

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES - THURSDAY, 4 JULY 2019

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 4 JULY 2019 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor D Patel – Chairperson

TH Beedle
JE Lewis

HJ David
JC Radcliffe

SK Dendy
HM Williams

DG Howells
RE Young

Apologies for Absence

PJ White, SE Baldwin, J Gebbie, KL Rowlands, E Venables and SR Vidal

Officers:

Nicola Bunston
Mark Shephard
Ian Vaughan
Mark Galvin

Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager
Chief Executive
Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager
Senior Democratic Services Officer – Committees

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor RE Young declared a personal interest in Agenda item 6. as Chairperson of Mental Health Matters Wales.

Councillor D Patel declared a personal interest in Agenda item 6. as a Trustee of Mental Health Matters Wales.

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

The Chief Executive submitted a report, which updated Members on the implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards.

By way of background, the Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager, advised that since the council received its compliance notice in 2015, progress towards implementing the 171 assigned standards had continued.

Updates on compliance she reminded the Cabinet Committee, had been provided previously on a regular basis to Members.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report, outlined the key progress/updates with compliance since March 2019 in summary format, whilst paragraph 4.2 gave details of the aims and objectives of the Welsh Language Action Plan shown at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager gave a resume of both these for the benefit of Members.

A Member referred to section 2. of paragraph 4.1 and the establishment of the Welsh Language Strategy Board, that meets on a quarterly basis to develop practice and monitor compliance. He asked if there were any welsh speakers on this body.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager advised that as far as she was aware there were none, but that she would check this and come back to the Member

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accordingly. He added that the Equalities Champion for the Authority (Chairperson of the Cabinet Equalities Committee) should also be a member of the Board.

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

54. WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The Chief Executive presented a report to Members, so as to inform the Cabinet Committee of the content and approach taken with the council's fourth Welsh Language Standards Annual Report for 2018/19

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager advised 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.

She added that, Standards 158, 164 and 170 require the Council to produce and publish an Annual report, in Welsh, by 30 June each year.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager, confirmed that the council's Welsh Language Standards annual report 2018/19 covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 and was published, as required by the 30 June 2019. The report was attached as appendix 1 to the main report.

The report outlined how the council has complied with the standards under a duty to comply during the period and also documents any progress and new developments with our compliance.

She proceeded, by stating that as part of the annual report, there is a duty on the council to report specifically on the information shown in bullet point format, in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager explained further, 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 under the Welsh Language Scheme.

A Member asked why employee training courses (ie e-learning models) were completed in English as opposed to Welsh.

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager advised that employees were able to complete e-learning modules in Welsh should they desire to do so, but in 2018/19, all completions were in English.

A Member referred to 2.2 of the Appendix, bullet point 7 and asked who decided if it was appropriate to conduct meetings in Welsh, and if these meetings were formal Committee meetings or did this also extend to other bodies and Working Groups.

The Chief Executive advised that the council required prior notice from a member of the public, if they required the proceedings and debate of a formal Committee to be conducted in Welsh. The same applied also, for webcasting of meetings. In-house meetings however, where the minutes or notes of these bodies were not made available to the public via the Council's web site, were conducted in English as the Welsh Language Standards did not apply to the more internal meetings/working groups etc.

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The Council also had to similarly give notice, if a formal Committee meeting was intended to be conducted in Welsh.

The Chairperson referred to page 24 of the Appendix to the report, where it stated that 10 new/vacant posts were advertised during 2018/19, where it was specified in the job advert that Welsh language skills were essential for these posts. She asked what posts these were.

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager advised that 8 of these posts were school based, including in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Inclusion Service. The other two were Human Resources Apprentices, he added.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet Committee Equalities received and noted the content of both the covering report and the Welsh Language Standards annual report 2018/19.

55. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ACTION PLAN REPORT (UPDATE ON WORK UNDERTAKEN BY DIRECTORATES IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS)

The Chief Executive submitted a report, that provided Members with an update on progress made in delivering the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2016 -2020 during 2018/19. This was the third such annual review for the plan.

The background to the report, confirmed that following public consultation, the Council's SEP (2016-2020) was approved by Cabinet on 15 March 2016.

The SEP has since developed with the support of an Action Plan, in order to assist in the achievement of 7 objectives in the SEP over the 4 year period.

The final Action Plan was now a live document, and contained 47 actions, with this being approved by the Cabinet Equalities Committee in July 2016. The Action Plan was attached to the report.

Progress for 2018/19 was documented in Appendix 1. Key points to note, were those outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report which related to the following:

- Transportation;
- Fostering good relations and awareness training;
- Our role as an employer
- Mental health
- Children
- Leisure, arts and culture; and
- Data

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager gave a resume of each of the above sections of the report, for the benefit of Members.

A Member noted from the Strategic Equality Action Plan that 69 Hate Crime Awareness sessions had been held throughout the County Borough and she asked in what places these had taken place.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager confirmed that she was not aware off hand where these had all taken place, but could find more information out regarding this and pass it on to the Member outside of the meeting.

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The Member felt that these awareness sessions should be held in the valleys areas as well as in other areas of the County Borough and 4 towns.

A Member referred to the SEP and noted that adults with Autism were included as part of a wider disability group. She felt that this group should have a Policy/be in a Strategy of their own.

She also noted from the SEP that the council had recruited Welsh speaking apprentices. She felt that both Looked After Children (LAC) and former LAC should be considered for apprenticeships.

Finally, she felt it would be useful for Customer Services staff to have training in how to deal with customers with special needs.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager advised that the first point the Member made could be considered as an action within the SEP going forward.

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager confirmed that an Apprenticeship Working group existed to support LAC children with apprenticeship and work experience opportunities.

With regard to the third point, he confirmed that every Directorate had their own budget allocation for certain staff training initiatives, particularly public facing staff such as Customer Services.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Equalities Committee both received, considered and noted the report and attached Appendix.

56. STAFF WELLBEING

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to provide an update on the actions taken and those planned, in relation to staff wellbeing, following the findings of the staff survey conducted in September 2018.

The report outlined certain background information, where it was confirmed, that in 2018/19, 11.79 days were lost due to sickness absence per full time equivalent employee, with stress/anxiety/depression/mental health related absences accounting for 30.8% of all days lost.

Reference to the staff survey so conducted, advised of a range of factors relating to job satisfaction and staff wellbeing that were measured as part of the survey. The type of responses received were shown in bullet point format in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

The council supports its employees through the application of various HR protocols, Occupational Health and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), as well as various staff benefits. A summary of these amongst other information, was shown at Appendix 1 to the report.

There was scope for employees to request a change in working hours, as well as purchasing extra annual leave, up to a maximum of a further 10 days. Counselling services were also available through EAP.

The Authority was also developing an Employee Wellbeing Strategy, the intention of which would be to focus on how it intends to develop a strong wellbeing culture to support a motivated, flexible and committed workforce. Whilst this is ongoing, there has already been an increased focus on employee wellbeing initiatives.

The following paragraphs of the report outlined in more detail some of the health initiatives the council were providing moving forward, including the convening of monthly health check clinics.

Furthermore, we were exploring with local charities, ways to improve the awareness and understanding of a range of health conditions that could have a positive impact on employee wellbeing within the workforce. This had also included discussions with charities based in Bridgend and working across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, including bespoke training and support for mental health and wider employee wellbeing. Any additional services offered as a result of these discussions, would be subject to a separate business case the report identified.

A Member referred to paragraph 3.7 of the report, and he asked by what methods was it intended, to increase awareness of staff in relation to benefits within the Authority that were available to them, particularly health benefits.

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager advised that the last few months, the Authority had been actively engaging with iCOM, requesting further details of benefits available to staff (that they may only have a limited knowledge of), and to pass on further information regarding these through Bridgend's.

A Member referred to paragraph 3.4 of the report, where reference was made to there being a problem with stress related sickness absence, which accounted for not far off a third of all sickness absence of staff. He felt that this percentage would not likely reduce any time soon, with staffing reductions still ongoing. He asked therefore, if HR had considered conducting a staff survey specifically relating to stress in/outside the workforce. He felt it would be helpful for the Authority to capture data on this from staff who completed such a survey.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Staff Survey carried out in 2018, was the first survey of this kind that had been undertaken for a few years. He advised that the survey (which did not include Schools staff) targeted 3,000 employees, and he was pleased with the response from 1,291 members of staff, which equated to 43% of the workforce. A considerable number of the elements of feedback from staff who completed the survey, would be taken on board he added. Notwithstanding the fact that the Human Resources (HR) Department was currently going through a restructure, it was intended to repeat such a survey more frequently, and the HR Department going forward, would be concentrating more on staff wellbeing, particularly as the council was now becoming a shrinking workforce. He added that he would also consider the suggestion put forward by the Member.

A Member enquired why schools were excluded from the staff survey.

The Chief Executive advised that he would find out the answer to this point and advise the Member of this outside of the meeting, but he suspected it was due to the fact that schools provided their own in-house staff surveys/staff engagement.

A Member referred to the eligibility of those employees who were able to work reduced hours/purchase extra annual leave. She asked if this was open to all council staff.

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager replied by stating that an employee firstly had to have worked within the Authority for 12 months prior to being considered for the above options. All flexible working requests needed to be considered in the context of service requirements. He was able to obtain data regarding requests for both the above and the outcomes of such requests, outside of the meeting.

A Member referred to those staff that regularly dealt with the public, including on-line, and asked if there was a Policy in place within the council that supported and protected them if they were confronted by abusive customers.

The Chief Executive advised that the council had such a policy in place, as well as adopting a zero tolerance approach to staff having to put up with abusive customers.

The Deputy Leader closed debate on this item, by confirming that bespoke training was also available for staff in their support of dealing with rude or abusive members of the public.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities noted the information contained in the report.

57. **ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY IN THE WORKFORCE (2018/19)**

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager presented a report, in order to supply the Cabinet Committee Equalities with a summary of the equality profile of the council's workforce as at 31 March 2019 and an update also, on gender pay gap reporting.

He referred to Appendix 1 to the report, which provided the above mentioned equality profile for the period stated.

He advised that it was not mandatory for employees to disclose their sensitive personal information for equality monitoring purposes. However, employees were encouraged to provide and/or update their personal information via the 'employee self-service' system.

The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference in average pay of men and women, irrespective of their role across the council. The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager added, that it differed from equal pay, which compared how men and women are paid for carrying out the same or comparable roles.

He explained that as schools were individual organisations, they were not included in the council's gender pay data in the Table 1 shown in paragraph 4.2.3 of the report, that provided a summary of the pay gap for 2017 and 2018.

He proceeded by confirming that, whilst recognising that a variety of factors contributed to the gender pay gap, the council was committed to promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of employment, described in bullet point format in paragraph 4.2.4 of the report.

The Chairperson referred to the report's Appendix, and enquired if the Equalities Questionnaire survey for staff was flagged-up by managers to the staff in their section.

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager, confirmed that the equalities questionnaire was included as a question on all employee appraisal forms and appraisal completion is monitored. Managers were also encouraged during 1 : 1's with their staff, to ask employees to update their personal information on-line.

She then asked how data was calculated with regard to the gender pay gap.

The Workforce Planning and Administrative Manager advised firstly that school staff were not included when calculating such data, and that gender pay calculations applied to corporate staff. The factors to figure-in regarding data produced through gender pay,

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were that Bridgend CBC has a higher number of females than any other local authority in Wales. He added that the council had a number of service areas where there was a large female workforce and conversely, service areas with a largely male workforce, such as refuse collectors (who were outsourced). He further added that 92% of part time jobs in BCBC were occupied by female staff, therefore this impacted on the overall data capture.

The Chief Executive advised that if school staff were included as part of the data calculations, then this would reflect a higher percentage of females in higher paid jobs. He added that three of the five current Corporate Management Board were also female, with six out of ten Chief Officers also being female.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities noted the information contained in the report and supporting information.

58. URGENT ITEMS

None.