

COUNCIL – 26 JULY 2017

AGENDA ITEM 11

Question from Councillor C Webster to the Cabinet Member Wellbeing & Future Generations

“What communication have Cabinet Members had with BCBC officers, Halo and Awen with regard to the provision of disabled access to the facilities and services they provide”?

Response from the Cabinet Member Wellbeing & Future Generations to Councillor C Webster

Whilst I welcome the time taken to submit this question, I must admit I consider it to be a broad question, and thus am not entirely clear what the specific concern is nor what information is being sought. I would like to take this opportunity to remind members that I am more than willing to meet with you regarding queries or concerns you have, at any time, so please don't feel the need to have to wait until a monthly meeting to resolve any concerns.

I have set out an initial response to the question, which is based on my interpretation of the question.

“What communications have Cabinet Members had” the phrasing of this appears to be a freedom of information request and if this is the case, members should note that there is an alternative route for this question.

Turning to the “provision of disabled access to the facilities and services” provided by (i) BCBC, (ii) Halo Leisure and (iii) Awen Cultural Trust, I have interpreted this to relate to individuals described as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 and set out below some information regarding the services that the three providers offer and have specifically tried to focus on the communication methods Cabinet Members are involved in.

(i) BCBC

The main interaction between Cabinet Members and BCBC Offices regarding access to facilities and services has been via the Equalities Cabinet Committee meeting and the development of the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 and its supporting Action Plan. These plans were produced following an extensive consultation and engagement exercise in 2016 involving many disability groups, including Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People, Bridgend Visually Impaired Society, Bridgend Deaf Club, People First Bridgend and Stroke Association. The Strategic Equality Plan contains a specific objective to support people with a protected characteristic, including people with disabilities, to access leisure and cultural services, including those operated on our behalf by Halo Leisure and the Awen Cultural Trust. To support this, Cabinet Members and BCBC Officers have worked with both organisations to develop a plan that will progressively improve opportunities and activities for people with disabilities. Updated plans were presented at the Equalities

Cabinet Committee meeting earlier this month, and are available for on the BCBC website.

In addition to this, BCBC offers the Community Chest grants programme, which focusses on tackling inequalities and supports projects that benefit disabled people. A network of “In-Sport” inclusive sports clubs has been developed linked to the Disability Sport Development programme. Disability Inclusion Training (DIT) has been delivered to clubs and leisure providers to better integrate people with disabilities. The “Calls 4 Action” programme has enabled groups of people with varied disabilities to establish clubs and associations. Children and young people with disabilities do have regular access to After School Play Club and school holiday “Discovery Day” programmes, supported by Disabled Children’s Team.

(ii) Halo Leisure

The Healthy Living Partnership Advisory Board which regularly evaluates progress and performance contains Cabinet Members, as well as, the relevant Chair of Scrutiny and representatives from Public Health Wales and Sport Wales. The Advisory Board is in place to review the reporting of Halo Leisure including levels of participation and focus on targeted population groups. There is also an annual service development planning process that is jointly developed between BCBC and Halo Leisure.

Halo Leisure is using both traditional and digital forms of marketing approaches to improve communication with disabled people. In particular, they are continuing to develop their use of social media and web based information whilst recognising those who are digitally excluded. Key opportunities have been promoted via the Dewis national database. The “Piece of the Action” website also features a suite of inclusive case studies that profile locally available opportunities.

Halo Leisure is currently supporting a range of initiatives for people with disabilities. It is working on the “Ageing Well Plan for Bridgend” and have develop services and activities, to help to make Bridgend an age-friendly county. For example, a dementia friendly swimming project is being developed and supports the disability swimming group called “Bridgend Sharks”.

Halo Leisure reports, that in addition to casual visits by disabled people, 600 disabled people commit to regular usage through membership.

The ‘Level Water’ partnership with Halo Leisure supports free ‘Learn to Swim’ opportunities for children with disabilities.

The national exercise referral scheme supports people dealing with Parkinson’s disease, as well as those with pulmonary rehabilitation needs and age-acquired chronic conditions. Halo Leisure has supported free access to swimming for armed forces veterans as part of a Welsh Government initiative. The ‘Later Life’ programme has supported physical activity and exercise in day care, residential care and community settings including the Olympage Games. A successful initiative linking stroke survivors to indoor bowling activities has also commenced.

(iii) Awen Cultural Trust

With regard to the Awen Cultural Trust (“Trust”) partnership, members will note that decision making regarding the performance and direction of the trust is taken by the Trustees, as it is an independent organisation with charitable status. There are two council representatives on the trustee board, neither of whom are Cabinet Members. That said the Trust presents an annual service plan to full Council for approval, which outlines and demonstrates progress against the 5 year commissioning outcomes set by BCBC. The annual performance of both Halo Leisure and Trust are reported to Scrutiny and highlight the impact services are having and how service development plans can respond to local needs and priorities.

There have been a number of ways in which the Trust delivers services and facilities for disabled people for example, the B leaf and Wood B projects, which are work-based horticultural and carpentry projects for adults with disabilities. The library and arts services offer a range of activities to help those with disability enjoy the cultural offer. Examples include: Bounce and Rhyme sessions led with sign language, Booklink service to housebound customers, BoomBox access to audio downloads for those with limited manual dexterity, and a fully inclusive youth theatre. The benchmarking of the Trust’s current performance of libraries, shows that Bridgend is in the top quartile in a number of important areas. The analysis showed customer satisfaction is at 97% overall across approximately 450,000 visits and issuing over 450,000 items of stock. Providing information and effective communication e.g. easy read formats will be developed through the period of the Partnership.

Councillor D Patel
Cabinet Member Wellbeing & Future Generations