

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
WELSH LANGUAGE STEERING GROUP
10TH OCTOBER 2016

WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY 2016- 2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Authors: Wendy Edwards, Head of Community Learning (01443 744111)
Steffan Gealy, Service Manager (01443 744079)

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to consider the draft Five Year Strategy for the promotion and facilitation of the Welsh Language in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Steering Group:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the report;
- 2.2 Refer the draft strategy to Rhondda Cynon Taf's Fforwm Iaith for feedback from its members;
- 2.3 Publish the draft strategy on the Council website as required under Standard 145 of the Welsh Language Standards
- 2.4 Agree a date for a further meeting to consider the feedback received from potential partners prior to deciding whether to recommend that Cabinet approves the strategy.

3. Background

3.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council received its Statutory Compliance Notice under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 on 30th September 2015. The Final Compliance Notice, as amended in September 2016, outlines the Standards the Council will need to comply with in respect of the delivery of Welsh language services.

3.2 Standard 145 of the Compliance Notice requires the Council to produce and publish on its website by 30th September 2016 a Five Year Strategy that sets out how the Council proposes to promote the Welsh language more widely in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

3.3 The strategy must include (among other things) a target for increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough by the end of the Five Year period; and a statement setting out how it intends to achieve that target.

3.4 It was decided to commission research from an external organisation with expertise and experience in language planning to support the development of a strategy to promote and facilitate the development of the Welsh language in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

3.5 The full report, produced by Sbectrwm, is at Appendix 1.

4. The proposed strategy

4.1 The research undertaken in preparing the draft strategy included desk research and face to face meetings with Cabinet Members, cross party Members, Council Officers including the Chief Executive and Acting Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Heads of Service responsible for key frontline delivery and a wide range of partners.

4.2 The draft strategy begins with an outline of the legal and policy context before proceeding to focus on the profile of the Welsh language in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Much of the data relating to the latter was the result of research commissioned by Menter Iaith on the profile of the Welsh language in the county borough and additional data supplied by the local authority relating to Early Years and School provision. The language profile includes useful maps and tables showing the geographical distribution of Welsh speakers, their age profiles and patterns of language usage. Of particular note is the clear decline in Welsh language usage that

can be identified in the post-16 age group which is consistent with pupils often leaving Welsh-medium education for work or further education and training.

4.3 The draft strategy recommends prioritising some key policy areas for action if the numbers of Welsh speakers in Rhondda Cynon Taf is to be maintained and increased over the next five years. These areas for action are:

- Expanding Welsh-medium education from pre-school to post-16
- Improving language transmission in the home
- Increasing the number of adults learning Welsh
- Extending opportunities for children, young people and families to use Welsh in the community and in leisure activities
- Expanding the use of Welsh in the workplace

4.4 An action plan is included which is designed to promote the Welsh language in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The action plan suggests activities and allocates proposed targets as well as indicating which organisation should be the Lead partner and which organisations could contribute to the achievement of each target.

4.5 It is a comprehensive draft strategy that includes some challenging and ambitious targets for the Council and for some of its partners and potential partners.

5. Next steps

5.1 The actions identified in the draft action plan require the support of partners. Consequently it is advisable to allow the partners named in the action plan to consider the implications for their organisations and to indicate whether they feel able to commit to supporting the action plan as it is outlined in the report at Appendix 1.

5.2 The organisations referred to in the action plan sit on the county's Fforwm Iaith. It is suggested that the document be referred to the next Fforwm Iaith meeting for discussion with a request that feedback is provided to the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group by an agreed date.

5.3 Publication of the Five Year strategy on the Council website is required in order to meet Standard 145 of the Council's Final Compliance Notice. Accordingly it is proposed that the draft strategy be uploaded onto the Council website until such time as a final version is approved.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The draft strategy and action plan produced by Sbectrwm provides clear guidance to the Council on what needs to be achieved in order to maintain and increase the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough over the next five years.

6.2 The draft action plan includes challenging targets that require good collaboration between the Council and a wide range of partners. It is important that these partners and potential partners have an opportunity to consider the draft strategy and action plan and provide feedback to the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group.

6.3 Once the feedback is received Members will have access to all the evidence required for making a decision as to whether to approve the draft strategy or to recommend changes prior to any report being submitted to Cabinet.

Appendix 1: Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2016 - 2021