



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET SUB-COMMITTEE

7 MAY 2024

**DRAFT WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL
REPORT TO THE WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER
2023 – 2024**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION, AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT
PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR RHYS LEWIS**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Welsh Language Cabinet Sub-Committee with a copy of the Draft Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023 – 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Welsh Language Cabinet Sub-Committee:

- 2.1 Note the content of the draft report;
- 2.2 Approve the draft report in order for a final version to be published on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website, and approve the distribution of the final report to each of the authority's offices that are open to the public by no later than 30 June 2024;
- 2.3 Approve arrangements for publicising the fact that the final annual report has been published.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Standards 158, 164 and 170 of the Compliance Notice issued under section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to produce a report (an "annual report") in relation to each

financial year that outlines the way in which the Council has complied with:

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

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf received its final Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 30th September 2015 which outlined the Council's duty to meet 171 of the statutory Welsh Language Standards introduced by the Welsh Government under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- 4.2 An application to challenge 14 of the Standards was presented to the Commissioner on 29 March 2016. This resulted in the imposition date for achievement of aspects of 3 of the standards (52, 58 and 64¹) being postponed until 31st March 2018.
- 4.3 The draft report at Appendix 1 covers the eighth full year of the implementation of the standards – from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. A final report must be published on the Council's website and made available in each of the Council's offices that are open to the public no later than 30 June 2024.
- 4.4 The Council is under a statutory duty to publicise the fact that it has published an annual report.
- 4.5. As well as complying with the aforementioned Standards in 3.1, the annual report must include the following:
- the number of complaints that were received during the year that relate to the Council's compliance with the (i) service delivery (ii) policy making (iii) operational standards with which it was under a duty to comply;

¹ Standard 52 – full compliance in respect of websites other than the corporate website was not required until 31/3/2018.

Standard 58 – full compliance in respect of social media other than the Council's main social media account was moved to 31/3/2018.

Standard 64 – areas defined as 'reception services' (for example, Libraries, Leisure centres etc) apart from the Council's main reception service was moved forward to 31/8/2018.

- the number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of the year in question;
- the number of members of staff who attended training courses offered by the Council in Welsh during the year in question;
- the percentage of the total number of staff who attended training courses offered in Welsh by the Council during the year in question;
- the number of new and vacant posts that the Council advertised during the year that were categorised as posts where - (i) Welsh language skills were essential, (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post, (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable, or (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary during the year in question.

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The draft annual report at Appendix 1 outlines the work of the Council over the past year to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.
- 5.2 Relevant sections of the 2023 – 2024 Service Self Evaluations have also been included in the draft annual report having been reintroduced in 2021/2022, post pandemic.
- 5.3 Despite the growing financial pressures facing the Council and resulting service changes, there have been continual successes in Welsh language compliance. Of particular note are the following:
- Welsh Language Services' Service Level Agreement to provide Welsh language policy advice to the newly-operational South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee – Welsh Language Services were recommended to lead on this due to their good reputation in the field;
 - Complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner were dealt with in a positive manner, with new resources produced to strengthen compliance as a result. In one instance the Commissioner's Office decided not to open an investigation into a complaint as the Council was able to demonstrate that it had worked proactively to rectify the matter upon first hearing of it, with no further action required;
 - A series of 'Bitesize' sessions on the Welsh Language Standards were designed and presented by Welsh Language Services staff, which were open to all Council staff. Thus far, 552 members of staff have attended these sessions, with topics covered including translation, Welsh language impact assessments, recruitment, correspondence and organising meetings;
 - The approval of a new guaranteed interview scheme for job applicants with Level 3 Welsh language skills or higher;
 - An increase in the number of Council staff learning Welsh with the Council's in-house Welsh language tutor. This year 94 members of staff began their journeys to learn Welsh.

5.4 Despite the good progress made by the Council, challenges remain as we seek to improve. Areas that remain challenging include the following:

- The continuing need to increase the number of Welsh speaking staff;
- Effective monitoring of any mitigating actions noted in any statutory Welsh Language Impact Assessments;
- Effective scrutiny of the partnership elements of the 5 Year Strategy for the Promotion of the Welsh Language;
- Continuous training and awareness regarding Welsh Language Standards.

5.5 Even in the face of some of the challenges identified at 5.4, feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner during the Council's annual meeting with their Standards Setting and Compliance Officer held in Quarter 3 2023-2024 continues to be very positive in respect of the progress made in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 The draft report has been prepared in response to RCT Council's statutory requirement to comply with Welsh Language Standards 158, 164 and 170 and such assessments aren't required.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The draft report has been prepared in response to RCT Council's statutory requirement to comply with Welsh Language Standards 158, 164 and 170 and such assessments aren't required. Approval of this draft report will provide evidence of our compliance to the regulator.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

8.1 The topic of the draft report relates to a statutory duty and therefore there is no requirement to consult on this issue.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to the draft report. However, there may be costs and resources as yet not fully ascertained in respect of implementation of any recommendations by the Welsh Language Commissioner as well as continued implementation of the 171 Standards. 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 Standards (No1) Regulations 2015; Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – in relation to a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, 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 The draft annual report outlines 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. Achievement of the standards will prevent complaints from residents who have been unable to access services in the Welsh language.

11.3 The content of the draft report is directly related to Goal 7 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act - a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Compliance with the standards will support the normalisation of the Welsh language and ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English 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 This will be the ninth annual report published by the Council that highlights the way in which it has complied with the Welsh Language Statutory Standards introduced by the Welsh Government under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The draft report outlines the good progress made by service areas in embedding arrangements for delivering services through the medium of Welsh.

12.2 It is recognised that further work must be done. However, the Council is confident that the systems developed to monitor compliance are robust and that support is available for service areas to further improve their performance where required.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:
Overview & Scrutiny

Contact Officer – Nicola Lewis, Head of Community and Welsh Language Services
Steffan Gealy, Service Manager, Welsh Language Services