
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE, 27.06.13

Present: Councillor Gweno Glyn (appointed to preside in the absence of the Chair).

Councillors: Elwyn Edwards, Tom Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Eric Merfyn Jones, Mair Rowlands, Gareth Thomas, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Mandy Williams-Davies.

Officers: Sion Huws (Compliance and Language Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Ex-officio Member: Councillor Huw Edwards (Council Chairman)

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

Apologies: Councillors Alwyn Gruffydd, Dyfrig Jones, Liz Saville Roberts

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Liz Saville Roberts as Chair of this committee for 2013/14.

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Gweno Glyn was appointed to preside over the meeting.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

This item was deferred until the next meeting because, should the committee wish to re-elect Councillor Gweno Glyn as vice-chair, it would not be possible to do so at this meeting as she could not preside over her own election.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 16 April, 2013 as a true record, conditional on noting that there had been consensus to formally invite the Cabinet Member for Customer Care to every meeting of the Language Committee.

5. WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME MONITORING REPORT 2012/13

Submitted – the report of the Compliance and Language Manager, inviting the committee to submit observations and to approve the Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report 2012/13 before its submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

It was noted that the first bullet point in the Introduction should be corrected to note that it was in July 2012, not 2013, that the task group formed to draw up the observations on the draft Language Standards had met.

The Chair emphasised the importance of following the objectives in order to see that they were updated.

It was noted that it was encouraging to see that Council staff were willing to submit internal language complaints as that was advantageous in terms of highlighting weaknesses and improving the Council's arrangements in terms of the Welsh language.

With reference to Objective CH2 – a request was made to see the content of the letter which would be sent to the person seeking to change the name of a house from Welsh. The Compliance and Language Manager agreed to enquire about a copy of the letter.

RESOLVED to approve the report and submit it to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

6. GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

Submitted – the report of the Compliance and Language Manager, inviting the committee to approve extending the period of the Council's Welsh Language Scheme until such time when the language standards would come into effect.

The Chair emphasised the importance of ensuring that there would be no deterioration in the Council's high standards in relation to the Welsh language as a result of the introduction of the new standards.

RESOLVED to approve extending the period of the Council's Welsh Language Scheme until such time when the language standards come into effect.

7. THE LANGUAGE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted – the report of the Compliance and Language Manager asking the committee to consider a series of issues which could be placed on the committee's work programme, including matters which had been raised at the last meeting and also to suggest any other matters that they would wish to see included in the work programme.

The Chair emphasised the importance of the same issues not being raised time after time, year on year and that the committee should succeed to resolve the problems.

A question was asked regarding how it was intended to fill the gap as a result of the secondment of the Welsh Language Promotion Officer to another post for a year. The Cabinet Member for Customer Care noted that it was intended for an officer or officers to replace her and that he would update the members when the situation was clearer. He also emphasised that it should be ensured that the standards which already existed within the Council did not deteriorate as a result of losing the existing officer for a year.

It was suggested that the matters on the draft work programme should be placed in priority order. The Compliance and Language Manager responded and said that he would discuss further with the Equality and Language Officer and would submit a report to the next meeting suggesting a priority order for the items.

It was suggested that the committee could look at how the language skills requirements of a post were set, what the conditions were and how that was monitored etc.

It was also noted that there was a need to look at those employees who were able to speak Welsh but, due to a lack of confidence, chose to speak English with people who were Welsh-speakers, also looking at raising confidence levels amongst staff in terms of corresponding and e-mailing through the medium of Welsh.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To place the following matters on the work programme and to leave the door open for members to add new matters at any time:-**
- **Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report**
 - **The Welsh Language Commissioner's response to the Monitoring Report**
 - **Language Complaints**
 - **To respond to the consultation on the proposed Language Standards**
 - **Developing the Gwynedd Council Language Standards**
 - **The use of Welsh by third parties using the Council's assets**
 - **Staff language skills (conditions relating to learning Welsh etc)**
 - **The use of Welsh within the Council's departments (on an individual basis)**
 - **The use of Welsh at the Bangor, Tywyn and Dolgellau Leisure Centres**
 - **Language Centres – progress report**
 - **Matters to be considered by the Committee in its consultative role on strategies promoting the Welsh Language within the county**
 - **How the language skills requirements of posts are set, what the conditions are and how that is monitored etc, also how to raise the confidence levels of those officers who are able to use the Welsh language in their everyday work.**
- (b) **To ask the Compliance and Language Manager to submit a report to the next meeting suggesting a priority order for these items.**

8. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

Submitted – the report of the Compliance and Language Manager detailing a language complaint which had been received against the Council.

RESOLVED to note the information.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 11.05am.