied on avenues of funding. There was also going to be established a multi-agency One Stop Shop in Level 1 of the Civic Offices that was designed for members of the public to visit

to enquire about various matters, and this would also provide advice and support avenues for sufferers of Domestic Abuse. There was also a Domestic Abuse Policy in existence within BCBC he added.

A Member suggested that the topic subject of the item being discussed could be made available for all Members as part of a future Pre-Council Presentation.

Officers advised that a Member Development session on Domestic Abuse etc, perhaps could be arranged to coincide with the opening of the One Stop Shop in November. The Chairperson added that the Committee should also be invited to the One Stop Shop opening event.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Cabinet Committee received, considered and noted the report.
- (2) That the Cabinet Committee receives an updated report in due course outlining the methods by which Domestic Abuse is being addressed and tackled in the County Borough, to include the success of the One Stop Shop.
- (3) That the Cabinet Committee also is advised in due course on the success of the Llynfi Valley Project referred to during debate on this item.

107. SIX MONTHLY REPORT ON EQUALITY IN THE WORKFORCE

The Equality and Engagement Officer presented a report that provided the Cabinet Equalities Committee with data on the Council's workforce, together with comparative information and an update on employment related developments

He confirmed that the Appendix attached to the report provided half yearly profiles and a data analysis of the contracted workforce from 30 September 2013 until 31 March 2015. Profiles included data relating to the number of employees disclosing as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, and a detailed breakdown of employees' Welsh speaking, reading and writing skills.

In terms of current developments, the Equality and Engagement Officer referred to paragraph 4.2.1 of the report, and explained that the data capture project focused on the benefits to employees of completing a questionnaire and disclosing details regarding themselves, including sensitive information. Good progress had been made to date he explained, with a total of 1,707 employees across all Directorates having completed the exercise. He then outlined the benefits to the Council and its employees by completing such a questionnaire, as were shown in bullet point format in this part of the report.

He then referred to paragraph 4.2.2 of the report, confirming that good progress had been made in meeting the actions outlined in the Strategic Equality Plan objective "The Council's role as an Employer", which was due for completion in 2015. These were outlined in this part of the report also.

The Equality and Engagement Officer then referred to certain further developments, which included the development of employee guidance on meeting the needs of Transgender customers, and the progress being made on developing a staff network for BCBC employees who were carers.

In conclusion of his submission, the Equality and Engagement Officer then gave a resume of some of the statistics contained in the Appendix attached to the report, the key points of which were detailed on the back page of this Appendix.

A Member noted that there had been a reduction in the number of full time employees which had decreased by 370 since March 2014. She asked if this included the transfer of staff to Halo.

The Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed this to be the case.

In response to a further question, a Member asked if the reduction in workforce included staff in schools, and the Equality and Engagement Officer replied that this data did not include staff within schools.

A Member noted that the age profile in terms of Officers employed by the Authority was interesting, in that since the recession more older than younger people were being employed by the Authority. He asked if any further data could be made available on this over and above that contained in the report.

The Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that he would look into this point to see if he could provide Members with some further breakdown on this, but added that the Authority were looking to employ people in roles of apprenticeships, as well as looking out for work placements and avenues of employment etc, for LAC including those that had come out of care.

The Equality and Engagement Officer further added that employment in local authority was these days not attractive as it once was, particularly since the recession and cut backs that had been imposed within local government, and that may be one of the reasons why older rather than younger people were looking at employment opportunities within the Council.

A Member asked if the Authority practised exit interviews through Human Resources when an employee leaved the employment of the Council.

The Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that whilst there was scope to have an exit interview, not all employees wished to have these.

In response to a further question from a Member, asking if Members could also complete the above questionnaire as part of the exercise, the Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that this had also been made available for Members to complete, though to date, only 8 of the 54 Members had completed and returned this.

The Chairperson advised that a reminder should be sent to those Members who have not completed this questionnaire, that it was available for them to complete, if they so desired.

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES - THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2015

She also noted that 75% of Officers in the Council are female, and she asked if Officers could break this down further by confirming what percentage of this are in management posts.

The Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that he would endeavour to obtain this information and pass this onto Members outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Equalities Committee received, considered and noted this report.

108. WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2014 - 2015

The Equality and Engagement Officer presented a report, in order to outline the Council's Welsh Language Scheme Annual Monitoring report 2014-15, and seek Cabinet Committee's approval for submission of this to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The report gave some background information, following which it referred to the above Monitoring Report which was attached to the covering report at Appendix 1, which highlighted the Council's progress in implementing its Welsh Language Scheme during this period.

The Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that the guidance provided for the completion of the Annual Monitoring Report 2014-15, required a lower level of reporting with a reduction in the specific data and information provided. Therefore, in line with the Commissioner's guidelines, the report itself was much less detailed.

He then referred to paragraph 4.3 of the report, where it detailed specific areas of performance information and other data that was required and included within the Annual Monitoring Report. An approved version of this was required to be with the Welsh Language Commissioner by 30 September 2015.

A Member noted from page 24 of the report, that between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015, 421 callers selected the option when they contacted the Contact Centre of the Council to continue their call in Welsh. She asked Officers if this was 421 different people or not. The Equality and Engagement Officer advised that there was no way of knowing this as it was impossible to define.

The Member then asked how many callers there were in total for this period.

The Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that the total number of callers was around 200,000 though he would check this and come back to her accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Equalities Committee considered the Annual Monitoring Report and approved its submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

109. WELSH LANGUAGE (WALES) MEASURE 2011 / WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

The Corporate Director Resources submitted a report, to update the Cabinet Committee Equalities with information regarding the Compliance Notice received from the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations came into force last March, following consultation and Standards Investigation undertaken by the Welsh Language Commissioner in 2014.

Appendix A to the report, detailed the standards that had been applied to BCBC, and these standards had been separated in two sets by the Welsh Language Commissioner, as shown in paragraph 4.3 of the report, 168 of which needed to be completed in 6 months with 20 needing to be completed in 12 months.

The Equality and Engagement Officer advised that many of the standards already existed within the Council's current policy and practice contained in the Welsh Language Scheme 2012-2015.

He then referred to the report's financial implications, advising that it would be almost impossible from a financial perspective for the Authority to fully comply with the proposed standards, a conservative estimate of which would cost £300k as one off expenditure, with a further £900k recurring spend. He added though, that it was important to note also, that future non-compliance with one or more standards brings with it an organisational risk to the Council, in that any formal complaints that are upheld and which reach the final stage of the investigatory process may potentially bring a financial penalty of up to £5k per standard breach. He further added that it was estimated that the Council would be unable to fulfil 51 of these Standards.

The Chairperson confirmed that a meeting had taken place with the First Minister regarding the Welsh Language Standards, and this would be followed up in writing.

The Equality and Engagement Officer confirmed that when the Implementation Plan had been fully completed, then he would have a better idea of the cost implications associated with compliance of the Standards.

The Deputy Leader added that even if the Authority had resources to spare, then these would be committed to other essential service areas of the Council that urgently required this, rather than be committed to meeting the Welsh Language Standards. Welsh Government needed to consider allocating finance to local authorities to assist in meeting the Standards that were being introduced by them.

The Cabinet Member Resources concluded debate on this item, by stating that the Authority currently committed £1.4m to its Nursery Provision, which was one of many of the Council's essential services. He felt that this put into perspective the reality which was that most local authorities would find it extremely difficult in meeting all or even the majority of the Welsh Language Standards.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the Cabinet Equalities Committee received, considered and noted the report.
 - (2) That Members also agreed to write to the First Minister explaining of the difficulty the Authority would have in meeting the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards, due to the present financial climate and the savings that had to be made under its MTFs.

110. WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Equality and Engagement Officer gave a report, that updated the Cabinet Committee Equalities with information regarding progress being made with the development of the Council's draft Welsh Language Standards Implementation Plan.

He confirmed that the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaces Welsh Language Schemes with a set of enforceable national 'standards' which will impact upon the work of the whole Council. A number of these standards related to the development of a Corporate Implementation Plan/Strategy.

In support of the report, the Equality and Engagement Officer gave a short powerpoint Presentation entitled 'Welsh Language Measure and BCBC Implementation Plan' that covered the following themes:-

Welsh Language Standards

- Approved by Welsh Assembly Government in March 2015
- Draft Compliance Notice issued in June 2015
- Consultation on content of Draft Compliance Notice closed 20 July 2015
- Final Compliance Notice issued in September 2015

The Equality and Engagement Officer added that the approved Standards were the 2nd iteration, the first being discarded by WAG. He further added that BCBC responded to the first consultation/investigation in April 2014.

He confirmed that the 5 main themes of the Welsh Language Standards were:-

1. Service Delivery
2. Policy Making
3. Operational Issues
4. Promoting the Standards
5. Record Keeping

Compliance and Timeframe

With regard to the above, the Equality and Engagement Officer stated that the proposed timescales were to comply with:

- (i) 148 Standards by March 2016
- (ii) 21 Standards by September 2016

In respect of the draft Implementation Plan, he added that this had been populated with some example data and information relevant to the Resources Directorate initially, which would then look to be rolled out to other Directorates. The approach to the development of the Implementation Plan was to:

- Adopt a "SMART" approach to outlining each of the standards
- Describing the impact of each of the standards on individual service units
- To also describe the work required to comply with the standard and the resources required to do so, and
- The lead Officer responsible for overseeing standards compliance within each service area.

A Member enquired as to what were the feelings of neighbouring authorities on having to comply with the Standards.

The Equality and Engagement Officer advised that in South East Wales, other Authorities were sceptical about obtaining full or even part compliance with the Standards, due to the resources required to meet these.. He added that it was not so financially daunting for other Authorities, such as Wrexham, Flint and Gwynedd, as they already had a number of Standards naturally in place as they were largely welsh speaking communities.

The Deputy Leader stated that the Standards needed to be challenged, albeit in a constructive way. As discussed earlier in the meeting, he felt that some discussion was required with Welsh Government, to endeavour to meet some of the Standards that were reasonable or minimal in terms of cost that would be incurred by the Authority. Those that had more of a cost implication needed to be negotiated with Welsh Government, as a compromise situation needed to be arrived at. He added that BCBC were consensus cross party, that it was too difficult from a financial perspective to be able to deliver all of the required Standards.

The Chairperson added that the Council should also contact the WLGA as there was a common voice across south east and to a degree south west Wales, over the Standards being unachievable due to the huge financial cost of these during a time when local authorities have limited resources.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Equalities Committee both received and considered the report and accompanying Presentation

111. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm