

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES

16 OCTOBER 2014

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

COMMUNITY COHESION

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the work undertaken by the Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator for Bridgend County Borough.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 The Strategic Equality Plan is a statutory plan and a cross cutting issue impacting on the whole of the council. It is linked to the Customer Care Programme and supports the community cohesion agenda.

2.2 This report also supports the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017:

- **Priority 2:** Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement;
- **Priority 3:** Working with children and families to tackle problems early;
- **Priority 6:** Working together to make the best use of our resources.

3. Background

In July 2010, Cabinet Equalities Committee agreed to receive reports and presentations on topic areas relevant to their remit. This includes community representatives presenting on relevant topics for members to gain a broader understanding of issues faced in our communities

3.1 Bridgend County Borough Council received Community Cohesion Funding from the Welsh Government (WG) in 2009 for the implementation and support of the overall aims and objectives of its '*Getting on Together – A Community Strategy for Wales*' (i.e. to achieve a fair and just society). The first phase of the project (1st April 2009 – 31st March 2012), funded a number of small projects addressing issues of community cohesion in Bridgend. At the end of this phase, findings from an evaluation of the Community Cohesion Programme in Wales, undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University, highlighted that mainstreaming community cohesion work throughout local authorities still required further support. Therefore, the Welsh Government Community Cohesion Programme (1st April 2012 – 31st March 2014), worth £500,000 per annum funds 8 Regional Community Cohesion Coordinators across Wales to take forward mainstreaming community cohesion work across the region.

Welsh Government allocated £62,500 to the Western Bay Region, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend Local Authorities, which included funding for the post of Regional Coordinator and to take forward the mainstreaming community cohesion work within each area. Welsh Government's Mainstreaming Community Cohesion Guidance for Local Authorities in Wales, issued in October 2012, provides strategic direction and an effective toolkit for Regional Coordinators and local authorities. Each Coordinator submits a quarterly progress report to the Welsh Government against an agreed work plan and informs the Welsh Government how the agreed actions/projects delivered will address local need.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 Revised Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan

Welsh Government has developed a National Delivery Plan (attached as appendix 1) which Regional Community Cohesion Coordinators need to report on. This delivery plan has 7 key outcomes for community cohesion around:

- Departments, organisations and people **understand hate crime**, victims make reports and get appropriate support;
- Departments, organisations and people **understand modern slavery**, victims make reports and get appropriate support;
- Increased awareness and engagement across **Gypsy and Traveller communities**;
- Increased awareness and data established on **immigration**;
- **Communities First** staff are knowledgeable about community cohesion issues and communities across the protected characteristics are involved in the Communities First Programme;
- Key policies and programmes through relevant plans are **evidencing delivery** against cohesion priorities;
- Policies and services are responsive to **changes in communities**.

4.2 Regional Approach

- The City and County of Swansea is the Grant Recipient Body for the Western Bay Region for the current Community Cohesion Programme grant that covers the period from 1st April 2012 – 31st March 2014.
- In September 2012, the Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator was appointed in the Western Bay Region, based in Swansea but working in communities in both Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend.
- The Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator's work is monitored by the three Community Cohesion leads from Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend meeting regularly to check and discuss progress against the agreed work plan.
- All three local authorities are at different stages of development and working towards the delivery of Community Cohesion Delivery Plan.

4.3 What does this mean for Bridgend?

Mainstreaming Community Cohesion has been a focus of the Programme. Examples of this are:

- Community Cohesion has been embedded into Equality Impact Assessments which means that Community Cohesion must be considered and assessed in all BCBC delivery along with other equality measures;
- The Community Cohesion Group in Bridgend, which meets on a bi monthly basis, is responsible for the delivery of the Community Cohesion Plan;
- Hate crime awareness sessions were delivered across services and partner agencies;
- A Hate Crime e-learning resource for staff has been developed and will soon be replicated with Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend;
- Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness sessions were delivered for staff and a Regional Anti-Human Trafficking Multi-Agency Forum established;
- A Regional Contest Board has been established which has increased information and intelligence sharing across the region;
- In partnership with Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council (SBREC) a Regional Gypsy and Traveller Multi-Agency Forum has been established;
- Community Cohesion funded the development of a Disability Hate Crime Myth busting leaflet

The delivery of the Community Cohesion programme in the Western Bay region was deemed by the Welsh Government to be one of the highest performers in Wales in 2012/13.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 The report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but is required to effectively implement the council's statutory duties in relation to equalities and human rights.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

No equality impact assessment has been carried out as this report provides the committee with information that will positively assist in the delivery of the authority's equality duties.

7. Financial Implications.

None in this report.

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Equalities Committee receives and considers this report.

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Date: 30 September 2014

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Background papers: None.