



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26TH FEBRUARY 2024

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Lisa Howell, 21st Century School Organisation and Business Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the implementation and the progress of the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022–2032.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the progress made since the previous update.
- 2.2 Consider the actions contained within the appended Annual Work Plan and note the subsequent feedback received from Welsh Government.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The WESP is a key priority for the Council and is the strategy for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in RCT to enable all learners in our communities to develop their Welsh language skills and assist with Welsh Government vision of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 3.2 The WESP underpins the Council's approach to achieving the ambitious target set to increase the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education by 10% over a 10 year period.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation(Wales) Act 2013 requires a local authority to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and outlines that a plan must contain:

A: A local authority proposals on how it will carry out its education functions;

- Improve the planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh in its area; and,
- Improve the standards of Welsh medium education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area.

B: The local authority targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in its area and reports on the progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous Plan or previous revised Plan.

4.2 Following Cabinet permission to consult on the WESP, the Council welcomed the opportunity to engage and participate with a wide range of stakeholders during the statutory consultation process. Following its conclusion, on 13th December 2021, Cabinet approved the draft WESP prior to it being submitted to Welsh Government for final approval in January 2022. The WESP became a formal and adopted strategic document in September 2022.

4.3 In order to meet the ambitious overarching target of the WESP by 2032, the Council, along with external partnership organisations who collectively form the WESP Steering Group, continue to work collaboratively to ensure success.

4.4 The WESP Steering Group is chaired by the Director of Education with each member of the Senior Management Team in the Education Directorate having responsibility for leading the work on each of the seven outcomes associated with the WESP. This is achieved through the work of the seven WESP Sub-Groups, which has included the co-construction of the action plan and moving forward, its effective delivery and review. The WESP Sub-Groups have been established to provide an effective focus for the Directorate, in partnership with external groups and organisations, to deliver on the 10 year plan with the aim of achieving the overarching goal of significantly increasing the number of learners in Welsh medium education by 2032.

4.5 There has been good engagement from our partners in the WESP Steering Group and the seven WESP Sub-Groups. This has included participation from a range of Directorates across the Council, external organisations, early years provisions, English and Welsh medium schools, and further education providers.

4.6 Outcomes from each of the seven WESP Sub-Groups contributed to the annual Work Plan as well as a draft five-year Work Plan. The draft five-year Work Plan was submitted to Welsh Government on 17th December 2022 and positive feedback was received.

4.7 A process for monitoring progress against the Work Plan has been established to ensure that we remain on target. The Annual Work Plan is intended to be a practical working document to ensure effective delivery of the WESP in the shorter term.

- 4.8 The Council is required to review the WESP each year and submit to Welsh Government an Annual Review Report capturing the key achievements for that year. A copy of the Annual Review Report is included in Appendix 1. An Annual Review Report will be provided to Members annually.

5. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The Council's Annual Review Report for year one of the WESP was submitted to Welsh Government for consideration on 31st July 2023.
- 5.2 Feedback from Welsh Government on the report was received on 14th November 2023. The feedback received was largely positive, a full copy of the response is contained within Appendix 2.
- 5.3 There has been further notable progress made in a number of areas since the report was prepared and submitted to Welsh Government in July 2023, and these are listed below.

Outcome 1

- 5.4 Following submission of two capital funding bids to Welsh Government for development proposals to increase Welsh medium childcare provision for Penderyn and YGG Castellau, a sum of £840k has been approved by Welsh Government for Penderyn. The funding decision from Welsh Government for YGG Castellau is still awaited.

As part of the Flying Start expansion, of the total number of 563 Flying Start places offered since April 2023, 90 (18%) have opted for Welsh medium Flying Start provision. This is a notable increase and a positive step forward to increasing the numbers accessing provision.

Outcome 2

- 5.5 The Council's Welsh Language Immersion Service 'Taith Iaith' officially welcomed learners from September 2023. At the end of term (December 2023), a total of 11 learners across seven different schools were accessing support. The immersion team were at full capacity at the end of the Autumn term, however as some learners were expected to finish the bespoke programme by Christmas, new spaces are now available. The immersion teacher has been gathering feedback from those parents accessing the service, as well as from staff at the relevant schools. Feedback received has been incredibly positive, which has been echoed by some of the teachers who attend the WESP Steering Group during recent meetings.

Outcome 3

- 5.6 On the whole, the transition rates between Welsh medium primary and Welsh medium secondary education across the County Borough are positive, however there are certain areas where higher numbers are transitioning to the nearest English medium secondary school. The Head of Service Transformation and Data Systems has met, or is due to meet, with each separate school cluster to discuss the data in further detail with the respective schools.

Outcome 4

- 5.7 Contact has been made with the Hen Felin Training Centre who deliver childcare qualifications in the Rhondda area, to gather further information on the courses they offer at the centre. Although they don't offer courses through the medium of Welsh, they do have a Welsh speaking assessor who can liaise and support students. The assessors actively support Welsh speaking students onto placements in Welsh medium settings with the hope of retaining work in this field. This is a positive step to addressing some of the concerns relating to difficulties recruiting Welsh medium childcare practitioners.

Outcome 5

- 5.8 All schools in RCT continue to work towards achieving the bronze, silver or gold Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus award, which is awarded to schools for increasing the use of Welsh outside of the classroom, in line with the relevant criteria. CSCJES lead on this programme. A total of five Welsh medium primary schools and two English medium primary schools have achieved the gold award and completed the programme. All other schools continue to work towards achieving their respective awards. There are two English medium secondary schools yet to engage with provision, CSCJES are targeting these schools to encourage uptake with provision.

Within the Annual Review Report, there's information relating to the first fully Welsh leisure club in RCT which was established during the summer. At the time of submitting the Annual Review Report, the club had submitted an application for funding and has since received confirmation that they have been successful in securing just over £2,000 of funding from the Sport Wales Be Active grant. Work around this continues and further updates will follow in due course.

Outcome 6

- 5.9 The new Welsh medium LSC provision for Key Stage 3 and 4 learners with ALN at Ysgol Garth Olwg opened to learners from September 2023.

The Council have recently consulted on the establishment of two new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs in the new Welsh medium school YGG Awel Taf which will open to learners from September 2024.

Outcome 7

- 5.10 The Council's Workforce Development team have been creating a 'Teaching as a Profession' section of the Council's new career portal. Wording for the website has been finalised, the design team are currently finalising the production of footage to be used on the website and across social media campaigns.

Marketing

- 5.11 In October 2023, a social media marketing campaign was launched across the Council's corporate social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). The

campaign specifically targeted promoting Welsh medium education with the use of videos shared by Welsh Government and Mudiad Meithrin. The campaign ran for 10 weeks, the statistics of the campaign will now be evaluated to inform future campaigns.

An Eisteddfod Schools Working Party has been established. Working alongside officers from the Eisteddfod team, the working group will serve as an opportunity for schools to engage directly with the Eisteddfod through sharing good practice and collaborating on activities to fundraise and raise awareness of the Eisteddfod ahead of its arrival in August 2024.

In December 2023, with the support of Ysgol Llanhari, a funding application was submitted to Cronfa Glyndwr to secure funding towards the creation of a Welsh medium education promotional video. We were successful in securing the funding, the Council's WESP Officer will now work with Ysgol Llanhari, WESP partners and internal officers to plan and produce a video specific to RCT.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (with Social-Economic Duty) for the WESP has been completed and presented to both the Review Panel and Cabinet, this document has been reviewed and remains valid.
- 6.2 In summary, the Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment identifies both positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts upon protected characteristics.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment for the proposed WESP has been developed and previously presented to both the Review Panel and Cabinet, this document has been reviewed and remains valid.
- 7.2 Recognising the importance of 'Cymraeg 2050', and how essential the education system is to achieving its vision, the WESP sets out the Council's ten-year plan for increasing and improving the planning of provision for Welsh medium and Welsh language education. It builds on the work of the previous WESP for the period between 2017 to 2022 and sets out a plan demonstrating how the Council intends to achieve its ten-year vision.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 A comprehensive public statutory consultation was undertaken between Monday 13th September 2021 to Monday 8th November 2021. The feedback provided via this consultation has been incorporated into the approved WESP for 2022-32.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 The following legislation/regulations are aligned to this report:

- 1) Section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
- 2) The WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019.
- 3) The WESP (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

11.1 The WESP links to the Council's Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:

- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper:
 - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

11.2 The delivery of the WESP will contribute to all seven wellbeing goals listed within the Future Generation (Wales) Act. In addition, due regard has been made to the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 In order to meet the target by 2032, the Council, along with external partners and representatives who form the WESP Steering Group and WESP Sub-Groups, must work collectively to achieve this ambitious goal. The WESP Sub-Groups will continue to work collaboratively to implement the actions identified within the Work Plan with the aim of successfully achieving the key targets.

12.2 The Council remains committed to ensuring the availability of Welsh medium education and will continue to support and encourage transition from the initial early years through to primary and secondary education before progressing through to higher and further education, so that all learners whatever their learning needs are able to access Welsh medium provision. This is in line with Welsh Government's vision to create one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 as set out in 'Cymraeg 2050'.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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