



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

22 APRIL 2021

WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICES - PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR G. HOPKINS

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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 25th 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 Recommend approval to the continued implementation of the current Action Plan until a new Action Plan is approved to cover the period 2021-2026.
- 2.4 Recommend approval to the engagement of an independent consultant to assess the extent to which the objectives of the 5 Year Strategy have been achieved through the implementation of the 2016-2021 Action Plan; and to advise on the development of a new Action Plan for the next 5 years.

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 30th October 2016.
- 3.2 As part of the Five Year Strategy the Council must:
 - 3.2.1 set a percentage target for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in our area by the end of the 5 year period concerned (currently set at +6.8% as agreed at the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group in May 2018);
 - 3.2.2 review the strategy and publish a revised version on its website within 5 years of publishing a strategy;
 - 3.2.3 assess the extent to which the Council has implemented the strategy and has reached the target set in terms of the percentage of speakers in our area;
 - 3.2.4 publish the aforementioned assessment on our website, ensuring that it contains a) the number of Welsh speakers in our area, and the age of those speakers; and b) a list of the activities that we have arranged or funded during the previous 5 years in order to promote the use of the Welsh language.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 Now that the current Action Plan is nearing the conclusion of its final year 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 agree on any additional actions that need to be taken to ensure any revised plan continues with its stated objectives for the period 2021-2026.
- 3.5 Engaging an external organisation that specialises in language planning to undertake an independent evaluation of the impact of the 2016 - 2021 Action Plan will provide Members with an impartial and objective assessment, and also provide recommendations in respect of areas for further development and/or improvement that can be considered by Members of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group as the next Action Plan is formulated.

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 that was allocated against a Council service 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. Significant progress has been made over the period of the plan in respect of some themes with some targets having already been met within timescales.

5.2 Due to the impact of Covid-19, progress during 2020-2021 has understandably been limited with service areas focusing on rapidly adjusting to new models of service delivery.

5.3 As stated in last year's report, targets achieved in full and/or embedded for the longer term include the following:

- Relocation and/or extension of the named primary schools to increase Welsh-medium 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 foster 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 necessary training.

5.4 Despite the impact of Covid-19, some good progress has been made in respect of a number of actions in 2020-2021, including the following:

- The Council has worked in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin to deliver 'Croesi'r Bont,' which is a language scheme to improve language skills in nursery settings. The focus is on ensuring staff at playgroups and primary school teachers use the same language patterns. The aim is to ease the transition into Welsh-medium education for children whose families do not speak Welsh;
- In addition, Mudiad Meithrin worked with Early Years settings to roll out 'Clebran' – which is a language support package for English speaking registered education providers;

- 12 Flying Start practitioners have now completed Open Learning Welsh and 'Cymraeg Babi' courses at the University of South Wales;
- The percentage of Flying Start places delivered through the medium of Welsh has doubled;
- Welsh Language Services led on the revision of the 'Being Bilingual' booklet to coincide with our new statutory Welsh Education campaign.
- Penderyn Community Primary School will become Welsh medium only from September 2021;
- The Council recently consulted upon opening a new Welsh- medium primary school in Pontypridd which would see an increase in Welsh medium primary school capacity by 93 pupil places;
- The principles of the Welsh language Charter are embedding well in schools. All Welsh medium primary schools have successfully received the bronze award for the language Charter; 8 had achieved the silver award by the beginning of March 2020;
- In English medium primary school, 15 schools have successfully received the bronze award;
- Resources have been created by regional consortia as part of the Welsh Government 'Keep Safe. Keep Learning' plan to support the use of informal Welsh at home during lockdown period;
- Awareness about the Welsh language and its contribution to the history and culture of Wales is being promoted in all schools via the consortia;
- Employment Services have worked with Welsh for Adults to use social media platforms to promote opportunities for families to engage with Welsh language learning opportunities;
- Menter Iaith have engaged with 490 families to raise language awareness;
- Menter Iaith have also engaged a total of 4,450 volunteering hours;
- Welsh medium childcare provision on primary school sites has continued to be expanded over the last 12 months. Two Welsh medium settings have relocated to brand new, purpose built facilities;
- Library service successfully moved a number of its Welsh-medium activities on-line during the pandemic and actively promotes its junior

Welsh language books - issues of this stock rose from 6,923 in 18/19 to 8,621 in 19/20;

- At Coleg y Cymoedd, staff can attend the CYMRAEG GWAITH Scheme (4 hours a week) or the normal CPD sessions at a variety of levels (2 hours a week) in addition to the 2 online courses offered through the National Centre for Learning Welsh;
- In 2017-2018 5.69% of Council staff were fluent Welsh speakers in 2018-2019 this figure rose to 6.95% and in 2019-2020 this figure rose to 7.92%;
- The Learn Welsh Campaign launched during July across all Council services with strong up-take and feedback. This campaign will be used as a template for others. Our Learn Welsh campaign includes a fully integrated list of Council and Community-based courses that is promoted to all staff. This ensures that staff have access to as many options for learning Welsh as possible;
- Welsh Language Services have worked with the RCT Source team to prepare the mandatory e-learning module that highlights to staff what needs to be implemented to ensure compliance with the Standards;
- Welsh Language Services are now also included in the virtual induction for new staff where we have a short presentation to all attendees. This demonstrates the status given to Welsh Language matters within our organisation

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 action plan to cover the period of 2021-2026. This may require:

- Reviewing some of the existing actions to reflect changed circumstances;
- Ensuring the Action Plan reflects changes implemented by the Council and/or partners in respect of 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 This work would be greatly enhanced through the appointment of an external organisation with specialist knowledge and experience of language planning that can undertake an assessment of the impact of the actions already undertaken and consider whether, and in what area, more work needs to be done by the Council and partners if we are to achieve the ambitions set out in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. Great benefit was derived from working with Sbectrwm during the development and formulation of the original Strategy and 2016-21 Action Plan. It is important that a similar approach is adopted as we look forward towards the next five years.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for the purposes of this report.

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 and also if the recommendation to appoint an external consultant to evaluate the plan is approved.

Non-compliance with a standard could incur financial penalties of up to £5,000.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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 have been found to be challenging, and work has been hampered in some areas due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the implementation of local and national lockdowns during 2020 - 21.
- 12.2 It would be beneficial to have an independent evaluation of what has been achieved so far and to highlight areas that need further development as we work with partners to develop the next Five Year Action Plan.