



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group meeting held on
Thursday, 22 April 2021 at 10.00 am

County Borough Councillors - Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group Members in attendance:-

Councillor G Hopkins (Chair)

Councillor J Rosser Councillor R Bevan
Councillor M Webber

Other Members in attendance:

County Borough Councillor J Cullwick

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
Ms E Sion – Menter Iaith, RCT

8 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

9 APOLOGY OF ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J James and E Stephens.

10 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group held on 9th October 2019.

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

The Service Director–Community Services provided Members with an overview of the Council's performance against the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Action Plan, as approved on January 25th 2017.

Members were reminded that 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 Service Director advised that as the current Action Plan was nearing the conclusion of its final year in terms of timescale, it was 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.

Members were referred to section 5 of the report which provided the current position and progress against the plan and it was noted that due to the impact of Covid-19, progress during 2020-2021 had understandably been limited with service areas focusing on rapidly adjusting to new models of service delivery, although some good progress had still been made in respect of a number of actions in 2020-2021.

The Chairman commented on the positive achievements made against the plan over the last 5 years and spoke of the positives of using an independent consultant to assist in the assessment of the objectives achieved and to assist in the development of the next plan.

The Vice Chair welcomed the progress report and the amount of work achieved especially through a difficult year due to the pandemic. The Member commented on the engagement with an independent consultant to assist with ascertaining areas for further development going forward.

ES, from Menter Iaith agreed that lots of good work had progressed over the 5 years and the need for an independent reviewer.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the information contained within the report;
2. To recommend approval for the continued implementation of the current Action Plan until a new Action Plan is approved to cover the period 2021-2026.
3. To recommend approval for 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.

12 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS COMPLIANCE REPORT TO THE WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER 2020 - 2021

The Service Manager, Welsh Language services provided the Welsh Language Steering Group with a copy of the Welsh Language Standards Compliance Report 2020 – 2021 which outlined the way in which the Council had complied with:

- the Service Delivery Standards with which the Council were under a duty to comply during the year in question;

- the Policy Making Standards with which the Council were under a duty to comply during the year in question;
- the Operational Standards with which the Council were under a duty to comply during the year in question.

Members were referred to the Annual Monitoring Report at Appendix 1 of the report which outlined the work of the Council over the past year to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. It was advised that in previous years, the work undertaken by service areas has mostly been captured via Service Self Evaluations and published as an appendix to the report. But due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was decided to suspend Service Self Evaluation for the year 2020 – 2021 in order for service areas to focus on responding to the needs of residents during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the Welsh Language Commissioner suspended investigation into non-compliance between 1st April 2020 and 1st August 2020 in recognition of the service delivery adjustments public sector bodies needed to put in place in light of the pandemic.

The Service Manger commented that despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, there had been notable successes in Welsh language compliance and service areas should be congratulated for their continued efforts during the crisis and the Officer provided an overview of the successes.

The Chair thanked the Service Manager for the report and welcomed the progress and the good work entailed and spoke of the importance of developing and supporting Welsh speaking staff within the Authority. The Chair referenced the importance of factoring in the challenges outlined in 5.2 of the report when considering the Council's future 5 year plan.

The Vice Chair also took the opportunity to speak of the notable success outlined within the report.

ES, Menter Iaith commented that the Council were in a positive place and thanked officers for the work accomplished.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. Note the content of the report;
2. To approve the report for publication on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website, and approve the distribution of the report to each of the authority's offices that are open to the public by no later than 30 June 2021 so that it is made available to the public;
3. To approve arrangements for publicising the fact that the annual report has been published.

13 WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN - ANNUAL UPDATE 2020

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group Members with an overview of the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) which was presented and agreed at the Cabinet meeting on the 28th January 2021.

Members were provided with a brief overview of the current position in respect of the WESP including details of surplus capacity, spend on Welsh medium education in recent years, planned minor capital works as

well as detail of each of the seven outcomes setting out how Local Authorities are expected to improve Welsh medium and Welsh language education in the locality.

The ~~Service~~ Director commented how the Council were making progress and were working in partnership to deliver, ensuring the Council did not become complacent in anyway. Members were advised of a forthcoming planning meeting in respect of the new WESP and an opportunity to think creatively and a way of working to meet new targets going forward.

The Vice Chair advised that the WESP had been discussed at the recent meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee as well as Cabinet and spoke of the positive changes noticed in Welsh medium since the formation of the current WESP. The Vice Chair spoke of the importance of noting the increased quality and availability of Welsh medium education provision in early years which was the platform for progression. The Vice Chair concluded by commenting on the areas needing to be addressed for the future WESP and the opportunities the WESP provides to provide the best learning opportunities for the children and young people of RCT.

The Chair welcomed the update and spoke of the good quality of facilities following investment that were now available and the availability of choice for the young people and their parents. The Chair referenced the importance of working in partnership, as everyone has a part to play in setting the ambition for the young adults of the future.

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication advised Members that as part of the development of the new WESP the Welsh Language Steering Group and Children and young People Scrutiny Working group would be involved in the strategy before it is presented to cabinet.

ES, Menter Iaith, spoke of the great work being delivered across the county in respect of Welsh language provision and spoke of the positives being recognised within the nursery settings. She welcomed being part of the process in helping to set the next WESP and spoke of the difficulties of planning for a 10 year plan compared to a short 4/5 year plan. ES referenced the plateau of no increase in the Welsh language over the last 10 years and queried officers as to how the new plan would work to increase this position. The Director agreed that this was a big task for the Council and partners and that there needed to be a continuous and steady build on the good work already being provided to address this issue. The Director referenced the planning meeting on the WESP that was due to take place and again the opportunities such meetings provided to focus and plan for such delivery.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the information provided in respect of the Council's Welsh

in Education Strategic Plan.

14 **OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF MENTER IAITH.**

ES, Menter Iaith Rhondda Cynon Taf provided the Steering Group with a presentation in respect of the role of Menter Iaith, providing details of the charity's aim and mission statement of ensuring that the Welsh language belongs to everyone in RCT and is a living language within the communities. Members learnt that due to the pandemic the organisation had adapted to a digital focus. ES commented on the importance of listening to the public to ensure that they deliver upon what is needed and not what is thought to be needed.

Members learnt how the organisation worked to increase the use of Welsh by providing services such as primary aged children's services, educational arts services and youth services. ES continued by advising of community events that have taken place to promote the language as well as promoting arts and culture. Details of how the Welsh language was promoted within employment, training and volunteering opportunities as well as supporting venues, organisations and infrastructure developments such as supporting centres and partners.

An overview of the structure was provided to the group with members learning that 37 members of staff worked within Menter Iaith, before being advised of how Menter Iaith support centres and events giving examples of the great developments in Clwb y Bont.

ES concluded her presentation by commenting how Menter Iaith looked to provide the best quality of services possible and the importance of collaborative working for the benefit of all within the community to develop and grow the Welsh language.

The Chair thanks ES for the presentation and the work of Menter Iaith and spoke of the importance of reflecting on how the pandemic has affected the potential growth and development of the Welsh language and the focus that needs to be taken forward. ES agreed that due to home working and home schooling many lost their confidence with using the Welsh language as they worked in isolation and agreed that focusing on future needs was crucial.

Following a query ES confirmed that non Welsh speakers were also encouraged to attend the events supported by Menter Iaith to prevent any barriers for any language and provided details of how these events were advertised. Members learnt of the financial challenges of hosting such events.

The Chair once again thanked ES for the work of Menter Iaith and the continued work with the Council for the benefit of all.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

This meeting closed at 11.30 am

**Cllr G Hopkins
Chairman.**