
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE, 23.10.14

Present: Councillor Mair Rowlands (Vice-chair in the chair).

Councillors: Craig ab Iago, Elwyn Edwards, Tom Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Siân Gwenllian, Charles W. Jones, Liz Saville Roberts, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams and Mandy Williams-Davies.

Officers: Arwel E. Jones (Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service), Ruth Richards (Equality and Language Officer) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Also present: Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language).

Apologies: Councillors Gweno Glyn and Eric Merfyn Jones.

Councillor Charles W. Jones was welcomed to his first meeting of this committee.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 26 June, 2014 as a true record.

Matter arising from the minutes Item 6 – Social Housing Allocations

In response to an enquiry, the Equality and Language Officer noted that it was expected for the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty to respond within the next few days to the Housing Service's letter, which noted the observations and concerns of members. She assured members that a copy of the response would be available by the next meeting.

3. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER – THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Submitted – the verbal report of the Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language, which detailed the recent developments in the field. The two following matters that arose from the presentation were discussed:-

(A) A lack of use of the Welsh language in committees and forums across the North

It was noted:-

- That councillors and officers tended to turn to the English language in external meetings, especially while responding to a question asked in English, and it was emphasised that Welsh should be spoken at all times in meetings where a translator was present.
- That there was a new clause in the Language Scheme that clearly stated that staff were expected to use the Welsh language in any public meeting,

and if translation equipment was not available, they should push for it to be made available.

- This was possibly a matter of language awareness, and guidance could be provided for staff outlining the requirements.
- That one of the problems was a lack of confidence and the chairman could state at the beginning of a meeting that it was required for Welsh speakers to use the Welsh language without turning to English. Also, whilst introducing themselves at the beginning of a meeting, members could state their intention to speak Welsh.
- That non-Welsh speakers should wear headphones throughout the entire meeting so that Welsh speakers could begin speaking straight away without delay while waiting for people to put on their headphones.
- That it was the Chairman's responsibility to establish the language of the committee and that a meeting that was chaired by a non-Welsh individual was more likely to slip into English.
- That this was a field where it would be possible to establish an Investigation Group to look into it, and it was agreed to discuss this further under item 7 on the agenda.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To send a message to the Business Group demonstrating this committee's concern regarding members' lack of use of the Welsh language in external meetings where a translator service is available, and underlining the importance of adhering to the requirements of the Language Scheme.**
- (b) **To send a message to the Heads of Service Management Group conveying this committee's concern regarding the lack of use of Welsh, and calling on the heads of service to support and encourage their staff to use the Welsh language.**
- (c) **To ask the Equality and Language Officer to give a presentation to the Management Group regarding the Language Scheme's requirements in this context.**

(B) Secondary Schools' Welsh Language Charter

It was noted:-

- That the Primary Schools' Welsh Language Charter had been a success, with most of the schools achieving the aim in terms of the children's use of the Welsh language, but moving this sort of implementation to secondary schools would be a difficult task.
- That it was important that after school sports coaches profess the Welsh language.
- That it could be encouraged that the Welsh Language Charter was also presented to parents.

RESOLVED to ask the Education Department to give this committee a presentation on the Secondary Schools' Welsh Language Charter.

A member noted that a recent conference in Aberystwyth on the connection between the language and the economy had received presentations by social language initiatives that offered guidance on how to strengthen local economies within the communities for the benefit of the Welsh language. One suggestion that was aired was the idea of creating a Welsh labour market, which involved creating a growth market around work and an

economy that depended on Welsh speaking skills. It was noted that the Conwy Language Initiative had been leading on this and it was suggested to invite Meirion Davies, the Initiative Development Co-ordinator, to give a presentation to this committee.

RESOLVED to invite Meirion Davies from the Conwy Language Initiative to give a presentation at the January meeting of this committee on the idea of creating a Welsh labour market, by inviting the Cabinet Member – Economy and the economy officers to be present.

4. WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S ENFORCEMENT POLICY (DRAFT)

Submitted – the report of the Equality and Language Officer asking for the committee's observations on the document in order to submit them to the Commissioner as part of the consultation process.

RESOLVED to submit the following observations to the Commissioner:-

- **A level of disappointment is expressed that the outlined powers are not robust enough.**
- **Although the document outlines methods other than complaints to identify a lack of compliance, a sense of assurance should be received that other methods, such as statutory investigations would also be widely used by the Commissioner.**

5. ENQUIRY STRUCTURE FOR THE LANGUAGE COMMITTEE

Submitted – the report of the Equality and Language Officer asking for the committee's observations on the structural suggestions outlined in the report and the priorities for further research fields.

The Language Champion notified the committee that they had a long list of ideas for investigations.

RESOLVED

(a) To approve the research structure as follows:-

- **Only hold a single investigation at a time, with a maximum of two investigations within a calendar year (in accordance with the scrutiny investigations arrangement).**
 - **The investigations should look at the Council's policies and procedures initially.**
- (b) To establish an investigation to look at the use of the Welsh language and language awareness amongst staff and Council members, by appointing the Chair, Councillor Gweno Glyn, along with Councillors Craig ab Iago, Charles Wyn Jones, Liz Saville Roberts and Elfed Williams as members of the Investigation Group. A draft brief should be prepared and the first meeting of the investigation should be arranged within 4-6 weeks, with the aim of completing the work and reporting back to the committee in six months' time. As part of the work, it is required that the investigation considers forming a protocol on the use of the Welsh language in public meetings.**
- (c) To circulate a list of the Language Champion's ideas to members of the committee before the next meeting and set this matter as a standing item on the agenda for every meeting to receive the Champion's ideas.**

6. THE WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S RESPONSE TO GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S ANNUAL LANGUAGE MONITORING REPORT 2013/14

Submitted – the report of the Equality and Language Officer, presenting the Commissioner's observations on Gwynedd Council's Annual Language Monitoring Report 2013/14, and the Council's response to the request for further information.

The Equality and Language Officer took the opportunity to update members on the Language Standards. She explained that very recently she had been made aware that the timeline had changed again, and according to her understanding of the situation at present, the standards regulations would be published during November. Following that there would be a consultation period of 4 weeks with a vote on the Standards in the Government towards the end of February - beginning of March 2015. The hope was to receive the compliance notices in April, and it was assumed that there would not be any changes from the original 6 weeks that was anticipated between the notice and the compliance.

The Equality and Language Officer reminded members of their decision to invite the Commissioner to a special meeting of this committee at the beginning of the year in light of publishing the Standards, but due to the fact that the timetable had slipped, a response had been received from the office stating that the beginning of the year period was likely to be one of consultation between the Commissioner and the Council regarding the formal notice, and therefore it would not be appropriate for the Commissioner to give a presentation on the Standards.

Referring to implementation requirement 5(A) in the Commissioner's Response to the Annual Monitoring Report, and the Council's observation that only 3 elected members had received the language awareness training, it was noted that the terminology was misleading as it suggested that it was a presentation for the non-Welsh speakers, rather than suitable training for everyone. It was suggested to change the terminology to something more appropriate when the training was next conducted in 2015.

RESOLVED to accept the response of the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Council's response to the request for further information.

7. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

Submitted – the report of the Equality and Language Officer detailing the latest language complaints to hand.

Referring to the complaint regarding the use of bilingual names for the streets of Gwynedd, it was enquired whether the Consultancy Department was collaborating with Mynyddoedd Pawb and the Place Names Association on providing a new policy on street names. The Equality and Language Officer agreed to pass this on as an observation for the Consultancy.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.15pm.