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## LANGUAGE SUB-COMMITTEE, 17.04.12

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**Present:** Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Chair);  
Councillor Liz Saville Roberts (Vice-chair).

Councillors Elwyn Edwards and Penri Jones.

**Officers:** Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Gwen Carrington (Head of Housing and Social Services), Debbie Williams Jones (Welsh Language Officer), Ruth Richards (Equality and Language Policy Officer), Lowri Evans (Policy Development Officer) and Eirian Roberts (Committee Officer).

**Apologies:** Councillors Dyfed Edwards, Llinos Merks, Eric Merfyn Jones and Sion S. Roberts.

### 1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

### 2. WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT “MORE THAN JUST WORDS...”

The Chair explained that a special meeting of this Language Sub-committee had been called to discuss and draft a response to the Welsh Government consultation document “More than just words...”, namely a Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care.

The Chair emphasised that the lack of Welsh language services in these areas had been a cause of concern to him and that he was extremely pleased that the document recognised that the ability to use the language had to be an essential element of care, and not an additional option. He very much hoped that this emphasis on “*need*” as opposed to “*option*” would be reflected in future legislation.

The Welsh Language Officer set the background and context to the document. The draft response of the Provider and Leisure Department to the eight specific questions asked on the response form in relation to the consultation had been included with the meeting papers, and the Social Services and Human Resources Departments were currently in the process of preparing their response to those questions.

The Head of Housing and Social Services then delivered a verbal presentation on the department’s methods of trying to address the language needs of the service users, together with the associated risks and challenges.

### RESOLVED

- (a) To agree with the content of the draft response of the Provider and Leisure Department to the document “More than just words...”.
- (b) To submit the following additional observations as this sub-committee’s response to the document:-

- To declare keen support to the change of emphasis from “*option*” to “*need*” because the ability to provide a service through the medium of Welsh is an essential element of care, and not an additional option.
  - To emphasise that clarification is required regarding the status of the document and its relationship with language standards to be drawn up in due course in the wake of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
  - To note that the expectations in terms of reporting / monitoring and accountability are not clear and that these matters need to be clear in the final document.
  - To suggest that the document should have been referred to the attention of the Language Commissioner in the first instance, before inviting observations on its content, and emphasise that a clear link is needed between it and the proposed language standards.
  - To note that it appears that this long-awaited and far-reaching document ticks all the boxes. However, in order for the strategy to work it would need to be in a more consistently supportive context and core changes to other strategies would need to be considered if it was to succeed.
  - To emphasise that the transfer from school to college is of key importance and that this needs to be looked at to ensure that learning paths in the field of health and care incorporate the language dimension. Recruitment methods should also be considered, including how to attract young Welsh speakers to the health and care sector.
  - To suggest that the ability to work in the field of care through the medium of Welsh should be recognised as an additional qualification.
  - To emphasise that administrative and support structures are also important in terms of addressing the need for provision through the medium of Welsh.
  - To note that an emphasis should be placed on the work of monitoring and supporting those who work under a contract.
  - To note that one should not depend solely on protocol, as that in itself does not lead to meaningful changes.
- (c) To combine the above observations with the observations of the Provider and Leisure, Social Services and Human Resources Departments and submit them, in due course, as the formal response of Gwynedd Council to the document.

At the end of the meeting, the Chair thanked everyone for their contribution over the last two years, noting that it had been a privilege for him to chair this sub-committee.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.15am.