
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE 10/07/18

Present:

Councillors: Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Judith Humphreys, Charles Wyn Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Eric M. Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Cai Larsen, Eirwyn Williams and Elfed Wyn Williams.

Officers: Janet Roberts (Senior Manager, Corporate Support), Gwenllian Mair Williams (Welsh Language Services Manager), Siôn Elwyn Hughes (Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer).

Others invited: Councillor Nia Jeffreys, Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language, Councillor Edgar Wyn Owen (Vice-Chairman of the Council)

For Item 11: Rhion Glyn (Business Manager, Adults Department) and Margaret K. Jones (Workforce Support Manager, Adults Department)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd as chairman of this committee for the year 2018/2019.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Elin W. Jones as vice-chair for the year 2018/19.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Aled Evans and Elwyn Jones

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent items were received

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 24 April, 2018 as a true record.

7. REPORT BY CABINET MEMBER FOR THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Councillor Nia Jeffreys was welcomed to her first meeting as Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language.

The Cabinet Member expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to attend and to listen to the discussion and hear about the Committee's priorities. She thanked her predecessor, Councillor Mair Rowlands for her work. She explained that she had now been in post for two months and wished to see Gwynedd remain a stronghold and promote the language, despite the Political turmoil taking place in the wider context. She referred to the good, exciting work being achieved with the Language Standards, the Language Promotion Plan and the Secondary Sector Language Strategy where she expressed that children's voices were central to its success. She thanked the staff at the Hunaniaeth Unit for their commitment to inspire and promote the language, face-to-face, at events across the county.

In future, she wished to see developments in Welsh language technology and apps and the formulation of an action plan for the Language Promotion Plan following the public consultation. She wished to see the Welsh language thrive as a living and working language and she looked forward to working with the Committee to ensure this.

During the ensuing discussion, individual members noted the following observations,

- the Committee needed a permissive role, rather than a scrutiny role. A suggestion to develop the role of the Committee to have greater influence.
- there was a need to develop links with the Education Department
- there was a need to strengthen the impact we had on the private sector
- the Welsh language was not a technical matter - need to reflect that it was part of us

It was proposed and seconded to hold a broader discussion with the Cabinet Member on the role of the Committee and to consider constitutional matters and establish its purpose.

RESOLVED to include 'Developing the Role of the Welsh Language Committee' as an item on the next meeting's agenda

8. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS 2017-18

The report was submitted in response to the Language Standards requirements where the Council was required to formulate and publish an annual report by 30 June 2018 explaining how it complied with the standards it was duty-bound to comply with (Section 44 Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011).

Reference was made to the specific Standards they were required to report on along

with any information that would add to the understanding of these specific steps. It was noted that the report had been published in accordance with the timetable and following the approval of the Council's Leadership Team.

RESOLVED to accept the Annual Report, for information.

9. CONSULTATION ON GWYNEDD'S LANGUAGE PROMOTION PLAN

Members received an update on the process of creating the Promotion Plan along with a report on the findings of the public consultation. It was reported that the draft strategy 'Welsh Language Promotion Plan in Gwynedd 2018-2023' had been formulated on the basis of consultation with members and an analysis of other relevant strategies and plans within the field. A six week (24 April - 5 June 2018) public consultation had been held where Gwynedd residents had the opportunity to contribute through an on-line questionnaire, by contacting the Language unit directly or by attending one of three open consultation events.

It was noted that the response had been positive (121 contributors) and constructive observations had been offered. It was highlighted that an action plan was in the pipeline and that internal discussions had already been held. A summary was provided of the responses received along with the general challenges that had been highlighted. Reference was made to the proposals that should be considered in response to the observations that had been divided into priority areas.

In the context of 'general challenges', the consultation had highlighted;

- lack of opportunities and lack of use
- inward migration and support for learners
- the role of technology

During the ensuing discussion, individual members responded to the challenges;

- there was a need to raise awareness of the language before moving into the County and to draw attention to the opportunities beforehand
- there was a need to identify inward migration movements in order to interpret where it was at its highest to respond to the numbers
- there was a specific role for technology - need to address this more in the plan
- need to present what was available more effectively
- need to identify opportunities that educated learners to understand that Welsh was the language of the community
- must continue to hold Welsh lessons - promoting, raising awareness, campaigning
- must create pride among Welsh-speakers
- everyone had a responsibility to support those who wished to learn to speak Welsh
- create links with communities - arrangement in education that parents learned

the language alongside their children.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to include the above-mentioned observations as considerations for the final Promotion Plan.

10. WELSH IN THE WORK PLACE

Submitted - a presentation by the Senior Manager, Corporate Support explaining how the Council utilised the Welsh Language Policy to strengthen Language in the Workplace. It was explained that the Welsh Language Policy had been reviewed in 2016 and it was reported that Gwynedd Council's Language Policy requirements were greater than those of the Language Standards policy.

It was reported that Gwynedd was unlike any other Council in Wales as its internal language was Welsh. To ensure that language standards were correct within the Council, the expected language levels of the Council's posts had been reviewed, and had now been incorporated with the 'person specification' when advertising a post. It was reiterated that support was being offered to fill the gap when measuring current staff against language designations. Siôn Elwyn Hughes was introduced to the Committee as the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer who was responsible for supporting staff and promoting language within the Council.

During the ensuing discussion, individual members noted the following observations,

- the Council gave the language status and influenced other agencies
- the use of 'plain' language was inconsistent amongst officers
- there was a need to use Plain Welsh to avoid jargon and to simplify the information
- the Council's products were being used by other Councils and therefore suggested applying to Welsh Government for additional funding
- application to present a 'speed reading' course in Welsh
- Gwynedd was leading. Opportunity to establish specific regional projects and to try to get other Councils in Wales to follow suit - share good practice
- accept the need to use simple language, however needed to ensure correct technical language.

In response to a question regarding personal development opportunities for staff or departments within the Council, it was noted that there was an opportunity for staff or units to offer themselves for support. Sessions would be provided according to demand.

The information was accepted.

11. MORE THAN JUST WORDS

Submitted - a report from the Senior Business Manager for the Adults Service on the way the Department and the Council were responding to the requirements of the Welsh Government's 'More Than Just Words - Follow-on Strategic Framework 2016-2019' to ensure Welsh language services in Health, Social Services and Social Care. The follow-up strategic framework had been launched in March 2016. It was reiterated that the framework included seven objectives that needed to be implemented by 2019 and reference was made to the latest on those objectives within the report.

During the ensuing discussion, individual members responded to the challenges;

- Need to identify the linguistic requirements
- Need to develop Welsh language skills and target the private sector
- Need to ensure ease in transferring individuals' information
- Need to collaborate with providers in future
- Need to consider and offer career paths
- There was a different language culture within care services and therefore there was an opportunity to nurture communicating in Welsh in order to develop a culture of awareness
- Need the terms to be relevant to the work
- Consider using prominent learners as ambassadors to support the work
- Encourage providing information in bilingual format

In response to a question regarding recruitment problems in care, it was noted that work was being undertaken to standardise scales, hold trials and for joint commissioning. It was reiterated that there was ONE strategy and therefore Health, Social Services and Social Care were all going in the same direction. It was noted that there was a challenge for front-line workers to learn Welsh, but there was a need to encourage the confidence that understanding the Welsh language was sufficient and there was a need to identify courses to respond to this. It was reiterated that a Forum had been established across north Wales to share and discuss good practice.

In response to an observation regarding the individual's 'choice' to receive service in their chosen language, it was highlighted that it was a proactive, natural offer that was made to the individual, but their 'choice' would be recorded for data collection purposes only. It was reiterated that individuals were not given a 'choice' - it was part of the administrative process.

In response to a question regarding the Council's communication policy for dealing with public bodies, it was highlighted that the Welsh language was used at all times. Contact would usually be made in Welsh until a response was received in Welsh. It was accepted that there were some exceptions, but it was reiterated that work was being done to improve this.

The report was accepted and it was noted that this was a major step in the right direction

12. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

It was reported that no complaints had been received.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.00 pm

CHAIRMAN