
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE 28/02/17

Present: Councillor Eirwyn Williams (Chairman)
Councillor Charles Jones (Vice-chairman)

Councillors: Elwyn Edwards, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Alwyn Gruffydd, Eric M. Jones, Elfed Williams and Hefin Williams.

Also in attendance: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Cabinet Member - Welsh Language).
Corporate Support Debbie Anne Jones (Welsh Language Manager), Gwenllian Williams (Language Development Officer), Garem Jackson (Area Education Officer), Bethan Eleri Roberts (Performance Management Officer), Carys Lake (Leader of Ysgol Eifionydd Language Centre, Porthmadog) and Ann Roberts (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Craig ab Iago, Thomas G. Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Gareth Thomas and John Wyn Williams.

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 meetings of this committee, held on 13 October and 22 November 2016, as a true record.

3. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER - THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Submitted – the verbal report of the Cabinet Member - the Welsh Language, detailing recent developments in the field, including:-

- A useful and constructive meeting had been held with Alun Davies AC to discuss the Council's Hunaniaith arrangements and the intention to develop relevant schemes for Gwynedd. It was acknowledged that Gwynedd's situation was very different.
- It was intended to hold a seminar in May/June in Gwynedd that would offer support to communities to promote the use of the Welsh language in their areas.
- The second meeting of the Hunaniaith Board had been held with the Language Officers of other public bodies to discuss how they could contribute to our strategy. The Board was expected to adopt the new Welfare Plan and to make a commitment to the Welsh language.
- The various local activities to promote Welsh across the county included activities in Bangor and the good work of Y Popty.
- Language Charter work - a working group was holding meetings to discuss the progress of the work at Secondary Schools.

In response to a comment that discussions were taking place in English at meetings held outside the Council, it was reported that there was a project in the pipeline with public services to try to get the services to normalise the Welsh language by committing to the first contact always being in Welsh.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

4. PRESENTATION ON THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE SECONDARY SECTOR LANGUAGE STRATEGY (DRAFT)

The Area Education Officer provided the background. It was noted that Primary School children had been part of the Language Charter for three years and the intention was to build upon this. The work of creating a strategy by 31 March 2017 was ongoing, and the strategy was to be implemented from 1 April 2017 onwards.

Carys Lake, Leader of the Ysgol Eifionydd Language Centre, was welcomed to the meeting and it was explained that she had been working on a commission to create the strategy jointly with the Education Department.

The Leader of the Ysgol Eifionydd Language Centre presented the main objectives of the Secondary Language Strategy (draft) and provided the local context to the work:

- Trywydd Report
- Welsh-Medium Education Scrutiny Investigation Report
- Alun Charles Report
- Strategic Plan – Welsh in Education
- Gwynedd Language Strategy 2014-2017
- The Council's Strategic Plan

It was noted that all of the abovementioned reports stated that there was a need to ensure progression of the work with the Welsh language from the Primary to the Secondary.

In terms of the national context and to meet the "Million Welsh Speakers by 2050" target and ensure that the Welsh language thrives there was a need to get all stakeholders involved in the plan e.g. all the staff.

The aim of the Secondary Language Strategy was to promote social use of Welsh among children and young people and to develop it as an effective medium for all aspects of school life. It was noted that there were two elements to this aim, namely the curriculum and social. Experiences in lessons influenced the social element.

The next step would be to give a presentation to a working group of representatives from amongst Headteachers who had met twice to discuss the draft aims. The following eight aims were agreed upon:

- i. Leadership and expectations
- ii. Ethos
- iii. The voice and ownership of young people
- iv. Training requirements
- v. The role of the Language Department and the School (guidance from the Language Department and getting young people to study subjects through the medium of Welsh)
- vi. Curricular experiences
- vii. Bridge learners (turn learners into Welsh-speakers to enable them to learn through Welsh)
- viii. The School and the Community (link the school with businesses and the community)

It was reported that it was intended to use the above eight aims to set criteria to monitor paths of progression. The criteria would ask for evidence to prove achievement. It was reported that work was ongoing in setting the criteria and the evidence required and it was acknowledged that there was a need to be ambitious.

It was noted that Gwynedd Council led in this field and that the rest of Wales looked at what was happening here in Gwynedd for guidance on the way forward. Additionally, it was noted that Council Officers met regularly with Welsh Government to discuss the way forward.

A member observed that the schools were not familiar or were not able to identify the problem why children and young people spoke English outside school. In response, it was reported that there was a need to work with young people to spread the message socially. An observation was made that Sports Clubs were a crucial part of the answer to getting children and young people to use the Welsh Language socially. It was noted that social media was a challenge and that the Welsh language had to be made relevant to the work and lives of children and young people.

A member reported that there was a need for every school to adopt an action plan.

The Leader of the Ysgol Eifionydd Language Centre was thanked for the presentation and the work.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the presentation and to incorporate the additional observations.

5. LANGUAGE INVESTIGATION - THE VISIBILITY OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE IN GWYNEDD

Submitted - a report by the Strategic Planning Manager, Performance and Projects on behalf of the Chair of the Investigation as he was unable to attend the meeting.

It was explained that members of the investigation had concentrated on what the Council was able to do and improve in terms of the visibility of the Welsh language in Gwynedd e.g. procurement, and the Council's culture and ethos. The following fields were investigated:

- The Council's management of its own property and lands
- The Council's procurement arrangements
- Grant conditions and support the Council allocates
- The degree of influence the Council had on signs placed on roadsides
- House and place names

A report was given on the support and the evidence received from Dr Rhian Hodges and Dr Cynog Prys, University of Wales, Bangor and Durk Gorter, a Research Professor and an expert on the linguistic landscape field from Ikerbasque.net, namely an organisation based in the Basque country.

The main point was noted, namely that there was a need to be proactive and not take matters for granted. The Council should normalise the use of the Welsh language first, it should be pro-active and promote the Welsh language and be ambitious and push the boundaries.

Draft recommendations were submitted to the Cabinet Member and it was suggested that there was an opportunity to share good practice with others and to consider attracting income at the same time.

It was reported that there were obvious matters within the recommendations that could be linked in with Language Audit plans.

The Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language reported that he did not anticipate any obstacles to implementing the recommendations and that work had commenced to improve

the visibility of the Welsh language by erecting Welsh language signs in the Council's reception areas.

The Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language expressed his gratitude for the work undertaken by the members and the officers.

RESOLVED to accept the recommendations of the investigation and to submit them formally to the Cabinet Member.

6. IMPLEMENTING THE WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

Submitted by the Welsh Language Services Manager - a draft summary of Gwynedd Council's proposed response to the statement of the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language 'Preparing for the Welsh Language Bill - Application for evidence'

It was explained that the First Minister and the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language had announced their intention to consider amending the Welsh Language Bill 2011 as five years had passed since it was first enshrined. The intention was to introduce amendments to the Bill in order to achieve the ambition of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

It was reported that the Minister had asked three questions in his statement. It was reported that the Language Standards sought to bring consistency across Wales, however the standards were onerous and open to interpretation.

The Council's proposed responses were presented to the committee and members were asked for their observations.

The Committee was grateful for the comprehensive report and it was observed that the standards were acceptable as they were but they were not relevant to Gwynedd Council. It was asked if the Government had a timetable and whether it was intended to extend the bill to banks, electricity companies, water etc. It was noted that there was a need for the Standards. An observation was made that the Language Board had an expertise in the field and offered support, however this had all been lost with the emergence of the Commissioner's Office.

The Welsh Language Services Manager was thanked for the report and the member's important point that there was a need to press for the expertise the Language Board possessed was noted.

RESOLVED to approve the contents of the report.

7. LANGUAGE AUDIT

Submitted - the report of the Language Development Officer summarising the findings of the Language Audit and offering further action steps.

The members were updated on the developments in the four departments in question. It was reported that it was intended to try to get the Departments to take responsibility for the action plans.

It was noted that

- action plans were in place for the Consultancy Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and there was a need to agree on the timetable.

- a draft action plan had been planned with the Economy and Community Department and it had been decided to hold back until the findings of the Language Investigation were known. Nevertheless, it was noted that the Tourism Service was working on improving the relationship with events organisers to seek to influence events held in the County. Additionally, it was noted that specific attention had been given to the Leisure Service by re-establishing Welsh language improvement lessons among the staff.
- work with the Regulatory Department would begin soon.
- the Language Officer sought to ensure the Department's ownership of the action plans.
- communication plan setting out guidelines on how to encourage staff to be more proactive and to promote speaking Welsh at all times.
- more staff had been asking for the Welsh lanyards recently and staff had been asking for support to create signs.

Following a member's comment that a number of non-Welsh speaking staff worked at the Recycling Centre, it was agreed that the matter would be looked into.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

8. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

Submitted – the report of the Welsh Language Development Officer detailing the three latest language complaints to hand and the responses.

Following a discussion about the street signs, it was reported that the policies would be considered and a report would be submitted to the Welsh Language Committee during the next political year.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.05 pm

CHAIRMAN