

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES - THURSDAY, 14 JULY 2016

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 14 JULY 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor HJ Townsend – Chairperson

HJ David

CL Reeves

PJ White

HM Williams

Officers:

Mark Galvin

Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Paul Williams

Equality Officer

128. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Cllr CE Smith

Cllr D Sage

Cllr MEJ Nott

Cllr M Gregory

S Kingsbury

E Blandon

129. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

130. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee Equalities dated 28 April 2016, be approved as a true and accurate record.

131. COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH

The Chairperson introduced to the meeting Police Constable Rhys Gronow who, Hate Crime Officer, South Wales Police, who gave a power point Presentation on the subject of Community Relations in the Bridgend County Borough. This was supported by a report from the Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services, and the purpose of the report was to inform Members of current intelligence surrounding community relations within the County Borough.

PC Gronow then proceeded to give his Presentation, which covered the following themes:-

- A definition of community tensions and an explanation of what this means;
- The reasons why community tensions need to be monitored in our area;
- The types of incidents, events and occurrences that can impact community dynamics
- An overview of community cohesion in Oldham;
- A practical hypothetical example; and
- Examples of the current tensions in Bridgend County Borough

Following the Presentation, the Chairperson asked Members if they had any questions to pose on the same.

A Member felt that various types of social media communications could instigate unpleasantness or even nastiness directed from some person or organisation to another, and he asked the Police representative, what action the Police took in instances such as this.

PC Gronow encouraged people who were or had been the subject of this, to report it to the Police, especially if it was of the nature of topics such as racism, sexuality and ageism etc, or the like, as dependent upon the seriousness of this, it could be deemed as a criminal offence.

A Member asked what action the Police took, if any, with regard to a person being similarly maligned or labelled on facebook.

PC Gronow confirmed that this was a difficult area, in that libel or defamation of character were Civil offences that were normally pursued by one party against another, and this could be through the Courts. However, the Police ordinarily dealt with Criminal as opposed to Civil offences.

A Member asked if the presentation delivered to the Committee today, was also given in schools, and if the proposals that were proposed by the Police to improve community relations were hindered in any way due to cutbacks in the Police.

PC Gronow confirmed that Schools Liaison Officers gave presentations throughout schools in the County Borough on this topic, with each Presentation being slightly adapted for that particular location. He added that the Project was funded by Welsh Government as well as the Police, and therefore, there were sufficient resources at present by which to deliver the aims and objectives by which to improve tensions within communities.

The Deputy Leader added that it would be helpful if today's presentation could be supplemented by details regarding the Council's Show Racism the Red Card initiative through the School Liaison Officers.

PC Gronow reiterated that any problems of hate crime ie racism and prejudice should be reported to the Police, as they took crimes such as this very seriously. Also, it sometimes led to victimisation and bullying, so therefore it was important to nip offences such as this in the bud. It was also about helping the perpetrator as well as the victim, as they could be educated to stop further offending, but of course if offending continued, the perpetrator could be prosecuted.

The Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing, added that to date there had been 9 workshops for Show Racism the Red Card, and a total of 250 young people had attended these, with the last one being held tomorrow. An assessment of

data and outcomes would be undertaken, to establish if these workshops had made a difference in terms of the perception of young people who had attended them, ie to what extent they had learned good practices from the sessions. It was important to educate people at a young age he added, before they went from primary onto secondary education.

A Member added that the perception of a lot of people was inaccurate when compared with reality. A considerable number of constituents within the County Borough, felt that there were a considerable number of immigrants living within the County Borough, when in fact this was not the case, as there was only 0.2% of people resident in Bridgend that were immigrants.

As this concluded debate on this item, the Chairperson thanked PC Gronow for attending the meeting and giving his submission.

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

132. **ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY IN THE WORKFORCE**

The Equality Officer presented a report that provided the Cabinet Committee Equalities with data on the Council's workforce as at 31 March 2016, and an update on employment related developments.

He confirmed that Appendices 1 and 2 of the report, provided profiles of the Council's workforce as at 31 March 2016. This data provided the number of employees disclosing as LGBT, those with a disability, employees who were also carers, those from a BME background, and a breakdown of employees' Welsh speaking, reading and writing skills.

The Equality Officer added that it was not mandatory for employees to provide such data, though efforts were being made to improve the level and accuracy of the information being disclosed.

The Equality Officer then advised Members of certain ongoing developments in respect of, for example, the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020. A strategic objective within the Plan, was "Our role as an employer". Actions within this objective which would be supported by accurate workforce data was exemplified in paragraph 4.2.2 of the report, while paragraph 4.2.3 of the report gave examples of e:learning modules on areas that related to Equality and Diversity, Mental Health Awareness and Disability Equality amongst others.

A Member noted from page 10 of the report, that as at 31 March 2016 he was surprised to see from data that there had been data indicating that gay men had classed themselves as lesbian in the Authority, there were 106 people in the Authority over 66 years of age and therefore, of normal retirement age.

The Equality Officer confirmed to Members, that staff in Bridgend County Borough Council are now legally able to work beyond 65 years of age if they so wished and they were fit and well enough to do so. The remainder of the data was based on what employees had given in terms of accuracy.

In terms of employees with a disability forthcoming with information regarding this, a Member felt that this could be promoted and encouraged further through the Trade

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Unions who could possibly put something in Union newsletters encouraging more of the workforce to complete and submit Workforce employee data.

The Equality Officer confirmed that he would look into this request.

In terms of statistical information with regard to salary pay grades within the Authority, and the split of this when comparing male and female employees, a Member asked if there was any data available in respect of this.

The Equality Officer advised Members that he could obtain this data and forward it onto them outside of the meeting. He confirmed as Members may be aware, that 75% of the Council's workforce were female.

A Member asked if there was any information available on the number of employees who held a blue badge, and if these individuals were classed as disabled.

The Equality Officer confirmed that as far as data was concerned, it was not incumbent upon the Council to categorise any of its workforce as disabled or otherwise, as it was the individual's responsibility to notify the Authority if they held a disability. He added that blue badge holders did not necessarily have to have a physical impairment to obtain a blue badge. They may also qualify if they had a cognitive impairment.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities received and considered the Workforce report.

133. WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

The Equalities Officer presented a report that informed Committee of the content and approach taken with the Council's Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2015/16.

The report gave some background information, following which it advised that the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2015/16 (attached at Appendix 1) had been published?.

The report outlined:-

- The preparations for compliance with the March 2016 standards made by the council and the ways in which the council has complied with the standards;
- the number of complaints received by the council during the period in question;
- the number of employees who had Welsh language skills at the end of the year;
- the number of employees attending training courses offered in Welsh during the period and the percentage of staff attending who attended the Welsh version;
- the number of new and vacant posts advertised during the period categorised as posts where either –
 - Welsh language skills were essential;
 - Welsh language skills needed to be learnt following appointment to the post;

- Welsh language skills were desirable and
- Welsh language skills were not necessary.

The Equalities Officer added that the report also included data relating to reception services as well as the number of Full Equality Impact Assessments undertaken.

He further added that the standards that relate to publishing an annual report do not require that the report be approved by the Council or the Welsh Language Commissioner prior to publication, as was previously required.

A Member hoped that in the future, there would be evidence that reflected outcomes arising from the financial commitment that was being made by the Authority with regard to the Welsh Language Standards, for example an increase in the number of Welsh speakers in the Council. She was hopeful that a commitment would be made to schools, so that younger people could develop their welsh speaking skills going forward as the future generation of society in the area of the BCB, especially in welsh language schools, so as to maximise pupils development in terms of speaking welsh fluently. She was aware of the extent of financial commitment that had to be made to satisfy the requirements of the Standards.

The Chairperson advised that there would be more data included in next year's Annual Report on the Welsh Language Standards, as matters would have progressed further by then, as well as outcomes of appeals made against some of the standards that are required to be introduced.

The Equalities Officer confirmed that the Authority also had to produce a 5 Year Strategy, working with other key partners so as to fully develop this, which would, in turn, assist in increasing the use of Welsh language spoken in Bridgend. A challenge would be, however how the provisions of the Strategy was measured against the communities comprising Bridgend, in terms of the use of Welsh language being developed.

The Deputy Leader reminded those present, that the Urdd National Eisteddfod would be coming to Bridgend next year, and this allowed an opportunity to conjure up enthusiasm for constituents to develop their skills in the use of welsh language, especially young people as the event itself was designed for individuals of a younger rather than an older age.

A Member asked the Officer for clarification as to what was meant in the last paragraph of paragraph 4.1 of the report.

The Equalities Officer explained, that prior to the Welsh Language Standards and the Measure being introduced, it was incumbent upon all welsh local authorities to introduce a Welsh Language Scheme, and this had to be formally approved by Cabinet and Council, before being sent to the Welsh Commissioner. This process however, did not apply under the new Welsh Language Standards.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities received and considered the report, and the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2015/16.

134. **DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016-2020 ACTION PLAN**

The Equalities Officer presented a report, the purpose of which, was to update Members on the development of the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 (SEP) Action Plan.

He gave some background information in respect of the report, following which he confirmed that between 12 May and 22 June 2016, the Council consulted with the public on the actions that will sit under each strategic objective of the Action Plan.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report, confirmed who had been involved in the consultation process, which involved meetings and engagement with such local equality and diversity groups.

The report also subsequently confirmed in summary, that the 47 actions under the seven objectives were widely supported, and that of these objectives, transport (26%), mental health (21%), our role as an employer (19%) and children (17%) were the most popular objectives when considering any gaps in the proposed actions. These areas were expanded upon in more detail in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

Paragraph 4.4 of the report then showed qualitative data (in table format), the feedback received on all actions which was agreeable, with only five actions disputed by more than 7.5% of respondents. In response to these disputed actions, the SEP Action Plan was amended as per bullet points i) to v) in this same paragraph of the report.

The Equality Officer concluded his submission, by referring to the attachments to the report, namely the Full Consultation report (Appendix 1), the final SEP Action Plan, amended in line with the consultation proposals (Appendix 2), and the Full Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 3).

A Member made the point that Laleston Community Council had been attempting to fund the provision of bus stops/shelters in certain locations contained within its area. However, if just one objection was received from a member of the public to such a proposal, then they would not be provided, even if these were funded by the Town/Community Council, as opposed to the local authority. This was an equality issue she argued, in that it meant that young/elderly people and possibly disabled people were getting wet in inclement weather whilst waiting for public transport. She had asked the Cabinet Member Communities to investigate this matter.

A Member asked if objections received to the above proposal, could be challenged through a Court of Law.

The Equality Officer confirmed to Members that he would also look into this issue outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities Committee received and considered the report and accompanying Appendices.

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

The Equality Officer presented a report, that updated the Cabinet Equalities Committee on the implementation of the Welsh language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards.

He confirmed that following receipt of its final compliance notice on 30 September 2015, the Council has been working to determine the implications involved in implementing all 171 standards by 30 September 2016.

The Equality Officer explained that the Council has continued to prepare for compliance with the standards, and the key updates/progress made since 28 April 2016 regarding these (the date when the Committee were last updated on this item), were summarised in paragraph 4.1 of the report. He then gave a resume of each of these for the benefit of Members.

The report attached the following supporting information:-

- The Action Plan themes;
- The Standards under appeal (March 2016); and
- The Standards being funded corporately

A Member raised some concerns with regards to the report's financial implications, and the pressure that will be placed upon the Authority to fund all of the Standards, which would place a huge amount of pressure on its already dwindling resources. She asked if the shortfall would be met by Welsh Government to which the Equality Officer confirmed that they would not be funding any such shortfall.

The Chairperson added that some of the Standards were being appealed against, however, if the appeals failed, the Authority would still have to comply with the Standards as, if it failed to do this, it could be fined by Welsh Government.

The Equality Officer confirmed that monies had been set aside under the MTFs to fund some of the Standards.

The Chairperson further added that some services the Council had to provide bi-lingually may be reduced or possibly stopped altogether in future, dependent upon the outcome of the appeals and the resulting cost to the Authority.

The Chairperson then introduced Amanda Evans from Menter Bro Ogwr to give a submission entitled Welsh Language Profile 2016.

She confirmed that Bridgend had 13,103 Welsh speakers, which amounted to 9.7% of its population. According to the Menterau Iath's language profile, 31% of these individuals spoke Welsh every day.

She confirmed that the vision of Menter Bro Ogwr, was to increase confidence and linguistic skills of Welsh speakers; promote and facilitate social activities through the medium of Welsh, encourage non-Welsh speakers and incomers to learn the Welsh language, and promote the use of Welsh in business.

Menter Bro Ogwr also wished to increase the use of Welsh in voluntary organisations, influence public bodies' policies, raise the profile of the language,

and finally prepare opportunities for children and young people to meet and socialise through the welsh language.

Ms. Evans added that by focusing on these areas, the Menter encompasses the Welsh Government's main priorities in terms of the language, and the areas of responsibility falling to BCBC under its promotion duties, for example, families, children and young people, the community and the workplace.

She confirmed that Menter Bro Ogwr had issued a questionnaire in the South Wales area, to which 733 people responded. Of these responses, 15% (109) were from the Bridgend area.. She advised that it needed to be borne in mind, that those who responded were not necessarily representative of all welsh speakers in the area.

Ms. Evans further added that only 2 of the 109 responses noted that welsh was not part of their everyday life, with the majority, (67 or 61%) noting 'most of the time'. 49% responded that they used the welsh language in their homes, 50% that they used welsh language at school, college or university.

She explained that awareness of the welsh language needed to be raised, as there were daily barriers that sometimes prohibited this. She felt also, that not enough people admitted that they spoke welsh, nor were there enough signs indicating that they did.

In conclusion therefore, Ms. Evans confirmed that the profile had brought together:-

- Key statistics of Welsh speakers in the area;
- The main statutory requirements relevant to the Menter's key partners;
- A number of research findings on Welsh language patterns of use by Welsh speakers in the area; and
- The results of the survey held as part of this work that highlights the experiences of Welsh speakers and learners in the area

The key messages that emerged from the experiences of welsh speakers, together with the formal data, also highlighted a number of areas that need to be addressed. For example:-

1. the need for more opportunities for young people to use Welsh outside school and after leaving school (from leisure to the workplace);
2. the need for more experiences to increase the confidence and use of the language amongst learners, and those Welsh speakers with little or no confidence to use their Welsh in new situations;
3. the need for employers to recognise the value of the language for their workplaces, ensuring support for Welsh speakers;
4. the need to ensure that the language is more prominent in the community, in order to promote wider use, both through the spoken word and visually

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Evans for her presentation, following which, the Committee

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RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Equalities Committee received and considered the report, and accompanying Presentation from the representative of Menter Bro Ogwr.

136. **URGENT ITEMS**

None

The meeting closed at 4.35 pm