



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP**

**9 OCTOBER 2019**

**WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICES - WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION  
STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION, AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLR GERAINT  
HOPKINS, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT COMMUNITY SERVICES & WELSH  
LANGUAGE**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Welsh Language Steering Group with an overview of the Council's performance against the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Action Plan, as approved on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2017.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report.
- 2.2 Consider whether further information is required.
- 2.3 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.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Council is required to produce a Five Year Strategy to facilitate and promote the Welsh Language in the County under Standard 145 of the Compliance Notice issued under section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The first Five Year Strategy was approved in 2016 and was published, as required, on the Council's website on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016.
- 3.2 The Action Plan for the Facilitation and Promotion of the Welsh Language was approved by the Welsh Language Steering Group in January 2017. The Welsh

Language Steering Group was identified as the appropriate vehicle for monitoring the performance of the Action Plan.

- 3.3 Now that the Action Plan has reached its half-way stage in terms of timescale, it is appropriate for the Welsh Language Steering Group to consider the progress made against the targets and actions identified, and consider any additional actions that need to be taken to ensure it meets its stated objectives by 2021.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Strategy and Action Plan (Appendix 1) were developed over the course of 2016 in collaboration with Sbectrwm, an organisation that has extensive experience of language planning; Menter Iaith and members of Fforwm Iaith, Council Services and Elected Members.

- 4.2 Residents were consulted in order to understand what would encourage them to use the Welsh language and which services they felt were most important as a means of promoting the language. They were also invited to highlight the activities they felt would support the use of the language. This consultation took place between April and July 2016

- 4.3 The feedback provided was crucial to the development of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Action Plan which focuses on:

- growing the number of people able to speak Welsh by 6.8% to 29,670 by 2021;
- increasing the use of the Welsh language in all aspects of community and public life, and
- raising awareness of the importance of the Welsh language as an essential part of the cultural identity and character of the South Wales valleys.

- 4.4 The importance of ensuring an effective Action Plan that will ensure the successful implementation of the strategy was reinforced when the Welsh Government published Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers in July 2017 - its long-term vision for a thriving Welsh language.

- 4.5 The Action Plan is divided into 2 parts:

- Part 1 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;
- Part 2 outlines the activities and targets that Fforwm Iaith members are responsible for achieving under their current funding agreements with Welsh Government and other organisations which align with the Strategy for the Promotion and Facilitation of the Welsh language.

4.6 All activities and targets are allocated across the following themes:

- Education – from early years to secondary provision;
- Language transfer in the home;
- Children, young people and families;
- Community activities;
- Welsh in the workplace.

4.7 It was agreed by the Welsh Language Chief Officer Group at the beginning of July 2016 that a Lead Officer should be identified for each action to ensure allocated to Council services to ensure accountability.

4.8 Progress against many of the targets identified in the Action Plan is recorded during the Council's annual service self-evaluation process that ensures consistency across service area plans without adding to the workload for services. This information is then included in the Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

## **5. CURRENT POSITION AND PROGRESS**

5.1 Appendix 1 includes information on the progress made so far against the targets identified in the Plan. As can be seen, significant progress has been made in respect of some themes with some targets having already been met within timescales.

5.2 Targets achieved in full and/or embedded for the longer term include the following:

- Distribution of the 'Being Bilingual' leaflet and implementation of a marketing campaign to promote the benefits of bilingualism;
- Relocation and/or extension of the named primary schools to increase capacity;
- Creation of materials to encourage parents to use Welsh with their children;
- Development of a Joint Strategy led the Youth Engagement and Participation Service to support the use of Welsh as a language for social and leisure activities;
- Establishment of a series of workshops to cater for different interests for example drama;
- Establishment of Language Use Forums in the Welsh-medium schools
- Organisation of a series of Welsh language social activities in Welsh-medium secondary schools;
- Welsh-language activities have been included as part of the offer at half-term and school holidays e.g. through the Library Service and the Arts Service;
- Training for Language Champions has been made available to staff in Leisure Centres;

- Regular reports are produced by the Welsh Language Compliance Officer on the Council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards;
- A Language Skills Strategy has been developed and is being implemented;
- A language skills audit was undertaken within the required timescale and a training programme implemented which is delivered on an on-going basis;
- Promotional materials, resources etc. have been developed and continue to be developed on an on-going basis to foster respect for bilingualism;
- The Council intranet is used to sign-post staff to relevant resources and promotional materials are provided to all staff through a variety of means—this will continue on an on-going basis;
- The language preferences of all Council staff have been recorded and continues to be recorded for new staff as they begin their careers with the Council;
- Schemes that fosters an environment where the Welsh language is encouraged to be used is evident across all Council offices and email signatures etc. are all bilingual;
- Simultaneous translation facilities are available for internal meetings as Council translators have been trained to provide this service and new appointees to the Welsh Language Service undergo the training.

### 5.3 Progress has been made in respect of the following:

- Early years staff are sign-posted to relevant training qualifications;
- Flying Start settings that are able to introduce basic words/sentences in Welsh have increased following training by our in-house tutor;
- The Council is currently in the process of developing community hubs and Welsh-medium activities are being explored through work with partners;
- The Adult Education Service continues to offer Welsh-medium courses and has increased its provision since 2016 but is yet to sustain a 5% increase year on year although other Welsh-medium activities have been offered such as Gwai a Gwen and Chatty Café (Caffi Cyfeillgar);
- Installation of Cysill and Cysgair on staff and Elected members computers/ipads continues to be rolled out;
- Bilingual interface for intranet launched;
- Over half Welsh medium primary schools in RCT expected to achieve y Siartr Iaith bronze award level with the equivalent for English medium schools, Cymraeg Campus, launched across Central South Wales in July 2018;
- Enrolments on Welsh for adults courses increased from 740 in 2017/18 to 775 in 2018/19;
- 250 additional people have signed up to receive Menter Iaith's e-achlysur newsletter in the last year;

- A Business Plan and Building Plan has been developed for Clwb y Bont – funding is being explored to develop the site.

5.4 The areas that are most challenging to address and/or to monitor progress include:

- Actions that relate to schools and the promotion of the Welsh language in English-medium schools. The inclusion of some of these targets were recognised at the time of development to be ambitious and are proving to be so in practice for a variety of reasons;
- Actions and targets where partners are the Lead Bodies are challenging from the perspective of monitoring as they are not obliged to share information with the Council and any actions they undertake are purely voluntary. In addition, resources that were available when the plan was being progressed may, by now have been reduced and/or contracts for specific areas of work may no longer exist.

## 6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 It is notable that a great deal of work has been undertaken by Council services and Partners to meet the ambitious targets outlined in the Action Plan. Areas where progress has been more limited will require more intensive focus over the next two years in order to ensure improvement against targets by the end of the Five Year period. This may require:

- amending some of the targets to reflect changed circumstances;
- changing the Council service/Partner Body to reflect changes in organisational structure or responsibilities;
- discussion with Fforwm Iaith to explore ways in which the partner-led elements of the Action Plan can be reviewed and to establish an agreed process for monitoring progression.

6.2 Developments at local and national level since 2016 also have to be taken into account in respect of the next steps. In November 2018, (*over two years after the requirement to publish a 5 year strategy was imposed on the Council*) the Welsh Language Commissioner published a best practice guide for county and county borough councils and National Park authorities on 5-year strategies. The guidance clarifies the statutory requirements as well as looking at essential elements of any good practice in support of the main two elements that are central to the 5-year strategies, namely the number of people speaking the language and language use.

6.3 The Annual Assurance Report 2018/19 identifies the following key areas for improvement:

- While recognising that users' experiences continue to improve, consistency is needed to build trust that services are always available in Welsh, and that Welsh is not treated less favourably than English;

- Organisations need to encourage the use of Welsh language services, make them easy to use, and understand the reality of users' experiences;
  - Organisations need to give strategic and detailed consideration to increasing the use of Welsh when they make policy decisions, and in relation to the language of internal operations.
- 6.4 As noted in this year's Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner, the delivery of Welsh language tuition to 455 members of Council staff (March 2019) at all levels with additional Welsh language training in the Autumn term 2018 for Early Years and Family Support Service settings has been commended. However it is evident now that moving learners along the language continuum must be a priority for the Council if we are to meet all our statutory obligations. It is notable that 14 of the 23 service self-evaluations for 18/19 identified the need to improve the Welsh language skills of their staff and the majority of the 14 have front line delivery responsibilities. Enhancing the offer to staff and supporting them to access the training available will increase in importance as the Five Year Strategy reaches its final stage.
- 6.5 To support Councils to meet many of their targets in 5-year strategies, the Welsh Government has funded a programme called Cymraeg Gwaith/Work Welsh, which provides access for the first time, to free Welsh language tuition and materials utilising three approaches:
- Free on-line tutoring (10 hour courses) for beginners;
  - Free 120hr/240hr over one financial year to support language progression;
  - Free week long residential courses to move learners from intermediate to advances.
- 6.6 There is an expectation that Councils take full advantage of this provision, as it is being provided in direct response to the sector's concern over training costs. Neath Port Talbot, Cardiff, Caerphilly, Conwy and Ceredigion Councils have already started with Cymraeg Gwaith/Work Welsh programmes, as well as some Local Health Boards. Welcome though access to free tuition is, there remains a challenge for services in respect of staff cover.
- 6.7 Finally, at a local level, the Council's successful bid to host the National Eisteddfod in 2022 is testament to its commitment to facilitating and promoting the language within the county. It will provide opportunities to further develop accessible Welsh-medium and bilingual activities for residents that will contribute to achieving a number of the targets in the Action Plan.

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 A consultation process was undertaken before the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Action Plan was approved in 2017.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. However, there will be costs and resources as yet not fully ascertained in respect of implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan. Non-compliance with a standard could incur financial penalties of up to £5,000.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Statutory Standards 2015 regulate this area of work.

## **11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 11.1 The Welsh language is a cross-cutting theme in the Corporate Plan and underpins all corporate priorities as the Council is required to comply with the amended Compliance Notice issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner in September 2016.
- 11.2 A statutory Annual Compliance Report is submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner outlining the work undertaken by the Council to comply with the Welsh language statutory standards that will contribute to the Welsh Government's longer-term goal of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. The work undertaken to achieve these standards involves working collaboratively with partners and residents to facilitate a wide range of opportunities for the use of the Welsh language in communities across the county.
- 11.3 The Welsh language is directly related to Goal 6 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act - a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also contributes to the creation of a more equal Wales by providing opportunities for Welsh speakers to access Council services in the medium of Welsh if they so wish.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 Good progress has been made against key areas of the Welsh Language Promotion Action Plan as highlighted in Section 5 above. However, some targets are challenging as they are very ambitious and further work is required over the remaining two years to address them in collaboration with key partners.
- 12.2 It is also an appropriate time to review the actions and targets with partners to ensure that they remain relevant and meaningful in the light of changes to organisations and guidance issued at a national level.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**Item:** Welsh Language Services – Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Progress Report

**Background Papers**

Background papers should be a List of documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the officers opinion will:

- a) Disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- b) Which have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report

But does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information

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