

LANGUAGE COMMITTEE THURSDAY, 18 JUNE 2015

Present: Councillor Gweno Glyn (Chair);
Councillor Eirwyn Williams (Vice-chair).

Councillors: Craig ab Iago, Tom Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Charles Wyn Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones and Hefin Williams.

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

Officers: Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery), Debbie Williams Jones (Democratic (and Language) Service Manager), Gwenllian Williams (Gwynedd Welsh Language Development Officer (Workforce)), and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Elwyn Edwards, Alwyn Gruffydd, Siân Gwenllian and Elfed Williams.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Gweno Glyn as Chair of this committee for 2015/16.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Eirwyn Williams as vice-chair of this committee for 2015/16.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

4. URGENT ITEM

The Chair referred to a matter raised by a member of this committee at the previous meeting of the Planning Committee, namely that language impact assessments should be distributed with the agendas of the Planning Committee.

The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery explained the background to this and he noted:-

- The Chairman of the Planning Committee had explained that the issue of which papers would be included or not was not a matter for the committee and it was agreed that it would be possible to discuss the distribution process at the appropriate scrutiny committee meeting or the Language Committee.
- The Communities Scrutiny Committee was about to commence a scrutiny investigation on the planning procedure and this matter would be addressed at the Preparatory Meeting of the committee in July.
- Should the matter not be addressed by the Communities Scrutiny Committee, then it could be addressed by this committee.

RESOLVED to note the matter and to request that the Communities Scrutiny Committee informs this committee if it intends to address this matter or not.

5. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 23 April, 2015, as a true record.

6. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Submitted – the verbal report of the Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language, providing details on the recent developments in the field, including the input of the departments to the Strategic Plan, discussions of the Local Services Board, the success of the Language Charter, commencing the process of consultation with organisations on the Compliance Notice on Welsh Language Standards and the success of the application for capital funding for the Bangor Language Centre.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

7. STANDARDS OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE – CONSULTATION ON THE COMPLICANE NOTICE

Submitted – the report of the Democratic (and Language) Service Manager, requesting members to discuss and agree on a way to secure the input of the Language Committee on the consultation on Language Standards – Compliance Notice.

RESOLVED to call a special meeting of this committee to discuss the matter on a date that is convenient to the Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language.

8. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE LANGUAGE SCHEME FOR 2014/15

Submitted – the report of the Democratic (and Language) Service Manager, requesting members to accept and approve the Annual Report on the Language Scheme 2014/15 which was to be sent to the Welsh Language Commissioner by 30 June 2015.

An amended table was distributed, providing details of the Regulatory Department staff's language skills.

During the ensuing discussion it was noted:-

- On the whole, the language skill levels of the staff were very heartening but care had to be taken that the cuts did not lead to deterioration in these figures.
- The cause of the greatest concern in terms of language compliance were the third party agreements in the field of Social Services and it was suggested that it would be valuable to receive a report later on in the year from the Task Group that had been established in response to the requirements of 'More Than Just Words'.
- The number of non-Welsh speaking traffic wardens in the Transportation and Street Care Unit was high. It was emphasised that there was a need to encourage managers to influence their staff to take advantage of the training available and that it was important that non-Welsh speaking staff received every support to achieve the necessary standard. It was suggested that the Learning and Development Team could be requested to provide a presentation to the next Language Committee on issues such as how they identified people who needed training, how much pressure could be placed on them, how they developed staff etc.
- There was a need to return to the departments to ask for clarity regarding some of the figures and also to look behind the data that had been submitted to ascertain whether a work programme for the committee could be formulated from it.

RESOLVED

- (a) To accept and approve the Annual Report to be sent to the Welsh Language Commissioner by 30 April, 2015.
- (b) To request a report for this committee later on in the year from the Task Group that was established in response to the requirements of 'More Than Just Words'.
- (c) To request the Learning and Development Team to provide a presentation at the next meeting on the process of developing non-Welsh speaking staff.

9. RESEARCH WORK BY TRYWYDD INTO THE INFORMAL USE OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE IN THE COUNTY'S SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Submitted – the Trywydd Executive Summary and the Democratic (and Language) Services Manager provided a presentation on the findings of the research work.

She elaborated upon the requirements of the brief, size of the sample/the methodology and the main findings and she provided details on the individual fields per theme and recommendation, namely:-

- Defining the linguistic nature of the schools
- The way in which schools promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language
- Language use and the Curriculum
- Pupils' use of the language outside the classroom
- The factors which influence the children's language use
- Attitudes towards the Welsh language
- The Welsh language outside the school

An overview of the findings of the research was provided along with the recommendations responding to those findings and outlining what the Council would be undertaking over the next year in response to the recommendation in terms of:-

- Language Practices Project
- *Hunaniaith* Project
- Strategic Plan 2015/16

During the ensuing discussion it was noted:-

- The good work achieved in the primary schools disappeared as the children moved up to the secondary sector even in the strongholds of the Welsh language.
- It was important that the Council provided guidance in this respect and it would be desirable to see the response of the Education Department to the Trywydd report.
- There was a need for children and young people to see that bilingualism offered better opportunities to them and this needed to be driven by the county and the Education Department.
- The members should not be satisfied that everything was in place.
- Ideally, children should attend the language centres prior to commencing their time in the local schools so that they were not labelled from the beginning as not being Welsh speakers. However, it acknowledged that this was not always possible as the programme of the centres were run on a per term basis.
- It was important that after-school sports coaches used the Welsh language and it would worthwhile looking into the idea of nominating a Welsh Language Coaching Champion within the Council.

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- It had been a good idea to commission a company from outside the area to undertake the survey as it had been possible to look at the situation more objectively.
- The ethos of a school depended on the head teacher and the senior management team and if they saw no value in the social use of Welsh for children, then it would be a difficult task.
- The Council had to act where it had influence and although the Education Department was trying to push this forward, ensuring success within a short period of time would be more challenging in the secondary sector.

The Democratic (and Language) Service Manager was thanked for the presentation.

10. STANDARDS COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Submitted - the report of the Monitoring Officer, reporting on the appointment procedure to the Standards Committee as a result of the concern expressed at the last meeting that the Council had appointed two independent non-Welsh speaking members on the committee.

The Monitoring Officer noted further:-

- The response level to the advertisement had been low and only one of the seven applicants who had been interviewed was a fluent Welsh speaker.
- The work was based on the criteria established by the full Council in 2012 and the only national guidance in existence on the matter was in draft form and noted that it was a requirement to have one Welsh speaking member on the Standards Committee.
- It could not be insisted that the Welsh language was essential for the post because of the nature and cross-section of the committee.

During the discussion, it was noted:-

- A requirement for Welsh to be essential would mean that there would be different criteria for elected members and independent members serving on the Standards Committee.
- The current balance of the Standards Committee (i.e. 5 non-Welsh speakers and 4 Welsh speakers) was not a reflection of the linguistic balance of the county.
- It was a disappointment that so few Welsh speakers had applied because it tied the hands of the Appointments Panel and more work needed to be done to promote awareness of the function, e.g. by advertising the opportunity in the local papers.
- Members of the Council could be informed when the opportunity arose so that they could draw this to the attention of Welsh speakers within their wards who could have an interest in applying for the post.

RESOLVED to accept the information and to emphasise the importance of working to try to ensure that the membership of the Committee reflects the nature of the county's communities.

11. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

Submitted – the report of the Gwynedd Welsh Language Development Officer (Workforce), detailing the latest language complaints to hand.

A member noted that the Performing Rights Society had refused a cheque written in Welsh by him and it was suggested that the member should send the full details to the officers.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.45pm.

CHAIRMAN