



City and County of Swansea

Notes of the **Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - Equalities**

Committee Room 5 - Guildhall, Swansea

Thursday, 8 November 2018 at 10.30 am

Present: Councillor L S Gibbard (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

T J Hennegan
L R Jones

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine
S Pritchard

Councillor(s)

S M Jones

Officer(s)

Sarah Caulkin
Adrian Chard
Adam Hill

Interim Director of Resources
Strategic HR and OD Manager
Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Resources

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): E T Kirchner and L V Walton

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

2 Membership

The Equalities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel agreed to Co-opt Dr Gideon Calder for the duration of the inquiry.

3 Equalities - Resources Directorate (including Human Resources aspects)

In attendance to discuss Equalities and representing the Resources and Human Resources service areas was Cllr Clive Lloyd (Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Performance), Sarah Caulkin (Interim Director of Resources) and Adrian Chard (Strategic Human Resources and Organisational Management Manager).

Cllr Clive Lloyd gave an introduction into equalities as it relates to the resources directorate, some of the points he raised included:

- He was pleased that this panel had been set up, feeling equalities and important issue and that there is a gap in looking at how the Council is meeting its duties.
- Important to consider how you embed the act into day to day business.
- That there are a number of Councillor Champions on number of different aspects including the protected characteristics.
- We have an Equality Plan that is reviewed each year but feel that there is a lot more we could do but this is a start. For example in relation to the gender pay

gap, how do we create a culture where women feel able to move up the structure and benefit from the resulting remuneration

Resources Directorate

Sarah Caulkin then took the panel through a presentation prepared based upon the questions that were sent to them in advance of the meeting.

In your opinion whose responsibility is it to implement and embed equalities in the organisation?

- A whole Council approach – Equalities is everyone's responsibility
- Each Directorate takes responsibility for embedding and implementing as per the Equality Objectives and reported in the Annual Equality Review Report
- New Equalities Champions in each Directorate embedding a culture of Equalities further across the Council
- There has never been one corporate Officer responsible solely for Equalities
- Access to Services responsible for advice, guidance and support but not implementing and embedding – much wider remit including statutory consultation
- Strategic Delivery Unit produces the Annual Equality Review Report

How do you ensure a consistent approach to the completion and the quality of Equality Impact Assessments within your directorate?

- Projects are required to complete EIAs at their inception
- Resources staff are encouraged to get involved in projects early on so that equality implications are fully explored and understood, e.g. Legal and Access to Services teams
- Standard templates ensure consistency
- Access to Services team review and advise to ensure quality
- Committee reports require an assessment of equality implications
- New Equality Champions embedding consistency and quality further in the Directorate

Do you have staff who are specifically trained on the procedures and the practice of EIAs? Who in your directorate monitors these for quality?

- Access to Services team reviews all EIAs and provides advice and guidance
- New Equality Champions receiving training to further embed quality and consistency

Who are the key influencers with regards to equality in your directorate? For example Cabinet Member, Equality Champions (councillor and/or staff)

- Deputy Leader
- Cabinet Member – Better Communities
- Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Resources
- Chief Transformation Officer
- Chief Legal Officer
- Equality Champions

What training plan do you have relating to equalities matters? How are staff training needs assessed in relation to these training needs?

- Specific Equalities Champions training is underway
- Training on the Act and nine protected characteristics is promoted on StaffNet to all staff and can be booked via Oracle
- An Equalities e-learning module is on the Learning Pool, which staff and Councillors complete as part of their induction

- Individual staff training needs are assessed by line managers during appraisals as part of overall development

What is your directorate doing to identify and remove any barriers to accessing services?

- Chief Legal Officer and Interim Director of Resources met with the Disability Liaison Group (DLG) over the Summer to understand how the Council could improve access to services for the DLG and other groups
- This engagement provided us with some specific areas of feedback we can address to improve access
- Co-production Strategy
- Engagement Strategy
- Statutory Consultations

How do you work with equality organisations, services users and other key partners to deliver your services in line with equalities legislation for example through co-production?

- The Council is developing a corporate Co-Production Strategy and plan, expanding co-production beyond the usual boundaries of Social Services, e.g. Toilet Strategy
- The Resources Directorate supports Council services where statutory consultation is required
- Frontline services such as the Contact Centre, Revenues and Benefits Teams engage directly with service users, equality organisations, and community groups particularly where there are any proposed changes to services, e.g. Kiosks in the Civic Centre
- Devolved to Services with Corporate support
- However, corporately we aim to ensure an engagement plan is in place to help groups plan and engage appropriately including: DLG includes (for example) SCVS, Disability Wales, RNIB, Parent Carers and also represents other organisations, Over 50's network, BME Forum, LGBT Forum

What further changes would you suggest?

- Learning from implementation of GDPR could be replicated around Equalities with regard to structure, governance and a designated Officer
- The Annual Equalities Report needs to be shorter and more focused on outcomes and impact
- Build further on the positive changes already in flight, e.g. Equalities Champions, Co-production with partners and service users

Councillors also raised and or discussed the following:

- How involved are staff in influencing equalities with the Council? Try to engage staff in all we do but depends on the nature of the project, i.e. the commissioning reviews staff involved throughout the process. We also have new equality champions (Equality staff representatives) within resources directorate and they will be more involved at grass roots. Trade Unions also involved and consulted.
- What training is available around equalities issues and what is the take up like? There is a selection of courses both online and face to face, some mandatory but take up is low. Work to improve take up is needed.
- How are we training in Co-production tool? Training senior managers first, they will then disseminate across the organisation. Co-production is an excellent tool but outcomes are not always what you would expect. Not suitable for all services has to be the right public focused area for the tool.

- Access to Services seems like a huge issue, for example being able to access or use a computer. Need to have different channels to access council services. Agreed that some of those ways may be through other organisations or groups. The panel were told that co-production will help to identify the best ways/channels. The issue of digital inclusion was raised, panel emphasised the important of considering equality issues, which can be quite significant. The example of applying for Universal Credit was quoted with it being online only.
- Cllr Lloyd told the Panel about the recently opened 'My Clydach Hub', which is a hub where people can interact through skype, access services and has hot-desking areas for staff. This is the first of the Hubs which are designed to take services closer to people. The next will be in based in Gorseinon. As many staff are now agile, staff can now be situated there and be on hand for advice etc.
- How can we better involve and engage the public, Councillor recognised that they can often bridge that gap between public and the council.
- We do still fund a number of voluntary groups but much fewer than in the past as we are in a different financial climate, we do actively support SCVS.

Human Resources and Organisational Development

Adrian Chard then took the panel through the aspects relating to Human Resources and Organisational Development.

How meaningful is the data produced for the Equality Review, how do you use this data or other important Human Resources related data to identify any issues and to drive improvement within the organisation in relation to equality matters?

- At job application stage, candidates are requested to complete an equalities form which, if completed, is entered against successful candidate's record. The form is voluntary along with the self-service capability
- Equalities information is requested on an annual basis, and published as part of the Annual Equality Plan Review Report

What Equalities training is offered to staff corporately?

- There is online mandatory training as well as half day face-to-face training for staff – the equalities module on the manager training plus the section in recruitment and selection.

Does equalities training form part of staff induction?

- There is a corporate induction e-learning module which gives a brief overview of the equality act and each of the protected characteristics, how equality issues can impact our services, and some key definitions of words associated with equality (direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, discrimination by perception and association, harassment, and victimisation).

What support and assistance is available to staff who make or have made a grievance that relates to a protected characteristic?

- This would be addressed under the Bullying/Harassment policy to:
 - Investigate the complaint promptly and objectively
 - Take the complaint seriously
 - Be assigned an HR advisor as a 'keeping in touch' contact
 - Be offered any assistance in relation to Counselling
 - Be offered Mediation
 - Make recommendations and changes to processes as a result of the complaint

Do we collect data on the number of grievances raised by staff relating to their protected characteristics?

- HR&OD is beginning to build current data on Grievances/bullying/Harassment complaints, and we will be analysing this going forward.

What does the council do to make employment within Swansea council accessible to, for example, people with a disability, requirements that relate to religious belief or staff that speak through medium of Welsh?

- The “Swansea Working” initiative is looking at this. Advertising and application forms are available online. Classes are available for those employees wishing to learn Welsh
- HR&OD is working with Poverty & Prevention to improve recruitment processes which will include a review of the existing Recruitment & Selection policy to ensure that it provides everyone with the ability to easily access employment opportunities within the Council.

What is being done to address the Gender Pay Gap?

- The Council published this information on our website in a specific report
- The report set out/published an action plan to close the gap as follows, further detailed milestones and timescales are being developed:
- Continue to improve workforce data, e.g. cleansing and accuracy
- Continue to review casuals/relief staff arrangements
- Maintain ‘watching brief’ on changes to GLPC Job Evaluation scheme,
- Analyse grade distribution of gender based work in lower grades
- Consider grade distribution analysis of senior roles by gender, working pattern etc.
- Continue to review multiple posts and contractual arrangements
- The PDDC will receive an annual report outlining the current situation for all non-schools staff.
- In addition to the above, we will include a review of gender and apprentices / trainees.

The panel also raised or discussed the following:

- Equalities data not representative as not mandatory to complete it on employee forms. Some people not comfortable filling it out when they apply. Perception, assurance that information given is confidential and used appropriately. Difficult to assess the make-up of council staff and off those applying if we do not have correct data. Is there something that can be done to improve this, the panel to think about, how we might take down that barrier. Is there best practice around for collecting this type of data, how do other LA report it...
- How do we support staff who are carers? Agile and flexible works help support employees. A pilot for different ways of working is currently being undertaken by 3 teams. It is task based rather than time based, so we manage people on output rather than managing people’s time. Panel would be interested to see outcome of the pilots (if within timescale of inquiry).
- Does the authority have a childcare provision? Not a physical provision but do offer childcare voucher scheme whereby parents then choice the facility most convenient for them.

4 Work Programme

The Panel reviewed the Work Programme.