



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group meeting held on Wednesday, 9 October 2019 at 10.00 am at the Committee Room 1, 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

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms W Edwards, Service Director – Community Services
Mr S Gealy, Welsh Language Services Manager
Mr B Harries, Youth Services Manager
E Siôn, Menter Iaith

1 Welcome and Apology for Absence

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

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor E. Stephens.

2 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

3 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group held on 29th April 2019.

4 Youth Engagement Participation Service - Welsh Language Progress

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Youth Services Manager provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with a comprehensive overview of the positive progress made within the Youth Engagement and Participation Service in relation to the Welsh Language.

The Steering Group were provided with information in respect of the staff numbers and those who are fluent in the medium of Welsh; the bilingual activities and projects on offer during the daytime, evenings and in the holidays; and the different levels of support on offer to young people who wish to access

services through the medium of Welsh.

The officer detailed the strengths of the service and it was pleasing to learn that each sub-service area contained at least one fluent Welsh speaker. The officer was also pleased to speak of additional funding, which led towards four newly appointed Mental Health and Wellbeing Officers, one of which could communicate through the medium of Welsh. Members acknowledged the importance of the role and the need for young people to access the support in the language of their choice.

The officer drew the Group's attention to the results of the 'Your Voice' survey, where it was concluded that out of the 17 schools within RCT, 26.8% of pupils are able to speak Welsh, but disappointingly, only 2.7% of those use the language outside of school. Discussions ensued around the 'broad' questions asked during the survey, with Menter Iaith commenting that rephrased or follow up questions often provide more clear and concise data. It was added that during recent surveys conducted by Menter Iaith, figures portrayed a more positive picture of the use of the Welsh Language by young people. However, the difficulty of collating such data was acknowledged, with both Members and officers agreeing that a lack of confidence when self-analysing their usage is a key issue for many learners.

Members discussed the psychology of communicating through the medium of Welsh, commenting that young people often choose to socialise in English, regardless of their knowledge of the language. They agreed that the culture of the language in many parts of South Wales, remains a challenge when promoting the language, as many people in RCT consider it a hindrance when communicating through the medium of Welsh.

Nonetheless, the Steering Group were pleased to note the progress outlined within such an integral service area to treat the Welsh Language no less favourably than the English Language. The presentation detailed many opportunities on offer, which encourage young people to gradually their language skills at a range of different ages.

The Chair thanked the officer for the presentation and it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update.

5 Change to the order of the Agenda

The Steering Group agreed that the agenda would be considered out of sequence as detailed in the minutes set out hereunder.

6 Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Progress

The Service Director of Community Services provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with an overview of the Council's performance against the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Action Plan, as approved on January 25th 2017.

The Service Director provided the Steering Group with background to the Strategy and advised 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

Sbectrw, Menter Iaith, Council Services and Elected Members.

Members were reminded that the Action Plan is divided into 2 parts and that all activities and targets are allocated across a number of different themes. Part 1 of the Action Plan outlines the activities and targets that the Council is responsible for achieving either through direct delivery or through the commissioning of services from partner organisations and Part 2 outlines the activities and targets that Fforwm Iaith members are responsible for achieving under their current funding agreements with Welsh Government.

The Service Director spoke of the positive actions taken within RCT to meet the targets set out within the report and Members were referred to Appendix 1, where the progress against targets for each individual service area was detailed. Members were pleased to learn that significant progress had been made in respect of some themes with some targets having already been met within timescales. The Chair was particularly pleased with the progress detailed in respect of the Flying Start provision and commented that he had recently witnessed a swimming lesson being held through the medium of Welsh.

It was recognised that an integral element of the strategy is enhancing the offer to staff and supporting them to access the training available. The Service Director explained that Welsh Government fund the training and was pleased to confirm that many members of staff were engaging, whether that was as a new learner or as a speaker with a lack of confidence.

Members went on to discuss the challenges, which the Council still face, and raised a concern in respect of the action, which permits the Council to 'introduce Welsh as the main medium of teaching in the Foundation Phase in some English-medium primary schools'. The Service Director advised that many of the targets were recognised at the time of development to be ambitious and were proving to be so in practice for a variety of reasons; and agreed that there was need for certain aims within the Plan to be rephrased.

Discussions ensued around future planning developments and the subsequent need for new schools. One Member spoke of his own ward, commenting that although it is positive for plans to include the provision for Welsh medium schools, there was concern that there was higher demand for English medium or bilingual schools. It was acknowledged that the Authority's current Local Development Plan is inclusive of a technical advice note for Welsh medium schools, but a number of Members commented on the need for balance and the correct provision available to meet the demands of each individual area. The Cabinet Member for Education advised that although future projections are factored into planning developments, it was difficult to factor in the unknown.

The Service Manager for Welsh Language Services took the opportunity to advise the Steering Group of recent changes to the Welsh Language regulations, which will impose a target on Local Authorities in respect of Welsh Medium education. With this in mind, Members emphasised that importance of the Steering Group receiving a future report on the WESP for consideration. The officer advised that the new WESP would cover a ten-year period and assured Members that it would tie in with the Promotion Strategy for consistency.

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 following discussions, the Steering Group **RESOLVED**:

- a) To acknowledge the content of the report;
- b) To approve the continued implementation of the Action Plan subject to the addition of further steps to address the priority areas for improvement as outlined in the report; and
- c) That a WESP report is reported to a future meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group.

7 Welsh Language Commissioner's Standardised List of Place Names

The Welsh Language Service Manager provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with a further update in respect of 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 reminded Members of the lengthy discussion on the complexities surrounding the adoption of the Welsh Language Commissioner's list of standardised place-names at the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group meeting on 10th October 2018. During the meeting, Members resolved, with the agreement of Cabinet, that the Chair of the Steering Group seek written confirmation from the Welsh Language Commissioner to establish the rationale of the list prior to any consultation with local communities. Subsequent correspondence from the Commissioner's office requested that the Council put any consultation process on hold and as such, the Chair of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group responded to the Welsh Language Commissioner agreeing that it would be inadvisable to progress with any consultation based on the published list.

Members were informed that following the above-mentioned decision, a revised list of standardised place-names had been published by the Commissioner and was before them, which included some detail and rationale on the recommendations.

Members were unanimous in their feelings towards adopting any of the recommended changes to the place names within RCT and commented that it would be for the residents of each individual area to decide on its name. The Steering Group felt that although a slight change to a place name might be insignificant to the Members, it might have some significance to the individuals who reside in the area.

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

- a) To recommend that Cabinet refuse to adopt the List of Welsh Place-names as applicable to Rhondda Cynon Taf. Until otherwise agreed, the Council will continue to utilise the current names outlined within Rhondda Cynon Taf's Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG).
- b) That subject to Cabinet's endorsement of the above-mentioned recommendation, the Chair of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group writes to the Welsh Language Commissioner outlining the Local Authority's position and to request that the current forms of place-names applicable to Rhondda Cynon Taf are used on the Commissioner's website.

This meeting closed at 11.45 am

**Cllr G Hopkins
Chairman.**