



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group meeting held on Wednesday, 10 October 2018 at 10.00 am at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

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

Councillor G Hopkins (Chair)

Councillor J Rosser Councillor R Bevan
Councillor M Webber Councillor J James
Councillor E Stephens

Officers in attendance

Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Mr C Hanagan, Director of Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services
Ms W Edwards, Head of Community Services
Mr S Gealy, Head of Welsh Language Service
E Siôn, Menter Iaith

1 Welcome & Introductions

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome new Members to the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group.

2 Apology for Absence

An apology for absence was received from E. Siôn, Menter Iaith.

3 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor E. Stephens declared a personal interest in Item 4 of the agenda – Welsh Language Services Internal Audits of Compliance. "I personally know the Compliance Officer who undertook the internal audits"

4 Minutes

The Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 28th November, 2018 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

5 Welsh Language Services - Internal Audits of Compliance

The Head of Community Services provided the Welsh Language Steering Group with an outline of the process adopted by Welsh Language Services for auditing departmental compliance with Welsh language standards, highlighting areas of potential non-compliance and to offer corrective solutions.

Members were reminded of the duty on local authorities to comply with

Standards of conduct in relation to the Welsh Language and of their duty to treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. The officer explained that should the Council be subject to a statutory investigation by the Commissioner for any breach of the Standards, the process can take up to 18 months to complete and could result in a penalty of up to £5,000. As a preventative measure, it was explained that a Compliance Officer post had been established within the new service structure, who would undertake regular internal audits to assess the level of compliance of Council services to ensure that any potential breaches, or any areas where there are particular challenges, can be identified and addressed swiftly before any complaint is made to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 and 2 of the report, where the Compliance Officer's first two departmental internal audits for Human Resources and the Library Service were outlined. Members were pleased to learn that for both service areas, compliance had been achieved in a number of areas and acknowledged that embedding the Standards is an evolving process.

Speaking of the Library Service audit, the Head of Community Services advised that it was difficult to monitor staff compliance as there are fourteen separate sites. However, it was pleasing to learn that Level 1 Welsh Language and refresher training was made a priority for frontline staff, to help them gain confidence when answering the phone to Welsh speaking members of the public. One Member queried whether minor issues, such as the need for a bilingual book stamp, which the Compliance Officer had identified, would be picked up on by the Welsh Language Commissioner. The officer explained that the rule is to treat both of the Languages fairly and as a result, even the smallest of changes must be made in order to comply.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and spoke positively of its content and the progression of compliance within the local authority. The Chair queried whether a 'mystery shopper' phoning exercise could be undertaken internally to ensure that all Members of staff feel confident in answering their phones bilingually. The officer advised that the process would be undertaken in January, 2019 with the help of an Intern to ensure that any phone issues are identified and resolved prior to the Welsh Language Commissioner discovering any breaches.

The Deputy Leader praised the report and the actions taken by the Compliance Officer and two service areas to further comply with the Standards imposed. The Member recognised that there would be areas identified for improvement due to the new ways of working and lack of confidence of some of the staff. The Deputy advised that during her regular meetings with the Director, Human Resources, she would praise the excellent work of the Service Area and ensure the target areas for improvement are continued to be worked upon.

One Member questioned whether there was a need for correspondence to individuals and organisations outside of Wales to be sent bilingually and the officer confirmed that there is only a need for correspondence to be bilingual within Wales.

On behalf of concerns raised by constituents, one Member queried whether correspondence could be sent to the public in the language of their preference. The officer explained that if formal correspondence of the Council such as Council Tax letters, are sent to several people, then it must be bilingual or it is a

breach of Standard 4. The officer added that operational correspondence can be sent to a person in their preferred language or the language they used when they initially made contact. The Director, Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services advised that placing the bilingual text side by side limits the cost implications to the Council.

Discussions ensued around the option of maintaining a central Council database where each local resident and their language preference are outlined, however it was deemed unmanageable. One Member acknowledged the importance of promoting the Welsh Language but commented that personal choice should be paramount.

The Deputy Leader recognised that in comparison to other Welsh authorities, particularly in North Wales, RCT has a different demographic and all residents must be treated fairly.

Members were in agreement that, in moving forward, it is important to continue the departmental audits to reduce risk of breach of the standards by the Council and following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Note the content of the report and;
- b) Approve the implementation of further audits in order to reduce risk to the Council and to offer corrective solutions to service areas.

6 List of Standardised Welsh Place Names

The Welsh Language Service Manager provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with information on the [List of Standardised Welsh Place-names](#) as published by the Welsh Language Commissioner in July 2018 and the Council's responsibilities in relation to this.

The officer advised that, although local authorities are ultimately responsible for deciding on the forms of place-names they use, it is the responsibility of the Welsh Language Commissioner to advise on the standard forms of Welsh place-names to individuals and organisations and to further emphasise the importance of adopting standard forms for public administration, maps signage and online search engines. As a result, the Welsh Language Commissioner wrote to the Chief Executive of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in July drawing attention to the List of Standardised Welsh Place-names as published on the Welsh Language Commissioner's website, expressing the wish that the Council adopt this list.

The officer explained that the Welsh Language Commissioner's Place-names Standardisation Panel had undertaken a broad piece of work which gave consideration to the meaning, history and etymology of the place-names and as a result, had established and published the list on the Commissioner's website.

Members were advised that the Welsh Language Commissioner had recommended that RCT Council adopt a mono-lingual version for Llanhari, Treorci and Cwmdâr, with the aim of ceasing to use Llanharry, Treorchy and Cwmdare and that further recommendations may be proposed in future.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the officer for the detailed report. Speaking of the proposals of the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Chair raised concerns in respect of the lack of consultation with local residents and

lack of response from the Local Members.

The Deputy Leader reiterated the Chair's concerns, stressing the importance of receiving feedback from the people who the proposals might affect, prior to adopting the list. The Deputy Leader referred the Steering Group to the wider list of changes in relation to RCT and speaking of her own ward, Rhydyfelin, the Deputy Leader questioned why the List contained the alternative Welsh forms of towns, and whether changing the spelling, would have an impact on the historical meaning of the area.

In turn, some of the Members took the opportunity to speak of their own wards and the impact any changes would have on the residents. Members were in agreement that the communities of RCT should be given a choice in whether the Council choose to adopt the proposals and that the origin of the individual areas needed to be taken into consideration.

As Members were all of the same opinion, the Chair suggested that it would be beneficial to firstly write to the Welsh Language Commissioner to gain an understanding of the rationale of the proposals, including the wider list in relation to RCT, prior to consulting with the local residents. The Director of Communications and Interim Head of Democratic Services advised that should Members wish to amend the recommendations, a report would be presented to the next appropriate meeting of the Cabinet to seek approval to write to the Commissioner. The Director instructed officers to continue to use the current place names outlined within Rhondda Cynon Taf's Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), which allows departments such as Planning, Highways, and Transportation to have a consistent approach to place names as they administer their respective duties.

Following consideration, the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Recommend that Cabinet seek written confirmation from the Welsh Language Commissioner, in respect of their rationale for the changes, as set out in the Welsh Language Commissioner's List of Standardised Welsh Place-names, in order to better inform a future decision of the Cabinet.
- b) Recommend to Cabinet that Consultation takes place with the communities highlighted in the report and that the rationale adopted by the Welsh Language Commissioner is used as part of this process. Until otherwise agreed, the Council will continue to utilise the current names outlined within Rhondda Cynon Taf's Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG).

7 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair advised that the next meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group would take place on Wednesday 3rd April, 2019, but that Members would be informed accordingly should he call for a meeting sooner.

This meeting closed at 11.20 am

**Cllr G Hopkins
Chairman.**