

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL Scrutiny Report Template

Committee:	Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Date:	14 November, 2017
Subject:	Progress Report on the Use of Welsh within the Council's Administration
Purpose of Report:	To seek approval on contents of the report
Scrutiny Chair:	Councillor Gwilym O Jones
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Ieuan Williams
Head of Service:	Mrs Annwen Morgan, Assistant Chief Executive
Report Author: Tel: Email:	Mrs Carol Wyn Owen Ext.2561 carolwyn@ynysmon.gov.uk
Local Members:	Not relevant

1 - Recommendation/s

Members of the committee are requested to accept the contents of this report.

2 – Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

This area of work has connections to the following:

- County Council's Welsh Language Policy
- Welsh Language Standards
- Provision of quality services in the customer's language of choice in accordance with the corporate priority

3 – Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members

To assist Members when scrutinising the topic:-

3.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities **[focus on customer/citizen]**

3.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality **[focus on value]**

3.3 A look at any risks **[focus on risk]**

3.4 Scrutiny taking a performance monitoring or quality assurance role **[focus on performance & quality]**

3.5 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:

- Long term
- Prevention
- Integration
- Collaboration
- Involvement

[focus on wellbeing]

4 - Key Scrutiny Questions

- In what way do you see the rolling programme an example of good practice?
- Are there any additional practical steps that could be considered to assist staff to increase their skills through the medium of Welsh?
- In what way do you think this aim can improve our customer service in accordance with our corporate aims?
- Are the monitoring arrangements outlined in the progress report adequate?

5 – Background / Context

In accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the Council received a Compliance Notice on the Final Language Standards on 30 September, 2015. The Council's Welsh Language Scheme was replaced by the Language Standards on the date they came into force. The Council had already been complying with a significant number of the standards imposed upon it through its Language Scheme and indeed, this scheme went further than the Language Standards in many areas. It was considered that the Council's current position regarding the language should not be diluted by restricting itself to complying with the Standards, and consequently, a new Language Policy was developed. This Language Policy is a combination of the Language Scheme and the Standards which the Council has a duty to comply with. This Welsh Language Policy was adopted by the County Council on 12 May, 2016.

In adopting the Welsh Language Policy it was also resolved to adopt the following amendment to paragraph 3.2.4 of the Welsh Language Policy:

'The Council's aim is to ensure that Welsh will be the Council's main language for both oral and written internal communication. In order to achieve this, the Council will monitor progress annually by the issuing of a report thereon to be presented to Scrutiny at the same time as the annual report on the operation of the Welsh Language Policy '. The County's Welsh Language Strategy also has a commitment towards working to ensure that Welsh is the County Council's main language for administration for the period 2016-21.

The purpose of this report is to outline the actions taken to achieve the above objective.
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6 – Equality Impact Assessment [including impacts on the Welsh Language]

Not relevant.

7 – Financial Implications

Not relevant.

8 – Appendices:

Progress Report on the Use of Welsh within the Council's Administration

9 - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):

APPENDIX

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE USE OF WELSH WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION

1 Policy Context

In accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the Council received a Compliance Notice on the Final Language Standards on 30 September, 2015. The Council's Welsh Language Scheme was replaced by the Language Standards on the date they came into force. The Council had already been complying with a significant number of the standards imposed upon it through its Language Scheme and indeed, this scheme went further than the Language Standards in many areas. It was considered that the Council's current position regarding the language should not be diluted by restricting itself to complying with the Standards, and consequently, a new Language Policy was developed. This Language Policy is a combination of the Language Scheme and the Standards which the Council has a duty to comply with. This Welsh Language Policy was adopted by the County Council on 12 May, 2016.

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The purpose of this report is to outline the actions taken to achieve the above objective.

2 Achieving the Objective

The County Council has adopted a gradual and purposeful approach towards increasing the use of Welsh within the Council's administration. Efforts are made to continue to maintain a positive and empowering corporate environment that champions the use of the Welsh language in the workplace. This, in turn, places clear expectations upon staff that the Council promotes good bilingual practice.

Achieving this aim is also important from a customer service perspective. It is essential that the County Council's staff have the necessary bilingual skills to provide quality services in the chosen language of the customer in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards.

To work towards this objective, it is intended to work intensively with services to ensure that the necessary support is in place for them to increase the use of Welsh, both orally and in writing. The aim will be to have a positive impact on their practices at work and on a social level in the office. A rolling programme is in place to provide direct support for other services to achieve the objective in turn.

3 Challenges

The County Council acknowledges that there are some challenges to be addressed in increasing the use of Welsh within the organization. These challenges are typical of such projects.

In the first place, it is recognized that a lack of confidence, expertise and proficiency can influence the willingness of fluent Welsh speakers and learners to attempt to use their language skills in the workplace. It is also a challenge to change long established language habits.

In future the Council will also need to be able to attract and recruit bilingual individuals with relevant experience. It is increasingly difficult to do so in some professions such as social work, planning, trading standards and legal services.

4 Actions

The proposed actions to reach the objective of increasing the use of Welsh within the internal administration, as well as meeting the requirements of the Language Standards are outlined below:

- Ensuring that the Welsh language requirements of posts are in line with the description of skills identified in the job descriptions. A linguistic assessment of the oral and written skills required for all posts is undertaken before they are advertised. The following statement is included when advertising posts - "Relevant Welsh language skills are essential for the post - see the job description for the relevant details". It is acknowledged that level of proficiency in the oral Welsh language skills required for a post can differ from the written Welsh language skills required for the same post. Exceptional situations can arise where a shortage of staff with the appropriate skills means having to relax

the Welsh language Essential requirement e.g. for social workers in children's Services.

- In the rare cases where an individual's skills do not meet the language designation of the post, a condition of employment is imposed comprising reasonable and realistic targets.
- Ensuring that appropriate support is provided, both corporately and within services, for individuals to reach the targets.
- Ensuring that managers establish a positive culture that continues to promote the use of Welsh in daily activities and that provides sufficient opportunities for individuals to practice their Welsh in a formal and informal setting within the workplace.
- Undertaking a rolling programme of intensive work with individual services (see 5. below).

5. Intensive work with individual services

The short term aim is to increase oral use of Welsh by encouraging staff to speak more Welsh, whether they are fluent Welsh speakers, good learners or less experienced learners. The workplace and informal settings can be used to practice. Staff who are confident enough are encouraged to send simple e-mails in Welsh and in-house support is given to those who are confident enough to draft reports in Welsh.

In addition, practical steps are put in place to provide practical support for staff to increase their use of written Welsh. For example, Cysill / CysGair and the proofreading service of the Translation Unit are available for them to check their written work. This support to ensure the correctness of the language can often be sufficient motivation to raise confidence levels in drafting more reports through the medium of Welsh. A range of training is also available to support and motivate staff such as language awareness, skills courses and courses on how to conduct and chair meetings in Welsh. Language champions can also be identified within the individual services (either fluent speakers or learners), and informal opportunities provided for staff to practice their skills.

6. The Housing Service

In September, 2016, the first service was selected for us to work intensively with them, namely the Housing service. Below is an outline of the methodology and the actions taken to establish and maintain the project.

7. Establishing a baseline of the use of Welsh within the Housing Service

The process of working with the Housing service began by establishing a baseline of the use of Welsh within the service by circulating a language use questionnaire to all staff and then analysing the results. The results were as follows:

Number of staff within the service – 127. Reponse rate 62%			
85% are fluent in Welsh	76% speak Welsh regularly with colleagues	78% send e-mails primarily in Welsh / bilingually	66% wanted to use more Welsh

8. The Action Plan

The contents of an action plan were agreed with the Housing Service Management Team in order to reach the objective. The main priority areas are as follows:

Area	Task	Progress
Leadership	Identify a Language Champion from the service's Management Team	Operational
	The Welsh language to be a standing item on at every meeting of the Management Team	Operational
	Head of Service to meet monthly with the Policy and Strategy Manager / HR Officer to review progress and identify any further support	Operational
Support	Identify a Language Champion within each service unit	8 identified (2 are learners) A sheet of tasks has been prepared for them

		Many of them attended a seminar for language champions on 28/03/17
Raising Awareness	Awareness Raising sessions for staff	34 staff have attended training Providing visual resources to promote the Welsh language
Meetings	Service Management Team meetings to be conducted through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh language to be a standing item on the agenda for the meetings Service teams to conduct meetings bilingually	Operational 50% of meetings through the medium of Welsh, 33% held bilingually and 17% in English only. Working to increase the percentage of meetings held in Welsh / bilingually Providing a course on chairing bilingual meetings for staff on 8-6-17
Language skills	Comparing the language designation of posts with the language skills of postholders	Providing support to develop skills for relevant staff
Increasing the use of Welsh orally	Identify informal opportunities for staff to have the opportunity to practice their Welsh language skills	Language champions establishing the needs of staff and co-ordinating activities
Increasing the use of written Welsh	Encouraging staff to send Welsh medium e-mails to colleagues, contractors, subcontractors and builders	Sessions to raise awareness of Cysill / CysGair Welsh terminology database on Housing

	Encouraging staff who have the confidence and skills to draft reports in Welsh	matters available to staff
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9. Sustainability of the Rolling Programme

The project with the Housing Service is gaining momentum and it augurs well that Language Champions are starting to take ownership of the challenge. They have voluntarily produced and circulated a questionnaire and conducted a follow up session for their colleagues in order to establish their language needs and the support they require. It is hoped in due course that we can draw upon their experiences of what works well and the main obstacles in order to help the next service that will be receiving intensive support. The next services to receive this support will be Public Protection and Leisure.

10. Monitoring Progress

Progress against the objective will be reported annually in a report to be submitted to the County Council's Corporate Scrutiny Committee. In addition, regular progress reports are submitted to the Language Task Group and the County's Strategic Language Forum.