

CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES - MONDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2021

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor D Patel – Chairperson

SE Baldwin
DG Howells

TH Beedle
KL Rowlands

NA Burnett
CE Smith

J Gebbie
HM Williams

Apologies for Absence

HJ David and E Venables

Officers:

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| Nicola Bunston | Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager |
| Jamie Cullen | Operational Manager for Customer Services/CCSU |
| Julie Ellams | Democratic Services Officer - Committees |
| Riaz Hassan | Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator |
| Michelle Hatcher | Group Manager - Inclusion |
| Judith Jones | Partnership Co-ordinator |
| Philip O'Brien | Digital Transformation and Customer Services Manager |

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

113. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of 27 July 2021 be approved as a true and accurate record.

114. COMMUNITY COHESION ANNUAL REPORT

The Partnerships and Community Safety Manager presented the annual report on the work of the Welsh Government Funded Community Cohesion Officer and the community cohesion work of Bridgend Community Safety Partnership.

She informed the Committee that funding had been allocated for Regional Community Cohesion Coordinators to each region across Wales, with Bridgend being part of the Western Bay Community Cohesion Region. She stated that the Council appointed a Community Cohesion Officer in September 2019, with extensions in funding made by the Welsh Government until March 2022. She outlined the role of the Community Cohesion Officer, who works closely with Bridgend Community Safety Partnership partners to avoid duplication and ensure collaboration across all aspects of community safety and cohesion.

She informed the Committee that the last 18 months has seen unprecedented changes locally, nationally, and internationally, making it difficult to understand the underlying causes of community tensions. She outlined tables which illustrated hate crime during this calendar year had been reported at a similar level to last year, with race related incidents being the most common. She informed the Committee that it was known that there is an under-reporting of hate crime, due to fear of repercussions, crime not being

reported and people not being aware they are victims. Areas of tension and hotspots are monitored.

The Partnerships and Community Safety Manager reported that a key element to the work of the Community Cohesion Officer had been the effect of Brexit, engaging with individuals and communities to ensure maximum uptake of the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS), monitoring tension within local communities, regular engagement and support. To date, 4 schools in Bridgend County have received sessions from Show Racism the Red Card via face-to-face delivery or webinars. The Community Cohesion Officer continued to provide the secretariat to the Prevent Channel Panel. The Partnerships and Community Safety Manager informed the Committee that the Community Cohesion Programme is funded by Welsh Government until 31 March 2022, with a decision on funding yet to be made. A rapid review of the Community Cohesion programme was due soon which will shape the future delivery of the programme from April 2022 onwards.

The Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator presented an update on the EU Settlement Scheme, which the UK Government had estimated that 4 million would go through the programme, however applications exceeded 5.42 million as at 30 April 2021. By the deadline for applications of 30 June 2021, 6 million applications were received, with 72,230 applications received from people residing in Wales. He highlighted the top five nationalities received in each UK country. In Bridgend, the Welsh Government had estimated that 1,000 applications would be received, with funding being based on that number, but 2,290 applications had been concluded, the majority being of working age. The top five nationalities for applications in Bridgend being Polish, Romanian, Lithuanian, Italian and Portuguese. He stated that the data, when available would be used for the planning of services and decision-making. Data on diversity within wards from the recent census will be available in 2022.

The Chairperson asked whether there has been any indication from the Welsh Government on funding post March 2022 and how could the Council influence the Welsh Government's thinking. The Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator informed the Committee that the Community Cohesion programme was in each of the 22 local authorities in Wales, which had benefitted the 3 Councils making up the Western Bay region immensely. He believed that the Community Cohesion programme needs to be funded by the Welsh Government for a period of 3 years going forward.

The Chairperson also asked what the impact in funding was due to the under prediction of applications received to the EU Settlement Scheme being 50% higher. The Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator confirmed there had been an under prediction of applications received, although some funding had been available from the Community Cohesion programme and that no additional funding had been required of local authorities. He stated that there would be financial implications affecting future direction if the correct data was not received and that informed decisions could have been made had there been better data as to the numbers of European citizens living in the region been known. He stated that a rapid review of the Community Cohesion programme and Race Equality Plan would commence shortly.

The Cabinet Member Communities stated that he and his ward colleague were aware of the under representation of the figures for EU citizens, particularly in town centre wards, which resulted in a lack of registrations on the electoral register, with EU citizens not aware of their entitlement to vote in the UK.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities noted the content of the and accompanying Appendix 1.

115. **ANNUAL UPDATE REPORT ON PROGRESS MADE WITH MEETING THE OBJECTIVES WITHIN THE WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS FIVE YEAR STRATEGY**

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager reported on the work undertaken to meet the objectives within the Welsh Language Standards Five Year Strategy (2016 to 2021), during the fifth year since its introduction.

She explained that the Council's final compliance notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner included two standards (145 and 146) that required the council have produced and published a Five-Year Strategy by 30 September 2016, setting out how the council will promote the Welsh language and facilitate its use in Bridgend County Borough for the period covered by the strategy. The strategy was split into two sections, section one addressing employees, and section two addressing the public, with a series of actions sitting underneath each objective.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager highlighted general developments, with the Welsh Language Commissioner's assurance report, "Steeping Forward", issued in September 2021. The Welsh in the Workplace policy has been promoted and available to all staff via the intranet. Work has continued with Menter Bro Ogwr on agreed actions and the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and action plan has been developed. The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager highlighted progress made on each of the objectives in relation to employee developments.

The Group Manager Learner Support reported on progress on the objective of raising the profile of the Welsh language, culture and local activities and events organised by the council and its partners in a structured way. In relation to the objective of increasing promotion and awareness of the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), the draft 10-year plan is currently out for consultation. She informed the Committee of a growth in the number of seven-year-olds being taught through the medium of Welsh, since the opening of the new Ysgol Gynradd Gymareg Calon y Cymoedd school. Work continues to encourage more families to consider Welsh-medium education for their children. She stated that the leakage in numbers transferring from Year 6 primary to Year 7 in secondary education has reduced and the Council is committed to inspiring children and young people to use Welsh in all aspects of their lives. There is strong collaboration with the Central South Consortium and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd the school to share good practice. Since launching the Siarter Iaith in Welsh-medium schools and the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus in English-medium schools, innovative work has been undertaken by the schools to increase the social use of Welsh within the whole school community. The Group Manager Learner Support also outlined progress made with learners aged 16 to 19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh and studying Welsh as a first and second language.

The Group Manager Learner Support reported on developments planned for delivery by the end of 2022, namely, a dual-stream, two-form-entry entry school at Parc Afon Ewenni and a one form entry school at Porthcawl. She also informed the Committee of progress made in supporting Flying Start settings through the medium of Welsh.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager reported on the progress of work in partnership with Menter Iaith to deliver half term activities and with the Urdd Sports Department to deliver Welsh-medium sports provision. Work was also ongoing to develop opportunities post Covid-19; to provide opportunities during school holidays to continue the use of the Welsh language outside school hours and to introduce Welsh medium opportunities within second language schools.

The Chairperson referred to the figure of 2,850 children accessing Welsh- medium sports provision and asked whether this was during school holidays and whether the figure related to children attending or opportunities to attend. The Group Manager Learner Support stated that she would clarify the figure with the Group Manager Sports and Physical Activity. The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager clarified that the figures in the tables related to activities for children during school holidays. The Group Manager Learner Support informed the Committee that representatives of the Urdd will be attending the next meeting of the WESP Forum and every opportunity was taken to capitalise on new initiatives to promote the Welsh language.

A member of the Committee referred to the table showing the numbers of pupils transferring from one year in Year 6 into Year 7 the following year and questioned the accuracy of the percentages. The Group Manager Learner Support informed the Committee that she would revisit the percentages in the table.

The member also questioned whether research has been undertaken of the reasons why some families choose not to continue their children's education through the medium of Welsh at secondary level. The Group Manager Learner Support informed the Committee that further work needs to be undertaken on the reasons for some pupils not continuing their education through the medium of Welsh when they reach secondary education.

The member further questioned whether research has been undertaken of the location of Welsh- medium schools as many pupils living in the valleys gateways areas choose to attend YGG Llanhari in RCT and not YGG Llangynwyd. The Group Manager Learner Support informed the Committee that a bid to the Welsh Government had recently been submitted for a seedling school at Porthcawl. She stated that the School Modernisation team will always look at the location of schools when drawing up plans for new schools.

A member of the Committee was pleased to see the steps taken to promoting the Welsh language by Cabinet Members and officers.

The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help referred to the need for the authority to grow its own Welsh speaking teaching staff and asked what the quality of the teaching material was and whether the authority engages with Universities in this regard, as many teachers, who teach through the medium of Welsh reside outside of the County Borough. The Group Manager Learner Support stated that within Outcome 7 of the draft WESP 10-year, there is a focus on this issue and there was a need to strengthen. Engagement had been undertaken with Swansea University to ensure a breadth of Welsh speaking teachers, teaching through the medium of Welsh. Regarding teaching material being in Welsh, the authority works with the Central South Consortium and the Group Manager Learner Support was unaware of its unavailability in Welsh.

A member of the Committee referred to the unavailability of textbooks in the medium of Welsh for pupils previously, which was no longer the case. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration believed that the teaching material and textbooks had improved significantly and there was a need to have as much of a Welsh culture and dimension as possible.

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

116. **UPDATE REPORT ON THE WORK OF BRIDGEND COMMUNITY COHESION AND EQUALITY FORUM.**

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager provided an update on the work of the Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum (BCCEF).

She advised that this was the fourth report presented to this Committee Equalities on the progress and work of BCCEF, which is chaired by Councillor Dhanisha Patel, with the Council holding the secretariat for the Forum. She stated that meetings were held quarterly, taking place in December 2020, March, June and September 2021 and remotely due to the impact of Covid-19. The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager outlined the presentations received; all members of the Forum are encouraged to propose main items for the agenda, while each organisation in attendance is given the opportunity to provide an update on their work and any partnership opportunities for engagement or training. She also informed the Committee that South Wales Police provide an update report that was previously presented to the Community Cohesion Group, which includes hate crime figures, use of force, figures on violence against women and girls, stop and search and complaints raised against the police and police misconduct. The role of the BCCEF is to receive this report and provide scrutiny to this report.

The Chairperson stated that this Forum is very challenging to organise due to the number of partners involved and she thanked the secretariat for the excellent support it provides to the Forum.

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

117. **CONSIDERATION FOR ADOPTION OF THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON BRITISH MUSLIMS' DEFINITION OF ISLAMOPHOBIA BY BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager reported on information on the All-Party parliamentary group (APPG) on British Muslims' definition of islamophobia and sought approval whether the All-Party parliamentary group on British Muslims' definition of islamophobia should be adopted by the Council.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager informed the Committee that in July 2021 all Leaders of Labour run councils were sent a letter from the Chair of the Labour Party urging them to demonstrate their commitment to supporting the Muslim community and working with them to root out Islamophobia wherever it rears its head by adopting the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia. She stated that the adoption of a working definition like the APPG definition of Islamophobia is the first step to help tackle the very real nature of Islamophobia and that without a working definition, Islamophobia was often misunderstood, ignored and even allowed to take place openly across society.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager informed the Committee that the adoption of a definition will signal to Muslim communities there is a willingness to tackle Islamophobia and helped build trust in communities which can lead to openness, more reporting on incidents and general relationships being developed for long term work. She stated that a definition is only the first step to tackle Islamophobia but it allowed a framework to be used to identify prejudices that may be faced locally.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager highlighted the working definition of the All-Party Parliamentary Group of Islamophobia, together with contemporary examples of Islamophobia in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in encounters between religions and non-religions in the public sphere. She stated that if adopted, it will support the work of the Strategic Equality Plan and the

community cohesion agenda and cuts across policy areas and service delivery. Any future requests for the adoption of definitions in relation to equalities, discrimination or community cohesion will be managed in the same way as this definition in that the information will be brought to, discussed in, and a decision made by Cabinet Committee Equalities.

The Cabinet Member Communities in endorsing the approach stated its adoption is an extra step for the Council. A member of the Committee stated that any form of hate crime or racism should not be tolerated at all. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help highlighted the importance in making all communities feel valued and safe with the adoption of the definition of Islamophobia. The Deputy Leader stated that the work of the All-Party was an important step in having a more equal society.

The Cabinet Member Communities asked how the adoption of the definition could be communicated and publicised to staff, Members and more widely to the community. The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager stated that it would be ensured the adoption of the definition would be communicated widely.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities Committee received and considered the report and agreed the adoption of the APPG definition of Islamophobia by Bridgend County Borough Council.

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

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager reported on an update on the implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards. She stated that progress had continued towards implementing the 171 assigned standards, since the Council received its compliance notice from the Welsh language Commissioner in 2015.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager summarised the key progress/updates with compliance since the last update report, which included a new Welsh Language Strategy and action plan for 2021 to 2026, published on the Council's website on 1 September 2021; the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) consultation launched on 27 September 2021 and the 'Stepping Forward', which is the Welsh Language Commissioner's assurance report for 2020-21 issued in September 2021, focusing on: regulation during the pandemic; the effect of COVID-19 on the provision of Welsh language services and the effect of COVID-19 on organisations' internal arrangements.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager informed the Committee that no new complaints were received since the last update report in July 2021 and there were no outstanding complaints to give an update on.

A member of the Committee placed on record his thanks to all members of staff in that there were no new complaints received which was a positive development. The Chairperson felt that services were now in a better place in relation to the use of the Welsh language and more embedded with staff and she thanked the Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager and team for their efforts.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet Committee Equalities received and considered the report and its appendices.

119. **NICOLA BUNSTON**

The Chairperson announced that it was the last meeting Nicola Bunston, Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager was attending prior to taking up a new position with Cwm Taf University Health Board. She placed on record her thanks to Nicola for her exceptional work in equalities, which was in a better place within the authority and she wished her well in her new role. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help thanked Nicola Bunston for the contribution she has made and has been an asset to the authority. The Cabinet member Communities commented that Nicola would be sadly missed and he thanked her for her recent work on the Penprysg bridge consultation.

Nicola Bunston thanked the Committee for their kind words and it had been a pleasure working with the Members of the Committee. She informed the Committee that Jamie Cullen, Operational Manager, Customer Services who was present at the meeting would be taking on the role of equalities until such time as an appointment to the role had been made.

120. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 12:06