

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB / REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor – Chairperson

A R Berrow	JPD Blundell	HJ David	M J Evans
J Gebbie	W R Goode	D M Hughes	M Lewis
J Llewellyn-Hopkins	RL Penhale-Thomas	JC Spanswick	A Wathan
AJ Williams	HM Williams	E D Winstanley	

Apologies for Absence

N Farr and P Ford

Officers:

Nimi Chandrasena	Democratic Services Officer - Support
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Alix Howells	Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager
Philip O'Brien	Digital Transformation and Customer Services Manager
Michael Pitman	Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Lara Rowlands	Community Cohesion Officer

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ross Penhale -Thomas declared a personal interest in all agenda items as he works for a charity that specialised in housing and equalities.

Cllr Melanie Evans declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 as she is a governor for Pencoed Comprehensive and her son attends the same school. Councillor Evans left the meeting when this item was considered.

Cllr Rhys Goode (Chairperson) declared a personal interest as he works for a charity that works in equalities.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: Cllr Melanie Evans stated that it was not recorded that she had sent in her apologies. With the exception of the record of Cllr Evans' apologies, the minutes of the meeting that took place on 25 July 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

12. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

The Chairperson raised an issue which he felt would be remiss if it was not mentioned within an Equalities Committee, that is the FIFA World Cup that took place in Qatar. The Chairperson consulted with the monitoring officer the day before the meeting. He expressed his congratulations to the Welsh men's football team and the FA of Wales for their successful campaign in the World Cup. He stated he felt it was important that they did not ignore what had been created by the authorities in Qatar and the duplicity of FIFA in holding it in such a repressive nation. He said that football had not always been

a place where LGBTQ+ people have felt welcome, however the work, including the Welsh FA, had much to change with the culture and attitudes in the game. He stated that support for LGBTQ people isn't something that can be rolled out when convenient. Consideration had to be given to people whose human rights are being violated by a nation, as they had been given a global platform that demonstrated intolerance and this shouldn't be acceptable in 2022. FIFA should be using its influence to improve human rights, not to ignore them.

The Chairperson then invited the Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager to submit the report.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager stated that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the work completed within the Strategic Equality plan 2022-2024 and the period 2021-2022 and went through the report.

The Chairperson invited questions on the report.

The Deputy Leader queried that as it was White Ribbon Day the week of the meeting whether BCBC held accreditation as an employer as it previously did.

The CEE Manager responded that BCBC's accreditation has lapsed, but the domestic violence team manager is looking into renewing accreditation for the 2023.

The Deputy Leader also queried with reference to unconscious bias, critical thinking and hidden disabilities with 24 delegates attending the training, out of a head count of employees where BCBC has 1232 males and 4655 female in a head count, she queried if 24 was an aspirational figure or if the thought was to be putting this through the workforce a bit more.

The Group Manager Human Resources and Organisational Development, stated that there had been other training taking place that was not detailed in the report. The report is a "snapshot". The Group Manager Human Resources and Organisational Development accepted that the numbers looked extremely low when compared to the overall size of the Council's workforce. She pointed out that it is not reflective of training that had been undertaken previously by other by employees and as such is not cumulative figure.

The figures reflect what had occurred during the reporting period on specific courses highlighted as part of the SEP, she assured members that if required, at a further date, HR could bring a more detailed report on training attendance.

The Chairperson added that he and the CCE Manager have had conversations with the charity Chwarae Teg to establish there was something that they can do to assist.

The Deputy Leader, stated she was aware that everything was not listed and appreciates the information available is only a snapshot. She stressed on the requirement to get more staff trained in particular issues to have a better impact on the communities, especially when responding to residents.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, stated that during discussions in relation to refurbishing play areas and there had been many questions around inclusion, and as an example inclusive accessible equipment. He also added that he had recently inquired about accessibility to play areas for those diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. He stated he felt a need not just for officers but Members to receive training to understand the full scope of disabilities and the challenges that were being faced.

The Chairperson added that he was aware that The Group Manager for Sports and Physical Activity – Prevention and Wellbeing in the Social Services directorate had undertaken a great deal of work to ensure that there is adequate provision across the borough. Time had been taken to speak with individuals within the borough who would use these play areas and there was attention to ensure that it reflected their needs. He felt confident that a lot of work had been undertaken was based on evidence and not just dependent on individual Members. He mentioned the expectation that an update in the form of report was due to be received in cabinet in this regard.

A Member queried if they would have access to the full report and a breakdown of where the Group Manager's findings are to show where the gaps are.

The Chairperson responded that based on his scheduled regular update he had been made aware that a full report is expected which can then be scrutinized by full council. He reassured the Member that they will receive what he believes to be a very exhaustive report that will answer many questions.

The Leader stated that he welcomed that BCBC have retained their status as a disability, confident employer. Having interviewed and appointed to roles as a result of our collaboration with Remploy, he would be interested in the extent and the progress made in this area. He stated that unemployment was still higher amongst people with disabilities. He mentioned he was pleased to see progress made but added it would be helpful to understand the extent of that progress and determine if more could be done along partners in the public sector.

The Leader mentioned the significance of fulfilling work life as it can be very important to people's quality of life and the equality of opportunity particularly so for people with disabilities.

Redirected to the Group Manager Human Resources and Organisational Development who acknowledged, responding to the Leader that she agreed there was always more that could be done. She stated that the numbers of people who have been successful in employment through the work with Remploy were relatively small, but it was considered success itself and that work needed to be continued. As part of the achieving the disability status, a Confidence award meant that BCBC gives priority to applicants who have a disability to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements for a role, they receive an interview. She acknowledged the importance of working with partners.

A member thanked the team for the report. He stated it was useful for members to see a snapshot in time of the makeup of the workforce of the authority. He mentioned, in terms of grievance, that there has been some hyper analysis sickness across protected characteristics. He queried if a study had been undertaken and whether or not any particularly prevalent themes have been drawn out that sickness in any one population group has been identified.

The Group Manager Human Resources and Organisational Development responded to state that HR did not have such an analysis. They were responding to the guidance in terms of information they were required to report on and they were the main themes that HR covered. She agreed it would be an interesting analysis and possibly something HR could look to do going forward. She stated that HR currently undertake quite a lot of analysis around absence. She said she felt it was something they could pick up going forward though currently not required to report on that as with other areas within this report.

RESOLVED: The recommendation is that the Cabinet Committee Equalities takes note of the progress made.

13. COMMUNITY COHESION ANNUAL REPORT

The Community Cohesion Officer discussed the report submitted and invited questions.

The Chairperson queried the possibility of an uptake in tension within the communities as the visas and hosting period for Ukrainian Guests came to an end, though there had not been a change to the situation in the country while time elapsed.

The Community Cohesion Officer stated at the beginning of the crisis the Ukraine scheme had a very different response to the Afghan scheme as an example. People had generally been very welcoming and very supportive and they had not seen an increase in Community tensions relating to the Ukraine scheme. They had considered that the cost of living crisis could change this but for the moment, they had actually seen it increasing Community tensions.

The Community Cohesion officer stated they have seen Housing leading on the Ukraine scheme and they would be best placed to provide specific data. She stated they had seen a small amount of hosts in the area where perhaps the relationship may have broken down and families have been able to have required additional housing or support, but had been significant initiative from Welsh Government and from the Wales Housing to strengthen hosts and family relations by way of delivering workshops specifically for hosts and their homes in the Ukraine Scheme, providing support directly for hosts to try and increase that the longevity of the stay so that it doesn't get to six months and the relationship is broken down. She stated that they had also seen, under the Ukraine scheme, that most people who arrived had wanted to start working straight away. They had good qualifications, and wanted to start training, in such cases, people have really had a more positive relationship with their hosts. A small percentage had seen a breakdown in the relationship.

A Member stated she knew of new arrivals being extremely educated and yet being offered jobs that were below their qualifications which in turn was demoralizing. The Member also cited further examples and queried what can be done to support individuals given their circumstances and how can their well-being be supported while ensuring that they receive support. The Councillor also queried the prevalence of hate crime.

The Community Cohesion Officer responded that they are working with organizations involved with displaced people in with a view to placing those who are fully qualified in specific areas and ensuring that the procedures are followed to allow such qualifications being utilised. She cited an example, where displaced people in action have a program where medical professionals can get the equivalent of the qualification recognized in the UK which is translated so that they can practice medicine in the UK without having to go through training again.

A Member mentioned that the visitors were having to report to the job centre but receive the message that they were required to take up employment irrespective of their qualifications to ensure receipt of benefits.

The Member also queried hate crime figures as she felt through examples she provided, that they were recorded incorrectly.

The Community Cohesion Officer provided possible explanations to the examples cited and confirmed that she would relay the information to colleagues in South Wales Police so they were made aware of the concerns.

The Chairperson thanked the member for bringing the issues to the attention of the committee and suggested inviting a representative from SWP speak to the Committee in this regard.

A Member thanked the officers for the report and praised the effort of Community Cohesion. He acknowledged the projects that had come forward at grassroots and at strategic levels. He mentioned that there was a gap in the information available around reporting of Hate crime. He mentioned it would be interesting to hear from Victim Support or South Wales Police about confidence that victims have in the reporting mechanisms that exist in seeking and actually receiving justice. He also felt that there was no indication if the reports had concluded with a satisfactory outcome for the victims.

The Chairperson thanked the Member for his questions and stated that the issue was recognised that it was not a new issue in terms of hate crime as to whether people with protected characteristics feel that reporting it is actually worth the hassle of reporting it was something the team needed to address

The Community Cohesion Officer responded by stating that they needed to understand the barriers to disclosure for specific communities, which was something they try to incorporate in their training and awareness sessions. The team were happy to contact Victim Support for further information on things like the referral process and the aftercare process and feel they would be able to get attendance from officers to share information in a similar meeting at a future date. She mentioned that certain figures in society create divisive languages, the Community Cohesion team aim to create counter narratives in response. As an example she shared that there was an organisation made-up of former, far right wing members who have a whole segment on how to develop and how to share counternarratives with individuals that may be prone to utilization or all these sort of in the process of being radicalised.

The aim is to replace hateful language, hateful graffiti with general positive messages that are generic, thereby not mentioning any specific communities.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities notes the content of the report.

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

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager explained the purpose of the report and stated as a general update, there's been two key Welsh language consultations that had taken place in 2021 to 2022, stakeholders from across the borough were asked to share their views on the draft Welsh language objectives.

The public consultation closed on the 18th of June 2021 was published on the Council website on the 1st of September 2021. The Welsh and Strategic Welsh in Education strategic plan was launched on the 27th of September and the results from the consultation were used to inform the final WESP, which has been in place since September 2022.

Monitoring is carried out monthly to identify the demand for Welsh services across all access channels within customer services including telephone face to face, e-mail and online.

Online recruitment is available in Welsh with the ability to enable the submission of Welsh applications advertisement of vacancies via MBO.

A rolling calendar of Welsh language activities and events is still in place, sharing details across internal and external communication channels such as press, social media and Bridgend.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager elaborated on the use of grant funding received in early years settings in Bettws, Ogmere Valley Preschool, and Bridgend.

She stated there was continuous monitoring of the number of seven-year olds being taught through the medium of Welsh and stated that there had been a significant amount of promotional work undertaken to encourage more families to consider Welsh medium education for their children.

She stated that the Council monitors the transition from primary provision to secondary provision, with the aim to improve transition rates and increase retention of children in Welsh medium education in foundation phase and key stage.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager stated that in order to support an increase in the number of Welsh Medium childcare providers, Flying Start settings in Brackla will become a Clych Meithrin in the afternoon sessions from January 2023.

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager concluded that BCBC continued to work in partnership with Urdd Gobaith Cymru to deliver school half term activities.

She proposed that the recommendation for the report is for the committee to note the progress that's been made in the last year.

A Member queried while it was great to see that the new centre in Blackmill was nearing completion she wondered referring to a previous update by the Directorate there wasn't a lot of interest from providers to go in and actually provide that service there and that maybe there would be some discussions with Welsh Government at how that can be progressed. She queried if parties had come forward with an interest to provide services and options available to ensure that it is set up and functional at the earliest opportunity. The Corporate Director for Education and Family support stated that the Directorate had run an extensive marketplace event for providers to try and attract Welsh medium childcare providers into that setting and the other settings that were provided by BCBC. He stated that they had profitable meeting with Bridgend College in November 2022 with an objective to try and support provision in those areas and also to improve and provide employment opportunities for young people to go into that as a vocation. This is being followed up with the college. He also stated that they were trying to identify providers in other areas and how they can be utilised, building on their expertise providing local employment.

The Leader stated while it is not provision BCBC have had before, he felt it complemented and supported the development of the new Welsh medium childcare provision at Bro Ogwr.

He stated that while the growth in numbers of pupils in Welsh medium provision is not what they would have liked to have seen there is an expectation that once the relocation of Bro Ogwr is completed, there will be a significant difference.

He said discussions are also expected with English medium schools to establish that that are making equally important strides around the development of Welsh language within English medium school settings.

The Corporate Director for Education stated, in relation to growth, the temporary provision that's going into the new school is expected to help before the new school is built. The new school is a significantly larger school and there is hope that the school will build on the excellent standards of Bro Ogwr or provide the learners and the community with world class provision for Welsh learners. Also as part of the Welsh in education strategic plan, to build the Welsh language provision across the county. He stated that Bridgend County Borough Council had more gold standard schools in any other local authority in the Central South Consortium region.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities receive and consider the content of the report.

15. **UPDATE REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE MEASURE (2011) AND WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS**

The Consultation, Engagement and Equalities Manager introduced the report stating that the purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update on the implementation of the Welsh language standards and a version of this report is presented at every Cabinet Equalities Committee to keep all interested parties updated.

She highlighted progress or updates with compliance since the last report that was presented in July 2022 and following a complaint from the Commissioner regarding the Mynydd Cynffig consultation when he was found that BCBC had not fully considered the effects.

The Officer also mentioned a second complaint received from the Commissioner with reference to BCBC's website.

The Councillors and officers discussed the complaint, ruling and proposals with regards to Mynydd Cynffig.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Equalities receives and considers the content of the report.

16. **URGENT ITEMS**

None