

MEETING:	LANGUAGE SUB-COMMITTEE
DATE:	10 OCTOBER 2013
TITLE:	LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS
AUTHOR:	EQUALITY AND LANGUAGE OFFICER
PURPOSE OF REPORT	PRESENT RECENT COMPLAINTS AND UPDATE THE COMMITTEE

COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE COUNCIL, PARTNERS OR THIRD PARTY ORGANISATIONS

DATE	COMPLAINT	RESPONSE
August 2013	Planning Officers presenting their case at a planning appeal through the medium of English, and supplementary documentation also produced in English only	<p>The appeal was presented to the Planning Inspectorate through the medium of English. An appeal in the form of a hearing is synonymous with a tribunal or legal hearing, and in this context, it is believed that the <i>Bilingual Policy in Courts</i> is relevant. The Policy states that "Gwynedd Council will deal with cases begun by or against individuals.... In the language choice of those individuals, be that Welsh or English". It also states that "those who represent the Council present the case orally in the language of the case." As a result, the hearing was held in English, with simultaneous translation available.</p> <p>The Council's written documents were prepared in English as this was the language choice of the agent presenting the appeal. In such cases, the timetable is very tight and so appeal documents are first of all prepared in the language choice of the appellant. It is believed that there is room to improve arrangements in terms of documents, so that Council documents on the publically available appeal file are bilingual, accepting that there are cost implications related to achieving this.</p>

DATE	COMPLAINT	RESPONSE
August 2013	Complaint by a Member that a data report from the Transportation and Street Service (which was free to share with constituents) was only available in English, with the Welsh version not available until later	The initial document was prepared in English, with the Welsh version available later. The English version was distributed before the Welsh to the Member in an attempt to facilitate discussion on matters of considerable local interest. The Department acknowledges that the work of translation and distributing the Welsh version took more time than it should in this case. The complaint provided a spur to the Department to ensure a Welsh version was distributed and to remind Officers of the need to have English and Welsh versions ready at the same time
August 2013	Change of building use application by the Economy and Community Department made through the medium of English only	It would appear that the application was submitted by an architect working for the Council, without passing it to the Department first. It was noted that the timetable for this application was also a very tight one. The Department states that a Welsh version has now been submitted and that they are confident that this case has been an exception.
September 2013	Complaint regarding the standard of Welsh in an e-mail from the Council regarding the Register of Electors	Apology and amended version sent from the Department