

## **OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE OF RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL'S WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group on Monday 10th October, 2016 at 10am at the Council Headquarters, Clydach Vale.

### **County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

G Hopkins – Chairman

R Bevan

(Mrs) M Webber

### **Officers in attendance**

Mrs W Edwards – Head of Community Learning

Mr S Gealy – Service Manger – Welsh Language Services

Ms E Siôn - Menter Iaith

Mr Derek James – Head of Communities & Prosperity

Ms Hannah Williams – Cabinet Business Officer

### **Others in attendance**

James Eul - Translator

Debbie Langford - Translator

Ffion M Parrington - Translator

## **6 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for attendance were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs).E Hanagan & C Davies, the Director of Education, E Thomas and the Secretary to the Cabinet, Mr C Hanagan.

## **7 WELCOME**

The Chairman thanked the Members and Officers for attending the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group and took the opportunity to welcome staff of the Welsh Language Translation Unit, who would be sitting in on the meeting.

## **8 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made pertaining to the agenda.

## **9 MINUTES**

The minutes of the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2016 were approved as an accurate reflection of the meeting subject to the following change:-

- To note that further discussions evolved around potentially extending provision for Welsh Medium Schools

## **10 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS APPEAL: DECISION OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER**

The Head of Community Learning provided the Steering Group with a brief update on the Welsh Language Standards Appeal, referring them to the letter provided to the Chief Executive on behalf of the Welsh Language Commissioner. The officer advised that an extension had been granted in respect of 5 out of the 14 standards appealed, with services that provide the first point of contact within the authority, such as libraries and receptions (apart from the 8 main office reception areas), being extended to March 2017. It was advised that the deadline for the Council's corporate social media account was extended to March 2017 but the Council's other social media accounts would have an extra six months to be made bilingual.

One Member queried the amount of resources currently on offer and whether the authority would have enough time to comply with the standards. The Head of Community Learning advised that although the extensions are greatly appreciated, the time scales remain a challenge, putting a great amount of pressure on the Welsh Language Service Unit. It was explained that an audit was currently underway to map the Welsh Language learners and speakers throughout the authority's staff. This would provide managers at all levels with the information required to up skill those who are willing, or to advertise future posts with the correct information. For example, if a receptionist post was required in the future, managers would be able to advertise that a basic knowledge of the language would be essential, which would allow for the correct candidates and a higher level of applications.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Head of Community Learning and the Welsh Language Service Unit Service Manager for their ongoing hard work and perseverance.

## **11 COUNCIL'S WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE**

The Head of Community Learning provided the Group with a verbal update in respect of the Council's compliance strategy. It was explained that the Welsh Language Chief Officer Group would continue to meet on a termly basis where updates would be provided with regard to the Council's position. The officer advised the Steering Group that identifying the level of Welsh Language skills among the staff was the current priority and that in the last six months, over 400 frontline staff and managers had been briefed on the

requirements with training provided to address the standards. The officer explained that although this was a positive step in promoting the message, it had raised the pressure on translation staff.

The Members expressed concern over the work load for staff and questioned the future capacity. The Welsh Language Service Unit Service Manager commented that in order to meet deadlines, there was a need to prioritise and maximise work allowance where possible. It was explained that external sources had been used in the past but due to the increased work load of other local authorities, quick turnovers were difficult. It was agreed that providing service areas with basic translation information would help them grow and alleviate the work load from the Welsh Language Service Unit. An example of this was the Council's leisure services, where basic templates were provided on the Council's internal website for them to utilise and develop where appropriate.

The Chair concluded that RCT were fully supportive and remained committed to promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh Language. It was stressed that although the standards were a challenge for the authority, they must be embraced as a positive drive forward.

## **12 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS CONSULTATION REPORT**

The Head of Community Learning provided a report informing the Welsh Language Steering Group of the results of the consultation undertaken with residents on the Welsh Language Standards. Members were referred to section 4 of the report where the outcomes of the consultation were identified. The officer spoke positively of the consultation, commenting that the information provided by residents would be beneficial in improving and promoting the Welsh Language within RCT.

Overall, Members were pleased with the report outcomes but commented that the information was not reflective of the population as a whole as only a select few individuals participated. It was recommended that the consultation process remain a continuous input throughout the 5 year strategy, with stalls being set up in the future to engage with a wider range of residents. It was added that through ongoing consultation, there would be an opportunity to celebrate successes, promote new provision and ask for further input.

Discussions moved onto the issue of the Welsh Language provision in the Council's leisure services. Members agreed that to provide this service, staff would need to be managed in a more efficient way, remembering that parental choice must be considered. For example, Welsh speaking staff could be made available for those children who wish to have their lessons taught in Welsh and the same with English speaking staff. Members queried whether

bilingual teaching could be introduced to provide more efficient use of staff time but it was advised that this was a specialist skill which should be further developed in the long term plan.

Following further discussions, it was **RESOLVED** to:-

- Note the contents of the report
- Continue the consultation process to gain further information and opinions from a greater range of residents

### **13 WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICES WITH TACKLING POVERTY IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

The Chair welcomed the Head of Communities & Prosperity to the meeting who provided the Group with a summary of findings and recommendations following a research report into Welsh Language and bilingual Services delivered as part of the Council's tackling poverty programme.

The officer advised Members that as part of the Council's approach to tackling poverty and the need to plan proactively for the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards, Menter Iaith were commissioned to undertake a research report. The aim of the research was to:

- Examine existing Welsh Language and bilingual services provided by the three tackling poverty programmes: Communities First, Flying Start and Families First;
- Identify opportunities to build on Welsh Language and bilingual services through these programmes, taking into account the requirements introduced by the Welsh Language Standards;
- Provide recommendations that can help inform the authority's strategic planning and delivery processes as the Standards are implemented.

Members were pleased to see work being undertaken to improve bilingual services as part of the Tackling Poverty programme. Queries were raised in respect of the strategic links between Communities First and schools, with Members being assured that provisions were in place to ensure all staff are trained in the Welsh Language.

Discussions focussed around the link between social housing and schools, with Members agreeing that this would be vital in identifying the families in need before they enter schools. The officer advised that the infrastructure was currently underway and would benefit both staff and families alike.

The Group requested clarity on the strategy in place for children who learn and practice the Welsh Language at school but lack support from their families at home. The Head of Community Learning recognised the need to provide parents with the basic skills in order to help their children. It was explained that family learning programmes were facilitated in schools but due to funding, the Adult Education Service was no longer in a position to deliver

this. One Member added that the practical matters need to be considered such as session times in order to fully utilise staff's availability.

It was concluded that an action plan would be formulated in partnership with Menter Iaith, in order to confidently progress the steps in place.

#### **14 WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY 2016 – 2021**

The Head of Community Learning presented to the Steering Group, the draft Five Year Strategy for the promotion and facilitation of the Welsh Language in Rhondda Cynon Taf produced by Sbectrwm. It was explained that the Members would have the opportunity to amend and approve the document before it formally being submitted to Cabinet.

Members spoke positively on the balanced level of ambition provided within the strategy, commenting that the targets would be a challenge but didn't seem entirely unreachable.

One Member referred to page 141 of the strategy where a table of the number of Welsh speakers in each local community was displayed, commenting that a more detailed breakdown of each town would be beneficial.

Members agreed that it would be important to send the Draft Strategy on to the Welsh Language Forum and partners for their feedback before formally submitting to Cabinet, ensuring that all organisations are aware of the demands and potential future implications.

It was **RESOLVED** to:-

- Amend the community name on page 14 of the Strategy from 'Pendyrys' to 'Tylorstown'
- Provide a more detailed breakdown of the Welsh speakers in each area
- Pass the report onto the Fforwm Iaith and Partners for their observations
- Reconvene in November to discuss any amendments the Fforwm Iaith and Partners may have had

#### **15 COMPLAINTS AND LIVE INVESTIGATIONS**

The Head of Community Learning provided the group with a verbal update in respect of recent complaints and ongoing investigations.

- One complaint was received with regard to online payments for school dinners and capacity available to provide a Welsh option. Members were advised that the issue had been resolved with the option to pay bilingually now available online.

- A letter had been received from the Welsh Language Commissioner, querying the previous issue of the Council's swimming pool lessons being provided in Welsh as well as in English. It was advised that the leisure service was currently looking into ways of resolving this issue with concerns being raised over staff confidence levels when speaking the language and the cost. It was explained to Members that it currently cost more for families to receive the lessons taught in Welsh as the pool is hired by the Urdd, whereas English schemes fall under the Council's Leisure for Life programme. Members agreed that this was unacceptable and expressed the importance of being non-discriminatory to Welsh Language speakers.

## **16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

With the agreement of the Chairman, the next meeting of the Welsh Language Steering Group will take place in November, 2016.

**This meeting closed at 11:45am**

**Cllr G Hopkins  
Chairman.**