

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2025

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER
- CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor M J Evans – Chairperson

A R Berrow
JC Spanswick

P Davies
HM Williams

N Farr

J Gebbie

Present Virtually

W R Goode
A Wathan

D M Hughes
AJ Williams

M Jones

M Lewis

Officers:

Paul Miles
Neil Arbery
Gayle Shenton
Angela Granville
Michael Pitman
Oscar Roberts

Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development
Lead Officer (Primary School Support)
Head of Learning
HR Business Development Manager
Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Temporary Democratic Services Officer – Committees

69. Apologies for Absence

Decision Made	Apologies for absence were received from Cllr H Williams, Cllr E Caparros
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

70. Declarations of Interest

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2025

Decision Made	Councillor J Spanswick declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 3, as a relative works within the Assia Domestic Abuse service. Councillor Spanswick left the meeting while this factor was being considered. Councillor R Goode declared a personal interest in Agenda item 5, as someone currently working with Cultures Wales.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

71. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That the minutes of the 4 June 2025 be approved as a true and accurate record. Members asked the following questions in relation to the report:- • A member asked whether a planned further engagement with staff on the subject of welfare reform in relation to Personal Independence Payments and any impact this may have on BCBC's disabled work force had been undertaken. • The Deputy Leader noted that delays to pay awards for staff make large impacts on personal finances especially in regard to Universal Credit and staff had been in touch to outline the effects of these issues as well as the effect of changes to Personal Independence Payments on them. Thus, the effects of these changes and challenges should be fully understood. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to inform the Deputy Leader and Cabinet on the details of staff impacted by delayed payments as well as potential plans for addressing any issues in the next month. • A member asked about the progress on assessing the business case for addressing the Assia Domestic Abuse service's funding challenges, sharing a response from a BCBC officer in relation to alternatives raised at a previous meeting of the Committee.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

72. Learning & Development

Decision Made	The purpose of this report, presented by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development, was to provide information of the Council's grow your own schemes and staff training during 2024/2025, to include full-time and part-time apprenticeships, the organisation's Graduate Scheme as well as mandatory and optional staff training workshops and courses. HR briefings have also been given to staff and management as additional support to staff. Members asked the following questions in relation to the report:- • A member asked about the low completion rate of 63.58% on the Introduction to Equality and Diversity mandatory training, and what the Council are doing to encourage staff to undertake the course. • A member asked about the reminders given to employees to complete training modules that are on a renewal cycle to be completed either once annually or every three years. • The Deputy Leader requested that all members should receive a reminder when their training is due for renewal, in addition to notices already sent out by the Democratic Services team. • The Deputy Leader asked about whether the Apprenticeship Levy is considered as value for money and whether it is best-utilised for the needs of BCBC's workforce. • The Deputy Leader asked about additional arrangements that can be made for staff who are not digitally enabled and that correspond with the seven learning styles to ensure that staff are not disenfranchised, whether an Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted on this subject and how staff can be further supported through the training. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide an update on activity within the Learning and Development team around those topics within a month outside the meeting. • The Leader asked about apprenticeships, noting that only 10-12 apprentices are with the Council in an average year, and asking how to ensure that the right apprenticeships in the right places can be put in place going forward. He also asked whether there is a centralised policy on apprenticeship numbers and allowances to ensure that best practice is followed. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide an update on the categories of apprenticeship that the Council offers. • The Leader asked about any gaps within the offering of apprenticeships within the Council and whether any central guidance is given to teams wanting or needing additional support. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to go into further detail in future to promote the offering of apprenticeships across all services, to include a breakdown of apprenticeships offered by level and sector.
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CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2025

	• A member asked for a report on apprenticeships broken down by level of apprenticeships offered and the time taken to complete each. The member also asked about Council arrangements to raise awareness of apprenticeships and other training courses to schools and colleges across Bridgend. • A member asked about current arrangements and training offered in the use of AI and how it can be used to help employees best utilise the tools available. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide information on the current training regarding AI as well as potential changes in the future to best utilise it within the next month. • A member asked whether every school in Bridgend County is included in initiatives to promote the Council and alternative employment and development options prior to the choice of GCSE and A-Level subjects. • A member asked about the in-house graduate scheme, noting that only 1 out of the 8 recruited so far is still with the Council and asking about specifically where those 7 graduates have gone, whether jobs were available for them to move onto and what their reasons were for leaving their posts. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide details on this information within the next month, pointing out that the Council's selective recruitment freeze and other financial challenges facing the local government sector have impacted the opportunities available within the Council for those coming to the end of apprenticeships or other training schemes. • A member asked about the strategic ongoing needs for the Local Authority within the next 3, 5 and 10 years, asking about relationships with other colleges and schools as well as ongoing needs within the organisation to meet potential future needs. They asked that a Corporate Strategic Needs Assessment be completed to indicate these future needs and tailor guidance and education to help meet these challenges. • A member asked about arrangements to manage AI use within coursework and support given to teachers to identify AI use within work submitted to school projects. The Head of Learning agreed to provide an update on current arrangements to prevent overuse of AI within school projects. These questions were addressed by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development, the Lead Officer (Primary School Support), the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Development and Housing and the Head of Learning. <u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cabinet noted the information contained in this report and within the Appendix.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

73. Health & Wellbeing

Decision Made	The purpose of this report, presented by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development, was to provide an overview of health and wellbeing within Bridgend County Borough Council, with a focus on actions and support provided between April 2024 and March 2025. The Council continues to prioritise mental, physical and emotional wellbeing through a range of support and resources. The resources outlined by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development as part of the report included the Employee Assistance Programme provided by Vivup which provides a range of assistance, assessments, support and counselling free of charge to all Council employees; Occupational Health provided by Insight which provides advice and guidance on the subject of health advice in the workplace; Health Hub News which is a quarterly newsletter distributed to staff containing health tips and testimonials in order to build awareness and the Health And Wellbeing Group, which is an action group formed of employees who promote and roll out new initiatives as well as taking feedback. Members asked the following questions in relation to the report:- • A member asked about the referral process for the Occupational Health Service and whether it requires manager approval or support. The member further asked about occupational health needs that may involve a manager or senior member of staff, or otherwise may be deeply personal to an employee. • A member asked about the rate of referrals to services per month, enquired about any possible increases in figures and whether any trends had been identified to explain potential rises. • The Leader asked about the cost and value for money provided by the Council's external contracts with Vivup and Insight as well as the length and review process of these contracts. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide information related to contracts with both organisations in regard to these factors of timescale and cost within the next month. The Leader further asked about potential internal options for providing a mental and physical health support service. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to consider the possibility of moving services to internal delivery upon the next contract review cycle. • A member asked about reminders given to staff about the Council's suite of support services and options when staff are facing difficulties or are considering taking stress-enforced leave. The member further asked about potential employee canvassing or surveying in order to assess broad-spectrum needs and any areas of improvement to be made with current services.
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CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2025

	• The Deputy Leader presented a case study to emphasise that staff should be accessing the services provided while in work as opposed to while on stress-enforced leave, adding that especially in high-workload environments with potential trauma endured by staff that a comprehensive package of support should be pursued by the Council over a service focusing on value for money due to the duty of care that the Council has towards its staff. • A member asked about what referrals to the Council's support services mean in practical terms. • A member asked about Health Surveillance Checks performed on specific Council officers within certain roles, and what additional checks are performed above those needed for licensure. • A member asked about the low numbers of staff accessing the Employee Assistance Programme considering research on the proportion of people who experience mental health difficulties. The member further asked about the number of people currently experiencing stress-enforced leave, and whether they had considered using the Council's support services and reasons why they may have not done so. • A member asked about the review process for the Council's support services given the challenges and confidentiality in doing so. • The Leader asked about requirements for different roles in recruiting new staff to the Council. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to check with HR staff to ensure that job requirements are consistent and reasonable to the job role when recruiting for posts. These questions were addressed by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development <u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cabinet noted the information contained in this report. Cabinet further thanked the HR Business Development Manager and her team for their work in organizing events across the Council.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

74. Workforce Data - Quarter 1

Decision Made	The purpose of this report, presented by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development, was to provide information of the Council's workforce, to assist workforce planning. The Council's headcount at the end of the reporting period was 5,921, and featured various breakdowns of the Council's workforce
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CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2025

	demographics and working patterns. Members asked the following questions in relation to the report:- • The Leader asked about the breakdown of appraisal figures across the Council, noting a low completion rate across multiple Directorates. The Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development agreed to provide a breakdown of figures in more detail in Q2 of year 2025/26. • A member asked to confirm that all staff receive an appraisal, receive individual checks with managers about their performance, actional goals set for staff and potential opportunities to provide feedback from staff to managers. • The Chair noted an increase in long-term sickness across the Council and asked about potential reasons behind this, as well as any procedures in place to manage this. • The Chair asked about the low completion of Display Screen Equipment assessments completed across the Council and linked it to a large proportion of absence attributed to musculoskeletal disorders in the back and neck, and whether any correlation between low completion rates and high rates of absence had been identified. • The Leader asked about policies in place to support employees taking absence due to close family bereavement, and the period of leave allowed for employees under those circumstances. These questions were addressed by the Group Manager – HR and Organisational Development. <u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cabinet noted the information contained in this report.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

75. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	3 September 2025

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2025

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#)

The meeting closed at 11:37.