

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES - THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2017

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES HELD IN
COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3 - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON
THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2017 AT 10.00 AM**

Present

Councillor D Patel – Chairperson

SE Baldwin
J Gebbie
CE Smith
RE Young

TH Beedle
DG Howells
E Venables

HJ David
JE Lewis
SR Vidal

SK Dendy
KL Rowlands
HM Williams

Apologies for Absence

JC Radcliffe and PJ White

Officers:

Gary Jones Head of Democratic Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors CE Smith, P White and J Radcliffe.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee Equalities of 09 March 2017 be approved as a true and accurate record.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY: VALUING DIFFERENCE

The Chairperson welcomed everyone in attendance to the meeting and in particular S Green from the Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People and A Davies from the Royal National Institute from the Blind.

The meeting then received an equalities briefing from the Senior Lawyer who clarified the requirements of the equalities legislation and how this was applied by the Authority.

5. ISSUES FACING DISABLED PEOPLE IN BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH

The Equalities Officer presented a report which informed the Committee of the issues faced by disabled people in Bridgend county borough's communities and to outline the influence that the council has on improving access to services and information.

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It was explained that the Strategic Equality Plan 2016 - 2020 and its supporting Action Plan were produced following an extensive consultation and engagement exercise in 2016 involving many local disability groups including Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People, Bridgend Visually Impaired Society, Bridgend Deaf Club, People First Bridgend and Stroke Association.

Some of the key issues that were raised by these groups included: the challenges with direct payments; wheelchair accessible taxis and public transport in Bridgend county borough.

The Committee heard from S Green who explained how difficult it was to find wheelchair accessible taxis. He added that although some taxi companies did have disabled facilities they were very limited particularly when trying to arrange travel at short notice. He added that Community Transport was expensive and not available quickly.

The Licensing Team Manager responded that there were two large taxi operators and a number of independent firms in the county borough. The local authority maintained a list of taxis and other vehicles providing disabled access facilities and had the power to enforce legislation should discrimination occur. She added that the policies and plans were being reviewed to identify the barriers for companies having a greater capacity to facilitate disabled travellers.

S Green outlined his views on the provision of disabled facilities of the taxi companies and requested that spot checks be undertaken to identify those companies who claimed that they had adapted vehicles and minibuses to transport disabled passengers but which were actually used to undertake more cost effective journeys for events and airport runs rather than to transport someone who was disabled.

The Licensing Team Manager explained that taxi licensing was a devolved function of the Welsh Government who were undertaking consultation on this topic. The Local Authority maintained its equalities duty and were able to consider a quota of accessible vehicles. A Davies added that there were also difficulties using taxis when you had a guide dog and that she had been refused the use of a taxi because of her guide dog. The Licensing Team Manager indicated that the policy would be consider in August or September following a consultation period.

The invitees then explained the difficulties the new recycling scheme had imposed on those with disabilities including lack of consistent information about the revised recycling processes, the difficulties with assisted collections and the use of the purple bags. A detailed discussion took place which highlighted the difficulties that residents with disabilities faced and how this was being addressed.

Queries were raised regarding the application process for the Blue Badge Scheme which had recently been updated by the Welsh Government. It was considered that the scheme just allocated points on a computer and did not take the needs of individuals into account. The Leader explained the new criteria were applied when the Blue Badge was being renewed and that an appeals process was available for those who had not met the revised criteria.

The invitees then raised their concern about the lack of accessible toilets in the town centres. They suggested that many of the toilets doubled up as baby changing facilities which was far from ideal and the toilets suitable for anyone with disabilities were not advertised or signposted effectively. They acknowledged that adapting toilets were

difficult but that more should be done to provide accessible toilets when new buildings were being developed.

The use of dropped kerbs and tactile paving was discussed. The benefits of dropped kerbs was explained and the difficulties if the tactile paving did not reflect the type of paving where it was situated. The meeting was advised that some tactile paving was fitted incorrectly and this meant that one road crossing actually used the tactile paving for a train platform or steep drop.

RESOLVED: That the committee received and noted the report.

6. **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2016-2020 ACTION PLAN**

Cabinet Equalities Committee were provided with an update on progress made in delivering the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2016 - 2020 during 2016/17. The Equalities Officer advised that the SEP was approved by Cabinet on 15 March 2016 and the draft action plan was then developed to include all seven of the strategic equality objectives.

He added that between 12 May 2016 and 22 June 2016 the council consulted with the public on the actions that sit under each strategic objective. The consultation included engagement with local equality and diversity groups. The 47 agreed actions were included in the updated SEP in May with the key points from each objective being highlighted in the report.

Members queried why domestic violence was included within the equalities agenda. It was explained that violence against women was considered as gender related. Bridgend was also a White Ribbon Authority and had established the Assia Suite to be a one-stop-shop to support the victims of domestic violence.

The members also requested further clarification on the anti-bullying schemes in schools. They were advised that a range of reasons led to the bullying which occurred in schools but the highest level was bullying related to race. The Show Racism the Red Card scheme had been introduced to help reduce the incidents of racial bullying. The Education and Family Support directorate was trying to identify the reasons which led to bullying in schools and how bullying could be reduced.

The Committee was also made aware of the Dementia Swimming Project and the benefits that swimming provided to dementia sufferers and the respite this provided to their carers.

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

7. **ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY IN THE WORKFORCE (2016/17)**

The Cabinet Equalities Committee was provided with data on the council's workforce as at 31 March 2017 and an update on employment related developments. The Equalities Officer explained that the report provided a profile of the council's workforce and included the number of employees disclosing as LGBT, those with a disability, employees who are also carers, those from a BME background and a breakdown of employees' Welsh speaking, reading and writing skills.

He also advised on the training programmes that were being developed and undertaken particularly those to assist with the Welsh Language Standards.

Members of the committee clarified some of the data and its implications

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

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

The Corporate Director Operational and Partnership services presented a report to update the Cabinet Equalities Committee on the implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards, deigned to increase the number of welsh speakers.

He advised that the Authority was currently compliant with some of the Welsh Language Standards and working towards compliance with others. It was acknowledged that the Welsh Language Standards required for the Authority were not considered proportionate in every instance and would result in significant expenditure to achieve. For these reasons, the Authority had appealed a number of Standards.

Meetings had been held with the Welsh Language Commissioner which had been positive and which supported compliance. The requirements of the act would be met in due course but not immediately. Concerns regarding the use of Welsh for social media were discussed.

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

9. WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The Corporate Director Operational and Partnership services presented a report to inform Cabinet Equalities Committee of the content and approach taken with the council's second Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2016/17.

He explained that the Welsh Language Standards give Welsh speakers improved, enforceable rights in relation to the Welsh language. The council received its final compliance notice on 30 September 2015, which outlined 171 standards requiring compliance. The standards require the council to produce and publish an annual report, in English and Welsh, by 30 June each year. The annual report 2016/17 covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2016/17 as attached as appendix 1 to the report outlined the council's preparations for compliance, the number of complaints received during the period; the number of employees who disclosed Welsh language skills and the number of employees attending training courses offered in Welsh. The report also included data relating to reception services; the number of full Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) and promotional activities that had been undertaken.

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

10. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 12.05 pm

