



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group meeting held on Monday, 14 May 2018 at 1.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypandy, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group Members in attendance:-

Councillor G Hopkins (Chair)

Councillor M Webber Councillor J James
Councillor S. Rees-Owen

Officers in attendance

Ms W Edwards, Head of Community Services
Mr S Gealy, Head of Welsh Language Service
E Siôn, Menter Iaith

14 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed the attendees to the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group.

Apologies were received from Councillor J. Rosser, Councillor R. Bevan, C. Hanagan and E. Thomas.

15 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor S. Rees-Owen declared a personal interest in Item 3 – Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Review ‘I am freelancer and have worked with ‘It’s My Shout’ whose partnership work has been outlined on page 54 of the report’.

16 MINUTES

The Steering Group **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th November, 2017.

17 WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY REVIEW

The Head of Community Services provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with an update on the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Action Plan which had been approved on 25th January, 2017.

The officer provided the Steering Group with background into the Strategy, advising that the Plan was developed under Section 145 of the Compliance Notice issued under section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and was developed over the course of 2016 in partnership with Sbectrwm, Menter Iaith, Council Services and Elected Members. The public had also been consulted between April and July, 2016 in order to understand what would engage them to use the Welsh Language and which services they felt were

important as a means of promoting the language.

Members were reminded that the focus of the Action Plan was to:

- Grow the number of people able to speak Welsh by 3%
- Increase the use of the Welsh Language in all aspects of community and public life, and
- Raise awareness of importance of the Welsh Language as an essential part of the cultural identity and character of the South Wales valleys.

The officer spoke of the positive actions taken within RCT to meet the actions, referring to Appendix 1 of the report, where the progress against targets for each individual service area was detailed. Members were pleased to hear that within the first year, there had already been a 2% increase in Welsh Language speakers amongst staff.

Members were advised that in July 2017, Welsh Government published their strategy for promotion *Cymraeg 2050* which outlined a target for a 78% increase in the number of Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050. Following the improvements already made by the Council and in order to meet the Welsh Government's target, the Council would need to increase the percentage of speakers by 1.66% per annum until 2021, with the numbers outlined at section 5.13 of the report. The officer referred Members to section 2 of the report and recommended that the Group agree an increased target for growing the number of Welsh speakers within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Chair thanked the officer for the comprehensive report, adding that it was pleasing to see the amount of work undertaken to ensure the Council meets its target and that they were in a good position to increase the number.

The Deputy Leader raised concerns about the target, commenting that it was more difficult to reach adults with little or no experience of using the language. However, the Deputy added that she was fully supportive of the proposed increase, commenting on the importance of targetting children at a young age that could develop their skills over a long period of time. The Member was pleased to see that comparisons had been made with Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff Councils and felt that it would be useful to reach out further to Councils such as Caerphilly and Bridgend to enhance one another's understanding and ways of working.

Ms E Siôn also welcomed the proposed target increase, stressing the need to have more consideration of the WESP and the need to strategically consider how the Council can further support partners in increasing their provision to extend the number of users. The Head of Community Services advised that Estyn had recently withdrawn questions relating to the Welsh Language within the self assessment evaluations, and instead consider the language as a part of every question. It was agreed that both officers would discuss these issues following the meeting.

Councillor S. Rees-Owen also praised the efforts the Council had taken to increase the number of Welsh speakers, commenting on the Council's internal network 'Inform' which had been updated to include helpful tools and templates to enhance both Elected Members and staff's way of working.

The Councillor also spoke of a recent Children & Young People Scrutiny

Committee meeting where Members considered the WESP and resolved to receive regular updates in respect of the targets set and achieved. An invitation was extended to the Chair to attend the meeting in June to give an update on the work of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group, which he gratefully accepted.

Following further discussions, the Steering Group **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the content of the report;
- b) To agree a revised target of 1891 additional Welsh Speakers in Rhondda Cynon Taf in light of the Welsh Government's Strategy *Cymraeg 2050 – A Million Welsh Speakers* published in 2017 and;
- c) To continue to progress with the actions as outlined in the currently agreed Action Plan.
- d) That Ms E Siôn, Menter Iaith and the Head of Community Services meet outside of the meeting to discuss Estyn's Inspection of Adult Community Learning and ways to plan strategically.

18 WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

The Service Manager, Welsh Language Services provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with the Welsh Language Standards Compliance Report 2017 – 2018 which covered the second full year of implementation of the standards.

Members of the Steering Group were referred to Appendix 1 of the report, which outlined the work undertaken by the Council to comply with a vast number of standards imposed by the Welsh Language Commissioner. The officer advised that following challenge by the Council, standards 52, 58 and 64 had been postponed until 31st March, 2018 and would, therefore, be included in next year's compliance report.

The officer explained that it was the Council's statutory duty to publish the annual report and to disseminate to the public. As well as covering the standards; the report had been made more transparent by outlining:

- (1) the number of complaints that you received during the year which relates to the Council's compliance with the (i) service delivery (ii) policy making (iii) operational standards with which it was under a duty to comply
- (2) the number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of the year in question
- (3) the number of members of staff who attended training courses you offered in Welsh during the year in question
- (4) the percentage of the total number of staff who attended training courses you offered in Welsh during the year in question
- (5) the number of new and vacant posts that you advertised during the year which were categorised as posts where - (i) Welsh language skills were essential, (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post, (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable, or (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary during the year in question.

The officer advised of an error on page 114 of the report, stating that the first line of text outside the box should read '2017-18 (April 2018)'.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the officer and his team for their constant hard work in what had been a significant challenge, explaining that resources

had been increased to ensure that standards would continue to be met. The Chair praised the transparency of including the complaints within the report, commenting that with change, they were inevitable, but was pleased that there were only 12 and were dealt with at an informal stage.

Councillor J. James queried the complaints process and whether they were formal or simply statements which had been logged. It was advised that the CSG reference meant that the complaints were sent directly to the Commissioner meaning they were formally dealt with by the legal process.

The Deputy Leader praised the progress made by the Council during the year, extending her thanks to the staff who work hard at ensuring meetings are conducted bilingually and professionally.

With the Group agreeing that there was a range of training avenues available for Elected Members and staff, resulting in a 2% increase of speakers within the Council, discussions ensued around recruitment and the plans in place to certify that there are more Welsh speakers employed. The Head of Community Services spoke of positive initiatives which had been put in place to ensure that all new employees must undertake a basic Level 1 Welsh language class with the aim of continuous improvement, whether they are employed at Director Level or below. The Service Manager, Welsh Language Services added that he had been working closely with the Human Resources department and that all newly advertised job specifications have Welsh Language skills as 'essential' and that it would be at each Service Manager's discretion to provide reasons as to why it should be changed to 'desirable'.

Following the positive comments, the Members **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the content of the report;
- b) To publicise the report on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website and make it available in each of the authority's offices that are open to the public by no later than 30th June; 2018 and;
- c) To approve arrangements for publicising the fact that the annual report has been published.

19 URGENT BUSINESS

Ms E Siôn, Menter Iaith took the opportunity to raise concerns around the WESP reporting system. It was explained that prior to Welsh Government making changes to the way in which the WESP was reported, there was a constructive action plan in place. However, with certain elements of the plan now removed, it was harder to implement the growth of Welsh speakers.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- a) That a meeting would be organised between the Chair, Cabinet Member for Education, Director of Education & Ms E Siôn, Menter Iaith in order to discuss a strategic way forward and;
- b) That the Service Manager, Welsh Language Services extend an invitation to Councillor Hopkins to the next WESP Group meeting which would take place on 21st June, 2018 to discuss the WESP.

This meeting closed at 1.45 pm

**Cllr G Hopkins
Chairman.**

