

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 19 June 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
Councillor Gwilym O Jones (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Non Dafydd, Euryrn Morris, Pip O'Neill, Derek Owen, Margaret Murley Roberts, Ken Taylor and Sonia Williams

Mr John Tierney – The Roman Catholic Church

Portfolio Member

Councillor Dafydd Roberts – Portfolio Member for Education & Welsh Language

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive,
Deputy Chief Executive,
Director of Education, Skills and Young People,
Head of Democratic,
Scrutiny Manger (AGD),
Scrutiny Officer (EA),
Committee Officer (MEH)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jeff M Evans and John Ifan Jones

Mrs Gillian Thompson – Parent Governor – Primary Schools;
Mrs Wenda Owen – The Church in Wales

Portfolio Members

Councillor Neville Evans – Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism and Maritime;
Councillor Nicola Roberts – Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change

Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer;
Policy and Welsh Language Manager (FO)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Llinos Medi – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Member for Economic Development;
Councillor Robin Williams – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member for Finance;
Councillor Carwyn Jones – Portfolio Member for Corporate and Customer Experience;

Councillor Alun Roberts – Portfolio Member for Adults' Services

1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the following meetings were confirmed as correct:-

- Minutes of the meeting held on 17 April, 2024
- Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May, 2024 (Election of Chair/Vice-Chair)

4 WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL REPORT - 2023/2024

The Welsh Language Annual Report was presented for the Committee's consideration and for comment prior to its submission for delegated approval by the Portfolio Member for publication.

The Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language said that in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards Regulations 2015 the Council must prepare an Annual Report regarding the compliance with the standards. He referred that there has been an increase in staff receiving Welsh language training over the year and the National Centre for Learning Welsh has supported the Council. He further said that it was pleasing that the Welsh Language Commissioner and Care Inspectorate Wales have praised the Authority that it has met all the Welsh language standards.

The Head of Democracy reported that the Annual Report has been structured in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language Commissioner and to comply with the headings that is required to be reported upon. He further said that the Anglesey perspective has also been incorporated within the report to highlight the wider successes attained within the Authority during the last year.

In considering the report the Committee raised the following issues:-

- Reference was made to the impacts on the recruitment process for posts that are challenging to fill and the requirement, in some services, to recruit people who need additional training and support to develop their Welsh language skills and to what extent does a focus on the Welsh language limit the ability to attract individuals to posts requiring a set of specialist skills? Further questions were raised that there are 178 staff with language skills of 0 – 1 Welsh language skills with only 27 having received training. The Head of Democracy responded that it is essential that the Council provides training to staff to support their language skills. He noted that the Welsh language is considered a crucial skill with levels of language skills varying depending on the requirements

of the role of a specific post. If there is a change in the language skills of a post discussions need to be undertaken within the Recruitment Panel. He further said that some posts only require the lower level of language skills, and that level will remain part of that post. It is recognized that there is a requirement to invest more to increase the linguistic skills of staff. The recruitment of some specialised posts is challenging to fill for a number of reasons including linguistic requirements, but support and training is available to improve their Welsh language skills. The Chief Executive said that the robustness of the Welsh Language Policy and the expected language skills is a way of measuring improvements of staff linguistic skills and the Welsh culture of the Authority. He further said that there is an expectation when an individual within a team is having an affect on front line services due to the lack of Welsh language skills, there is an expectation within the employment contract of that individual to undertake Welsh language training.

- Questions were raised as to what additional information could add value to the Annual Report? The Head of Democracy responded that internal discussions have been undertaken as to how the Annual Report can be improved in the future and especially the use of data as regards to the use of the Welsh language within the services offered by the Council and the language choice of the customers. He said that case studies could be beneficial to the enhancement of the Annual Report and to track development and progress of staff attending Welsh language training.
- Reference was made that there has been a decrease in internal Welsh language training courses in 2023/204 to 30% from 55% in 2022/2023. Questions whether it would be advantages to afford additional training sessions and the need to ensure resources is spent more effectively. Further questions were raised as to whether there is a lack of confidence in staff speaking Welsh and it was considered that Welsh awareness sessions be afforded to give the history of Wales and culture. The Head of Democracy responded that more bilingual language training courses are offered and there is a need to examine the data from the uptake of these training session. He noted that he would make enquiries as to the availability of Welsh awareness session.
- Questions were raised as to whether there are courses available to continue the improvement in written and language skills. The Head of Democracy responded that it is important that there is a variety of levels of training available to staff from basic skills to language refresher courses. Work has undertaken with the Centre for Learning Welsh which afford training courses free of charge and courses are also available to continue with the development of people to improve their Welsh written and language skills. He further said that during the Annual Conversions process with staff the Welsh language levels can be discussed and staff can be offered training provision to use the Welsh language formally within the workplace.
- Reference was made that there has been an increase in the use of the Welsh language within the schools in the Holyhead but there is a lack of Welsh language course available for adults in the area. The Head of Democracy responded that the Authority works with partner organisations through the Anglesey Language Forum who organise Welsh language courses within communities.
- Questions were raised as to whether the publications of findings of the innovative research into the field of recruitment to help organisation to recruit

more Welsh speakers by reducing any barriers to applicants has been published. The Head of Democracy responded that the findings of the research will assist the Authority's recruitment process and to guide Managers to gauge language levels to certain posts within the Council.

- Reference was made to the assessment of the effect on the Welsh language when planning applications are submitted and especially large developments within communities and the effect it can in the longer term. The Head of Democracy responded that the Policy and Welsh Language Manager is consulted when planning applications are considered during the consultation process. He further said that the Welsh Language Assessment is afforded by the developer under the planning regulations. He noted that the process could be considered under the new Local Development Plan. Comments were made that the support of the Welsh Language Commissioner be ascertained to put pressure, on a national level, on Welsh Government that there is a need to change the legislation that developers can afford Welsh Language Impact Assessments. The Chief Executive said that there will be collaboration between Officers on a strategic level in the development of the new Local Development Plan, however, planning applications must be evaluated on the population data and especially the linguistic perspective must be fully considered within the national planning policies set out by Welsh Government. The Portfolio Member for Education and Welsh Language said that a joint letter between both him and the Portfolio Member of Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change has been forwarded to Welsh Government ascertaining whether there is a more comprehensive guidance as regards to language risk assessments as there is a high proportion of Welsh language speakers on the Island.
- Reference was made that some members of Town and Community Councils are unable to contribute within meetings in Welsh as translation facilities are unavailable. Questions were raised as to what translation support is available from the Council at Town and Community Council meetings. The Head of Democracy responded that work will be undertaken to identify Welsh Language Champions within communities and Town and Community Councils to understand the requirements and existing practise. He noted that there is an intention to consider the Welsh language provision within the Town and Community Councils Forum in October. The Policy and Welsh Language Manager has been in contact with organisations who afford translation facilities to support Town and Community Councils.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To accept the Welsh Language Annual Report for 2023/24;**
- **To note its contents and that Scrutiny's comments be forwarded to the Portfolio Member as part of its submission for delegated approval and subsequent publication.**

ACTIONS :

- **That Welsh awareness sessions be made available to staff to promote the history and culture of Wales;**
- **That the consultation process on the effect of the Welsh language should be reviewed during the planning application process.**

5 WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN : 2022-2032 - PROGRESS REPORT (2023/2024)

Submitted – a report by the Director of Education, Skills and Young People for consideration by the Committee.

The Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language said that the purpose of the report is to provide an annual update on the progress made as regards to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People reported that over the period of 2023/2024, schools have received the support of the Learning Service, the language centres, the Language Charter and GwE to ensure provision of standard that reflects school categories and the needs of the pupils within the schools on the Island. He noted that the Welsh Education Strategic Plan progress report must be submitted to Welsh Government to report on the progress to reach the Council's priorities and address the aims of the Plan. The report notes the stability of outcomes 1,2,3, 5 and 6 with a decrease in outcome 4 (pupils studying through the medium of Welsh) and an increase in outcome 7 (number of staff able to teach through the medium of Welsh). The language categories have been discussed with the schools with Category 1 – English Medium, Category 2 – Bilingual and Category 3 – Welsh Medium. There is a transitional period to work towards Welsh Medium (T3). As noted within the report, all primary schools except one are within Category 3 and 4 secondary schools are within Category 3 with one secondary school in T3. He further reported on the 'Cynllun y Llan' which is specifically for the Welsh Language Centres and 96 primary school children attended the Language Centres and 150 pupils received aftercare language support. One member of the centre will be sustained on the Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi site, strategically as part of the transitional plan to support the school from Category T3 to Category 3.

The points of discussion by the Committee were as follows:-

- Questions were raised as to how parents will be assured that their children will receive their education in Welsh following the transition from a Category 3 primary schools to Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that a plan will be created in Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi which includes creating a Category 3 stream in Year 7 from September 2024. By 2029, every year will have a Category 3 stream within the school. One class in Year 7 will be afforded who will receive their education through the medium of Welsh from September 2024 and progression will follow in the following Years 8 to 11. Staff have already attended Welsh language courses and are optimistic that pupils from Holyhead primary schools will have the provision to receive their education through the medium of Welsh in Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi. Further questions were raised as to whether there will be a provision for parents to be able to contact the school with other language problems that may arise. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that a Language Charter Officer has been appointed which will focus on how to improve the Welsh language within the school and outside of the classroom.

- Questions were raised as to what degree does the Language Centres service fully respond to the immersion needs across the Isle of Anglesey? The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that there are one primary and one secondary Language Centres which cater for the needs of pupils that move into the area. Grant funding is sought to improve the capacity within the Language Centres and a teacher is appointed within the secondary immersion provision. He further said that it is evident that there is a need for the Language Centres as there is a waiting list of pupils waiting to attend these Centres. 32 pupils per term from the primary schools and 30 pupils per term from the secondary schools attending these Language Centres. The success of these Language Centres is evident as other local authorities have adopted the same provision afforded. However, there are financial challenges to continue providing the provision of Language Centres. Further comments were made that pupils are having to wait for the provisions provided by the Language Centres. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that teachers within the schools already have the language skills to teach bilingually but due to the increasing demand for the Language Centres it is unfortunate that pupils have to wait to attend the Language Centres due to capacity.
- Questions were raised as to the challenges foreseen in progressing Holyhead High School from Category T3 to Category C3. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that there is a commitment within Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi to progress with the transition of ensuring that pupils receive their education through the medium of Welsh from Year 7 onwards. The continued monitoring and consultation with parents are essential to alleviate any concerns that may arise.
- Reference was made that the Church School in Holyhead is within Category 2 and questions were raised as to whether there is provision to progress the school into Category 3. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that the Church school has been placed in Category 3 following the hard work of the school. The other school within the Authority that is currently a Category 2 school is the Foundation School and there is a commitment within the school to ensure that both languages are taught with an appointment of a teacher to focus on the Welsh language provision which is part of their development plan to increase the use of the Welsh language within the school.
- Questions were raised as to what extent is the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan on track and likely to achieve what is required? The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that there are challenges within the Strategic Plan to address the targets expected. Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy has set a target of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 which is a challenge within the Education sector as there is a high level of non-Welsh speakers' people moving into the Island. Census records have also shown that there is a decrease in people speaking Welsh within the household. However, there is strong evidence within the schools on the Island that the Welsh language is paramount to the education of children. The Chief Executive said that the Census records show that there are 70% of the population of the Island have the awareness of the Welsh language compared to 25% in other areas of Wales. He noted that the target of 1 million of Welsh speakers by 2050 will be challenging and partner organisations needs to be aware that policies and legislation together with funding is important to match the targets.

- Reference was made that when children return to schools following the six weeks summer holiday period, they seem to have reverted to speaking English with each other. Questions were raised as to the provision available for parents to learn Welsh so that they can support their children in speaking Welsh within the home. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that there are courses available through the Canolfan Bedwyr within Bangor University and other provisions provided to learn Welsh is advertised within the schools with some schools affording the provision to learn Welsh within the schools.
- Reference was made that the Urdd National Eisteddfod will be held on Anglesey in 2026. Questions were raised as to whether the promotion of the Urdd Eisteddfod coming to Anglesey can be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that it will be an opportunity to highlight the progression of the Welsh language within the Island when the Urdd National Eisteddfod will be held on Anglesey in 2026 and can be included within the Strategic Plan. Working in partnership with organisations involved with children and young people is paramount to the success of the promotion of the language. He noted that it will be an opportunity for non-Welsh speaking families to attend the Eisteddfod.

It was RESOLVED to note the update on Anglesey WESP 2022-2023 data and the proposed method of sharing this information.

ACTION : As noted above.

6 COMMITTEE NOMINATION - FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

Submitted – a report by the Scrutiny Manager in respect of the above.

It was RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Derek Owen to serve on the Finance Scrutiny Panel.

7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025

The report of the Scrutiny Manager setting out the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's indicative Forward Work Programme for 2024/2025 was presented for consideration.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To agree the current version of the forward work programme for 2024/2025;**
- **To note progress thus far in implementing the forward work programme.**

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**