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## LANGUAGE COMMITTEE, 11.10.12

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**Present:** Councillor Liz Saville Roberts (Chair);  
Councillor Gweno Glyn (Vice-chair).

**Councillors:** Craig ab Iago, Tom Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Eric M. Jones, Elfed Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Mandy Williams-Davies.

**Officers:** Sion Huws (Compliance and Language Manager), Ruth Richards (Equality and Language Officer) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**Observer:** Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Customer Care).

**Apologies:** Councillors Elwyn Edwards, Selwyn Griffiths, Mair Rowlands, Gareth Thomas and Eirwyn Williams; Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director).

### 1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

### 2. URGENT BUSINESS

#### (1) The Welfare Reform Act

Submitted – a draft letter from Iwan Trefor Jones, Corporate Director, to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

- Expressing concern that the proposed changes to the welfare system would mean fewer opportunities for the residents of Gwynedd to use the Welsh language in relation to the process of claiming benefits.
- Requesting a discussion with her regarding these concerns, and asking for her concerns on the issue.
- Requesting further information on the Department of Work and Pensions' obligations to promote Welsh language services, either by means of an existing Language Scheme or under the proposed Language Standards.
- Calling for collaboration with her to try to influence the Department of Work and Pensions to promote the Welsh Language as much as possible while introducing the new system.

The committee was asked for their observations on contents of the letter.

Concern was expressed that the Welsh Language Commissioner's powers were restricted to devolved matters, and that it should be insisted that the Commissioner called for the reinstatement of the powers formerly held by the Welsh Language Board over every public body operating in Wales.

**RESOLVED to approve the draft letter and send it on behalf of the Language Committee and the Corporate Director.**

#### (2) Welsh Language Promoter in Schools

The committee was asked to support the bid from the Schools Service to the Council for half the funding for the post of Primary School Welsh Language Promoter.

It was explained that funding had been received from the Welsh Government for half the post, and although it was originally envisaged that the schools would meet the remainder of the cost, the Working Group established to produce the Language Charter for Schools was of the opinion that the funding should come from the Council's corporate budgets, as one of Gwynedd Council's main aims and objectives was to promote and safeguard the Welsh Language. Therefore the Head of the Schools Department had submitted a bid to the Council for the remainder of the funding, and the Working Group was eager to secure the support of the Language Committee to this.

**RESOLVED to unanimously support the Schools Service's bid for funding from the Council's corporate budgets for half the Primary School Welsh Language Promoter post.**

### 3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 28 June, 2012 as a true record.

#### Matter arising from the minutes

#### Item 6 – 2011/12 Language Plan Monitoring Report

The Chair requested that an item be scheduled on the Language Committee's agenda for a presentation on the work of the Language Champions in the Leisure Centres.

### 4. STANDARD NAMES OF STREETS, HOUSES AND PLACES

Submitted – the report of the Equality and Language Officer presenting background information on this topic, following the request made by this committee at its last meeting.

Referring to the Welsh Language Commissioner's investigation of a case relating to the use of Welsh addresses (paragraph 1.8 of the report), the Equality and Language Officer noted that the Commissioner had now confirmed that she was satisfied that the Council was conforming to its Language Scheme.

She further noted that a letter had been received from Pwllheli Town Council Clerk requesting the Council to inform each Head of Department of the requirement to use Welsh versions of street names, and to contact the Post Office and BT to try to persuade them to use the Welsh versions rather than the English versions.

The officials were asked to enquire about the possibility of using only the Welsh names on street signs in future.

It was noted that it was not currently possible to place a sign on a road that leads from another road, and that many old Welsh names had been lost as a result of this.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) That members of this committee draw attention to any specific examples of non-Welsh names on geographic features within their areas.**
- (b) To invite a representative from the Welsh Place-name Society to meet the committee to talk about the society's work and to discuss how the Council could assist it.**

- (c) To remind each head of service of the requirement to use the Welsh versions of street names.
- (ch) To contact the Post Office and BT to try to persuade them to use the Welsh versions of street names.
- (d) The officials were asked to enquire about the possibility of using only the Welsh names on street signs in future, by the next meeting.

## 5. THE WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S RESPONSE TO GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S ANNUAL LANGUAGE MONITORING REPORT 2011-12

Submitted – the report of the Equality and Language Officer, presenting the Commissioner's comments on Gwynedd Council's Language Scheme Monitoring Report 2011-12, and the Council's response to the request for further information on some aspects of the report.

Specific attention was given to the following matters:-

(i) D.1 – Language Skills Strategy Action Plan

**RESOLVED to send a message to the Head of Human Resources stating that the committee was eager to see the database for recording staff language skills in place before March 2014, and to report back at the next meeting.**

(ii) 5.A – Number of non-Welsh speaking officers appointed to 'Welsh Essential' posts and the number who attend language training

A question was asked about which department(s) had appointed the two officers that did not meet the linguistic requirements of their posts. The Equality and Language Officer agreed to make enquiries and to report back.

(iii) 5.B – The number of Welsh-speaking staff and the total staff numbers in the departments

It was noticed that the estimated percentage of Welsh speakers in the Social Services, Leisure and Housing Department was far lower than the other departments. It was noted that it was more difficult to attract Welsh speakers to some posts within those fields, and that many of the services provided by the department were being privatised. A question was raised about whether young people starting to think about possible career paths could be encouraged to consider following courses in these fields.

**RESOLVED to look in greater detail at the reasons for the low figures in the Social Services, Housing and Leisure Department.**

(iv) B.2 – Joint provision of some specialist children's services

The view was expressed that the interim 'Language Guidelines' document (Appendix 3 to the report) did not comply with Gwynedd's Language Scheme. It was emphasised that consent should not be given to anything that undermined this Council's Language Plan, and in a situation of conflict between two language plans, priority should be given to the most robust.

**RESOLVED to send the committee's comments to Derwen's Management Board, by first contacting the Service Manager, Integrated Disabled Children's Team, and report back at the next meeting.**

- (v) D.3 – Language awareness sessions for front-line staff that aren't care staff or youth workers

It was noted that people should be persuaded to attend these sessions. The Equality and Language Officer noted that the dates for these sessions had only recently been set, and that she would speak to the Training Unit in due course to find out how many had responded.

**RESOLVED – to accept the Welsh Language Commissioner's response to Gwynedd Council's Language Scheme Monitoring Report 2011-12, and the Council's response to the request for further information on some aspects of the report.**

## 6. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

Submitted – the report of the Equality and Language Officer, giving details of the latest language complaints received against the Council, complaints regarding other organisations and various other relevant matters.

Specific attention was given to the following matters:-

- (i) English-only instructions on a new crossing on Porthmadog bypass

The Equality and Language Officer suggested that it would now be timely to refer this matter to the Welsh Language Commissioner as a positive response had not been received from the Welsh Government.

- (ii) The use of the Welsh wording 'dog waste' on Council bins

It was recommended that the wording 'baw cŵn' (dog mess) should be used on the Council's bins, and that the statement by the Highways and Municipal Department that 'gwastraff cŵn' (dog waste) was the standard wording would not be accepted.

**RESOLVED to refer the matter to the attention of the Welsh Government's Translation Unit and the Council's Translation Unit for their views.**

- (iii) English-only Events Licensing Form

**RESOLVED to use the unofficial Welsh version of the form until further guidance is received from the Welsh Language Commissioner.**

- (iv) English-only internal e-mail filtering system

**RESOLVED to report back to this committee on the result of the Customer Care Service's efforts to find a resolution to the problem with the company.**

- (v) Failure to provide an interview through the medium of Welsh

**RESOLVED to send a message to all heads to forewarn them of the consequences if they do not arrange interviews through the medium of Welsh.**

(vi) WC Sign on the A487, Porthmadog

The need to observe this issue was emphasised.

(vii) The need to review national planning policies so that more consideration is given to the need to provide Welsh signage in retail developments

**RESOLVED to send a letter to Leighton Andrews AM, the Minister for Education and Skills, requesting that he confirms the role of the Welsh Language Commissioner in this context, and to press for assurance regarding this power.**

(viii) Padarn Buses

**RESOLVED to ask the Equality and Language Officer to discuss the arrangements of the meeting with the Chair and the Vice-Chair.**

The following matters were raised by members:-

(i) Caernarfon Market

It was noted that English-only signs were displayed in Caernarfon market.

**RESOLVED to ask the Compliance and Language Manager to look at the Council's powers in the context of such cases.**

(ii) English-only CRB Forms

A member noted that he was recently requested to complete an English-only CRB form in his role as a governor of Ysgol Bro Hedd Wyn, Trawsfynydd.

**RESOLVED that the member gives the Equality and Language Officer further details and that she will investigate the matter.**

(iii) English-only Swimming Certificates in Blaenau Ffestiniog Swimming Pool

It was noted that children had been receiving English-only swimming certificates in Blaenau Ffestiniog Swimming Pool.

The Equality and Language Officer replied that she believed that this matter had been resolved, but that she would check this with the Operational Senior Manager, Provider and Leisure Department.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.10pm.