

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 2016 AT 11.00 AM

Present

Councillor HJ Townsend – Chairperson

HJ David
PJ White

M Gregory
HM Williams

MEJ Nott OBE

CE Smith

Officers:

Emma Blandon
Paul Williams
Sarah Daniel

Equality Officer
Democratic Services Officer – Committees

Invitees:

Councillor M W Butcher
Councillor N Farr
Councillor C A Green
Councillor R C Jones
Councillor A D Owen
Councillor C Reeves
Councillor M Reeves
Councillor D Sage
Councillor M Thomas
Mr Riaz Hassan - Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator

120. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Sage

121. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

122. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Equalities was approved as an accurate record of the meeting

123. UPDATE REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE (WALES) MEASURE 2011 AND WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

The Equalities Officer presented a report to update Cabinet Equalities Committee on the implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards. He explained to Members that the Authority received its final compliance notice on 30 September 2015 and had since been preparing for compliance with the standards by holding initial awareness raising sessions for staff between July and

September 2015. He advised Members that a Welsh Language Standards Implementation Board had also been established which was chaired by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and comprising directorate representatives.

The Equalities Officer advised the Committee that attached at appendix two to the report were a list of the standards that the Authority had appealed and were waiting for a response to.

A Member asked if Welsh Government had provided statistics that had been achieved as a result of the implementation of the standards. The Equalities Officer advised Members that they had not received any specific data from Welsh Government. He added that the only information they had was based on Census data which confirmed that 9.7% of people in Bridgend spoke Welsh. He added that further information would be available from a forthcoming national survey in Wales that may assist, however the information was not yet available.

A Member was concerned that the implementation of the standards would not increase or encourage Welsh speakers in the Borough and suggested that the resources would be better placed in Welsh Medium Schools. Another member agreed and stated that the implementation of the Welsh Language standards was forcing the Welsh language onto people, particularly those who did not speak Welsh. She agreed that it should be made available to those who wish to use it. The Member was also concerned that as a basic Welsh language speaker, if a constituent wished to communicate in Welsh then she would have difficulty.

The Equalities Officer advised that this was a concern as the Authority does not have a large number of Welsh speakers. He added that if a situation was presented to Members where they had a constituent that wished to communicate in Welsh that Officers at the Authority could arrange simultaneous translation to Members. The Chairperson was concerned that this could cause delays in some processes, particularly in Social Services.

A Member noted that some other Authorities have two websites one each for English and Welsh and asked if BCBC had considered doing the same for ease of use.

The Marketing and Engagement Manager stated that the Authority had not considered this because BCBC was not fully bilingual and there were not enough pages of the website that had been translated. She added that the translation of the website was currently under appeal as there would be a huge amount of work and Resource involved in getting it fully bilingual. She further added that the Authority was reviewing the content of the web pages as anything unnecessary could be removed.

A Member asked if BCBC were consistent with other Local Authorities on what standards had been appealed. The Equalities Officer stated that the appeals were similar to other Local Authorities but some had appealed far less than what BCBC had. He advised that the Authority were expecting a lot more requests than had been received to correspond in Welsh since the implementation of the standards, however requests for using the Welsh Language in the Authority had not increased to date.

A Member asked for clarification on the appeal and if it was to not comply with the standards indefinitely, or, if it was for an extension in time in which to comply with them. The Equalities Officer stated that it was generally for more time to comply with the standards but some were appealed on the grounds of proportionality and reasonableness.

A Member asked if the penalty fines were suspended during the appeals process and the implication of not adhering to the standards if the appeals were not successful. The Equalities Officer advised that no fines would be issued during the appeals process and fines will not be backdated if the appeals were not upheld. He added that the Authority were trying to be reasonable in complying with as many standards as possible as once the outcomes of the appeals were confirmed, there would potentially be a £5k fine per non-compliance with a standard.

Members were collectively concerned about the recurrent budget pressure and costs of implementing the Welsh Language Standards. The Cabinet Member Communities advised that if the Authority were able to research the percentage of people in the Borough that were able to conduct a business meeting in Welsh, that alone would be enough to appeal more of the standards. The Equalities Officer advised that the appeals process was now closed and any further appeals submitted would not be considered. Members stated that if the Authority were able to evidence the statistics in that there was not an increase in the use of the Welsh Language then the Authority could lobby AMs to move an amendment to the Welsh Language Measure.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet Equalities Committee noted and considered the report

124. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016-2017**

The Equalities Officer gave a report to seek Cabinet Equalities Committee approval for the proposed Forward Work Programme for 2016-17 which was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Equalities Committee approved the proposed Forward Work Programme 2016-17

125. **HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY IN BRIDGEND**

The Equalities Officer welcomed and introduced to the Cabinet Committee Riaz Hassan, Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator for Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Councils who gave a presentation to the Cabinet Committee on A Local Perspective for Anti-Slavery/Human Trafficking which included case studies local to Bridgend.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Hassan for the presentation and stated that the case studies were horrendous. She added that the Child Sexual Exploitation Lead Officer for BCBC now has weekly meetings with the police, and Members of the Authority have had awareness training sessions on this.

A Member asked what the BCBC policy on the outcomes of the report were and if this would be on the Forward Work Programme for the Committee. The Chairperson advised that the Authority were already addressing many of the outcomes from the report, including Officers from Social Services and Western Bay Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards to ensure a safe and consistent flow of information between both groups. She added that the Strategic Plan was on the Forward Work Programme for the Cabinet Committee for the next year's programme of meetings.

The Leader thanked the Community Cohesion Coordinator for his insightful presentation. He added that he felt that awareness sessions would be beneficial for all Members so they were able to share the information with their constituents. He

suggested a pre-Council presentation for all Members. He added that it was frightening that the issues were on the increase despite added resources and awareness sessions. A Member referred to the number of intelligence submissions relating to Human Trafficking for Bridgend, Maesteg and the Vale of Glamorgan and stated that the low figures for this area compared to other areas made her feel uneasy and thought it reflected a lower priority for the area.

One Member stated that she thought it should be mandatory for anyone that witnesses something that they have a duty to report it. She added that Child Sexual Exploitation training would also be an advantage so Members know the signs to look for and are then able to report it to the relevant person.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet Equalities Committee received and considered the report and appendix

126. URGENT ITEMS

None

127. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016-2020

The Equalities Officer submitted a report to the Cabinet Equalities Committee of the approval at Cabinet on 15 March 2016 of Bridgend County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020

The Equalities Officer stated that nine equality objectives set in 2012 were reviewed in order to develop the SEP for 2016-2020. The review of the objectives was based on progress made, further consideration of the protected characteristics, local and national issues, learning from networks and partnerships, feedback received from equality and diversity groups consideration of the Councils priorities and external reports. As a result of the review, the equality objectives were reduced from nine to seven.

The Equalities Officer advised that a detailed SEP action plan would be developed during 2016 and further consultation and engagement would be arranged. The action plan would outline the specific tasks and actions to be undertaken over the next four years and would be outcome focused. He added that the final action plan would be presented to Cabinet Equalities Committee for approval in July 2016

A Member asked if those that were educated at home were included in objective 5 as it was not mentioned in the report. The Equalities Officer confirmed that it was included in the objective and would form part of the action plan.

A Member asked how many copies of the plan had been requested in welsh. The Equalities Officer stated that the plan was available in Welsh online but they could look at the statistics as to how many had accessed the welsh version.

A Member asked if the Authority had received any negative feedback from the Transgender Community for grouping them together with the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community. The Equalities Officer stated that the transgender community have given positive feedback rather than negative and they appreciate the Authority's commitment to them.

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES - THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 2016

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Equalities Committee noted the content of the report and the approval of Cabinet on 15 March 2016 of the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020

The meeting closed at 12.40 pm