



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group meeting held on Monday, 29 April 2019 at 10.00 am 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 R Bevan    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 J Phillips, Aquatics Development Officer  
E Siôn, Menter Iaith

#### **8 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors M. Webber, J. Rosser and E. Stephens.

#### **9 Declaration of Interest**

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

#### **10 Minutes**

The Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2018 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

#### **11 Welsh Language Aquatic Activities**

The Aquatics Development Officer provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with a presentation in respect of the positive progress of Welsh Language Aquatic Activities, particularly in terms of Welsh language swimming lessons.

The officer explained that, in line with Standard 84, an education course that is open to members of the public, must be offered at the same level in both English and Welsh. Previously, the Council provided Welsh Language swimming lessons through the URDD but were not fully compliant with the Standards. Members were pleased to learn that following previous discussions by the Group and queries raised by parents, positive progress had been made in respect of the provision, which resulted in swimming lessons, which are conducted through the medium of Welsh, being on par with those provided in English.

With the aid of a video presentation and photographs, the Aquatics Development Officer evidenced that an action plan had been produced in partnership with RCT's Welsh Language Compliance Officer in order to successfully meet the Standards. It was pleasing to learn that the key focus was on customer experience and that since September 2018, 50 young people had been accessing swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh. Members learned that the 'parent portal', which is accessible by all parents/guardians of the swimmers to keep track of their child's achievements and progress, was now bilingual to ensure the same level of experience, regardless of language preference.

The officer continued by speaking of the following challenges:

- Staffing – the struggle of sourcing teachers;
- Cost – pool hire and training costs; and
- Pool time

Despite the challenges, the officer spoke of the following actions, which were in place to further progress the provision:

- Convert the Rhondda Sports Centre to LFL – there are currently swimming lessons provided in the medium of Welsh but they are not on par with those provided in English;
- Develop a Cynon offer but dependent on the potential increase of demand elsewhere;
- Introduce Baby and Toddler sessions;
- Increase the number of spaces by putting more lessons on;
- Improve advertising by utilising Facebook;
- Develop the Council's own workforce, in order to make the operation more sustainable and more financially viable; and
- To hold a meeting with the Urdd to review the progress;
- The need to target Welsh speakers with an interest in a future in leisure/becoming swimming teachers, to invest in the long term sustainability; and
- The need to target groups such as Learning Support Assistants, School leavers and the retired.

The Chair thanked the officer for the comprehensive presentation, commenting on the positive progress made by the Local Authority, in order to meet the Welsh Language Standards. The Steering Group expressed their gratitude to officers from Leisure Services, along with the Welsh Language Compliance Officer, for demonstrating strong partnership work.

Discussions ensued around the potential to further reach out to Welsh Language Swimming Teachers through school leavers and University students. The Director, Education & Inclusion Services spoke of the community volunteering section of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification and commented that the provision would be a positive way for pupils to gain the qualification, along with upskilling and earning an income. The officer explained that the difficulty of recruiting school leavers and university students is that they often cannot commit to the full 50 weeks of work due to commuting during the holiday periods. The officer spoke of an opportunity, which had been previously advertised on a local university's student portal and advised that, unfortunately, interest was received from English speakers only.

Menter Iaith praised the department for taking action to ensure that the Welsh Language is treated no less favourably than the English Language, and queried whether there were any future plans to develop school swimming lessons in the medium of Welsh. Although it was acknowledged that it is not a requirement of the Welsh Language Standards for schools to access Welsh medium swimming lessons and that the current focus was the development of paid lessons, the officer advised that there was potential for the service to progress into schools in the long term.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update and it was **RESOLVED** to note the progress.

## 12 Welsh Language Annual Compliance Report

The Service Manager, Welsh Language Services provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with the Welsh Language Standards Compliance Report 2018 – 2019 which covered the third full year of implementation of the standards, along with the progress against Standards 52, 58 and 64, which had previously been postponed until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

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 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; and
- (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 continued by outlining key developments, which the Council had progressed during the Municipal Year:

- The introduction of Welsh Language Level 1 Training for all new appointees;
- The delivery of Welsh language tuition to 455 members of staff (March 2019) at all levels with additional Welsh language training in the Autumn term 2018 for Early Years and Family Support Service settings;
- Appointment of Senior Translator roles allowing for a more efficient service, with dedicated support for Democratic Services and the Cabinet

- Office;
- Provision of Welsh simultaneous translation services for all decision making Committees e.g. Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees;
  - A new question introduced for use on all service change consultations to assess the impact that any change will have on the Welsh language or Welsh speakers; and
  - The ongoing review of Website pages with removal of non-compliant pages

Members were referred to Section 5.2 of the report, whereby a number of areas for improvement had been identified. Discussions ensued around the capacity to meet the increased demand for Welsh language tuition at Level 1 and the continuous need to increase the number of Welsh speaking staff. The Steering Group went on to have a lengthy discussion regarding the importance of the Welsh language being listed as 'essential' on the Local Authority's job application forms. Members acknowledged the importance of frontline staff in particular, having basic Welsh language skills when answering telephone calls to the public, but one Member commented that the person's ability to complete the job is far more essential than their ability to speak Welsh. Another Member queried whether the desirable or essential skill on an application form would deter potential applicants, who lack confidence when speaking in the medium of Welsh. Members agreed that confidence is a continuous challenge and that it is important for future applicants to understand that Level 1 incorporates basic skills, which are taught at both English and Welsh Medium Schools, and can also be gained whilst working for the authority.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the department for their continuous hard work on a challenging area and commented that the report before Members outlined good progress made by service areas in embedding arrangements for delivering services through the medium of Welsh.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED:**

- a) 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 30<sup>th</sup> June; 2019; and
- b) To approve arrangements for publicising the fact that the annual report has been published.

### **13 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 taking place with local communities.

The officer advised that in response to the letter of the Chair of the Welsh

Language Cabinet Steering Group, the Welsh Language Commissioner's office requested that the Council postpone any consultation process as there was a further need to revisit the recommendations outlined within the list in respect of RCT. Therefore, Members learned that the Chair of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group had since written to the Commissioner's office to request that the published list of Standardised Place Names is amended to reflect the bi-lingual list of place-names currently used in the administration of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council business.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and spoke of the necessity for the list to be amended to reflect the names currently used, as the Welsh Language Commissioner had failed to provide rationale behind the changes made.

One Member commented that there were still discrepancies within the publicised document, advising that the English form of 'Pont-y-gwaith' should read as 'Pontygwaith'.

Members were pleased to note that the Commissioner's publicised list had been amended at the Chair's request but raised questions regarding the 'experts' and their right to decide on the spellings of each area. Members acknowledged the complexities of amending the place names and remained in agreement that should there be any changes in the future, feedback from the people who the proposals might affect would be essential.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Acknowledge the decision taken by the Cabinet Member, Adult Community Services and the Welsh Language in respect of the list;
- b) Note the Council's current position in respect of the Welsh Language Commissioner's proposed list of Standardised Place Names.

## **14 Social Media Campaigns 2019-2020**

The Service Director, Community Services provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with information relating to the proposed quarterly promotion of national and local Welsh medium/bilingual events via social media as a part of the Council's 5 year Action Plan to Promote the Welsh Language in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The officer spoke of the power of social media, commenting that it is a quick and cost effective method of engaging with a wide range of residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Service Director explained that subject to the approval of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group, there would be four events, based on their national importance as recognised festivals in Wales. It was stated that not only would the campaigns reflect the Council's commitment to increasing opportunities to use Welsh through its social media channels, but that the promotional work would be complementary to the Council's preparations to host a successful National Eisteddfod in 2022. In addition, due to the educational nature of the campaigns, the Council would respond positively to the Welsh Government's expectation to promote the resources they have already shared for use through social media channels.

The Service Director referred Members to the four key events attached as appendices to the report and explained that, if approved, they would take place during the financial year of 2019/20 (one per quarter):

1. Eisteddfod yr Urdd – Quarter 1
2. Diwrnod Owain Glyndŵr – Quarter 2
3. Diwrnod Shw'mae – Quarter 3
4. St David's Day – Quarter 4

Using the Eisteddfod as an example, the Service Director explained that it would be complementary to the Council's Corporate Plan, as well as showing its commitment to promote the work of partners, which is integral to the success of the 5 year strategy. The use of social media to promote the event would be an opportunity to target all residents to be involved, and not just those who are confident with the Welsh language.

One Member praised the campaigns for Quarters 1, 3 and 4 but raised questions about Diwrnod Owain Glyndŵr; and whether the campaign would be promoting Nationalist content. The Chair acknowledged this concern but explained that residents learn of the history of English Kings and Queens, but often, they are not informed about the Welsh equivalent. The Service Director, Community Services advised that a number of schools already undertake work on the subject and that it was being developed nationally. The officer assured the Member that should the campaign be approved, it would not be used to promote a political movement, but would instead seek to promote an integral part of Welsh history by ensuring access to relevant books at local libraries.

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication added that the four events outlined above would seek to target human interest and knowledge of Welsh history, instead of just complying with the Welsh Standards.

Discussions ensued around the opportunity to include more local campaigns in the future, which would promote culture and heritage, with one Member suggesting an event for Aneurin Bevan.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Formally approve the campaigns and timetable for implementation as outlined in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of the report, subject to consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

## **15 Urgent Business**

The Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group spoke of their excitement for the 2022 Eisteddfod, which had been confirmed to take place in RCT.

Menter Iaith took the opportunity to offer support in promoting awareness and engagement with the Council and it was confirmed that a County Steering Group would be established, which would include the involvement of all Stakeholders.

**This meeting closed at 11.35 am**

**Cllr G Hopkins  
Chairman.**