



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

6 OCTOBER 2021

**WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICES - ASSESSMENT 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 assessment of the Council's performance against the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, as required under Standard 146 of the Compliance Notice issued to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report and assessment.
- 2.2 Consider whether further information is required.
- 2.3 Approve the assessment's recommendations.

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.
- 3.2 As part of the Five-Year Welsh Language Promotion 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 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 to promote the use of the Welsh language.
- 3.3 Now that the current strategy has concluded in terms of timescale, it is appropriate for the Welsh Language Steering Group to gain an overview of the Council's performance against the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, as required under Standard 146 of the Compliance Notice issued to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure
- 3.5 Engaging an external organisation that specialises in language planning to undertake an independent evaluation has been an opportunity to provide an impartial and objective assessment and 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 strategy is formulated.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The current Welsh Language Promotion Strategy was developed over the course of 2016 in collaboration with an independent language planning consultancy, Menter Iaith and members of Fforwm Iaith, Council Services and Elected Members.
- 4.2 Residents were also consulted 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 which focused 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 With the aim of ensuring a successful strategy, an action plan for the strategy was agreed by this group and divided into 2 parts:

- Part 1 outlined the activities and targets that the Council was responsible for achieving either through direct delivery or through the commissioning of services from partner organisations;
- Part 2 outlined the activities and targets that Fforwm Iaith members were responsible for achieving under their current funding agreements with Welsh Government and other organisations.

4.6 All activities and targets were 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 were recorded during the Council's annual service self-evaluation process to ensure consistency across service area plans without adding to the workload for services. This information was then included in the Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

4.9 Following approval by this group in April 2021, Nico Cyf, an external organisation that specialises in language planning was commissioned during

the summer of 2021 to provide an impartial and objective assessment of the Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy.

5 THE ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The assessment (Appendix 1) concludes that the Council has fully met standard 145 by setting a target for the percentage of speakers in the area, together with outlining details of how the Council would aim to reach that target in the form of an action plan for itself and its partners.
- 5.2 In addition, by undertaking this review of the 5 Year Strategy the Council has met the requirement in standard 146 of assessing the extent to which the Council has followed the strategy and met set targets.
- 5.3 The assessment also provides a basis for the work of formulating a revised and ambitious 5 Year strategy and Action Plan that will be considered by this Steering Group in due course prior to publication.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 An Equalities and Diversity / Socio-Economic Impact Assessment is not required for the purposes of this report.

7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report is presented for information purposes only / as a review of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2016-2021 in accordance with standard 146
- 7.2 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment will be completed as part of writing the new strategy in accordance with standards 88, 89 and 90. A public consultation is currently being held (1> 30 September 2021) to help shape the new strategy and impact assessment.

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 any new Strategy and resulting Action Plans.
- 9.2 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 The Council's priorities in its Welsh Language Promotion Strategy were in line with the national vision and based on research and consultation. The targets were a natural reflection of the specific needs of the population and highlighted a consideration of current provision and existing financial and practical constraints.
- 12.2 The strengths of the Strategy should be celebrated, and good practice shared. The strategy was driven by a tailored vision supported by key leadership and personnel, together with a robust internal accountability process which also included an element of external scrutiny by key partners through the Fforwm Iaith.
- 12.3 The assessment indicates that there are a number of exciting opportunities to strengthen the Council's direction with the subsequent strategy, and the recommendations in the review (Appendix 1) seek to highlight those opportunities for the future.