

LANGUAGE COMMITTEE, WEDNESDAY 1 MAY 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd, (Chairman)

COUNCILLORS: Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Aled LI. Evans, Judith Mary Humphreys, Charles Wyn Jones, Elwyn Jones, Eric M Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Olaf Cai Larsen, John Pughe Roberts, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams

OFFICERS: Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Manager), Gwenllian Mair Williams (Workplace Language Development Officer), Rhonwen Jones (Member Support Officer)

OTHERS INVITED: Councillor Edgar Wyn Owen (Vice-chair of the Council)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

In relation to Item 5 on the agenda; Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member – Language)

For Item 7 below; Bet Huws (Gwynedd Language Development Officer (Meirionnydd), Ifan Llewelyn Jones (Gwynedd Language Development Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and officers were welcomed to the meeting.
Apologies were received from Councillor Elin Walker Jones

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 17 January, 2019 as a true record.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language.

It was explained that two awards were annually awarded at the Council's Council at its Best Ceremony, these were:

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- To recognise an individual within the Council who was learning Welsh; and secondly,
- Individuals or teams who made a particular effort, or went beyond their normal roles, to promote the Welsh language and ensure that residents and service users were able to use Welsh without any hindrance.

This year's awards were presented to Nancy Wilkinson (Environment Officer in Gwynedd Consultancy) and the Health, Safety and Well-being Service (for their work of securing Welsh language resources for 'The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health' (IOSH) training).

Two videos of the awards, featuring the winners ceremony were shown at the end of the meeting.

A member drew attention to item 5.4 (Other Developments), Supplementary Planning Guidance. The Cabinet Member suggested that she should arrange a meeting with the Member for further discussion.

Resolved:

To accept the report.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE PRAISE AND COMPLAINTS REPORT

The report was presented by the Language Development Officer, and noted that it examined complaints and praise in parallel, in order to identify trends and to provide members with a comprehensive picture of activities within the Council relating to compliance with the Language Standards and Policy.

Praise

The report drew attention to two specific cases over recent months where Council officers had excelled in promoting the Welsh language and ensuring that residents and service users received a high-quality Welsh medium service:

1. **Safety training (IOSH):** The Health, Safety and Well-being Service had recently received recognition at the Council at its Best Awards for its work in ensuring that IOSH training was fully available through the medium of Welsh. Council staff members had been leading training sessions in this field for some time, but were having to use English only materials as they were not provided bilingually by the chartered body. The mater had been referred to the Welsh language Commissioner to get their support and influence, but in the end it came down to the perseverance of the Council's officers, who raised awareness of the requirements and demand from staff for Welsh language materials.

2. New online forms for Blue Badge applications from direct.gov

It was noted that the Siop Gwynedd and Galw Gwynedd Manager and her officers had recently been working hard to try to ensure that the new on-line forms for Blue Badges met the requirements of the Standards and the Council's policies. The team had noticed numerous mistakes and errors in the Welsh version while testing the system (before it went live), and the Council had refused to transfer to the new on-line system without changes being made to ensure that it reached the expected standard. They had collaborated with the translation unit and the website team to test the system, and had raised the matter with the provider, including Welsh Government. Discussions were ongoing and the system was still not operational.

Complaints

Since the beginning of 2019, correspondence had been received from the Welsh Language Commissioner about three complaints relating to the Language Standards.

The Commissioner decided not to investigate the complaints further based on the explanations below:

1. Standard email sent in English only in a response to an e-mail in Welsh from GwE. The investigation was terminated after the Commissioner received correspondence from the Council's Legal unit, confirming that the Council's Standards were not relevant to GwE due to its status as a joint committee.
2. English only receipt sent by the Welsh Penalty Processing Partnership. It was explained that this had happened due to a technical error after the administrators had made updates to the payment system. The matter had already been brought to the attention of the Council and had been resolved by the time the complaint was received by the Commissioner, and the Commissioner agreed that the Council had already dealt with the matter appropriately.
3. Blue Badge application assessment and processing Service. The Council confirmed that this was a service managed by the Welsh Government, and that the Council had already received several complaints, and had referred concerns about the quality of the service to the Government. Following the response, the Commissioner agreed that the Council was not responsible for the matter, and referred the complaint and Gwynedd Council's concerns to the relevant Welsh Government Department.

RESOLVED:

To accept the report.

7. HUNANIAITH - GWYNEDD'S LANGUAGE INITIATIVE

In response to a request, the Chair presented an update on Hunaniaith's work, outlining the successes, lessons learnt; he also took the opportunity to raise Members' awareness of this work.

Overview of 2018-19 work

It was reported that 2018-19 had been a good year in terms of developing key partnerships, such as Cymraeg for Kids, and Llandrillo Menai Group, and that it appeared that investing time to jointly plan and collaborate was paying dividends.

Additionally, it was noted that collaboration across the Language Initiatives as a whole had also developed further, with Welsh Language Initiatives (the umbrella organisation that supported the work of the initiatives across Wales) leading on many national projects. There would also be opportunities for further collaboration between the North Wales region language initiatives in future.

Two presentations were made by the Language Officers:

Early Years

It was explained that seminars had been held to equip the early years workforce and activity providers with the knowledge to enable them to convey the message about the value of bilingualism to families. It was noted that the feedback from the seminars had

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been extremely positive, and although it had not been possible to attract some of the targeted businesses and organisations that provided family activities, the officer felt that the events had been successful. Collaboration would continue with Cymraeg for Kids and the Council's Early Years Service on similar events in future.

Targeting Young People aged 15+:

A conference had been held for young people to discuss the value of the Welsh language as a skill for the workplace, and to introduce best practice and role models from professional and occupational areas. The conference's aim was to encourage young people to consider their career choices, and to pay particular attention to the Welsh language as part of those options.

The conference had been arranged jointly with officers from Llandrillo Menai Group, with specific focus on students from Llandrillo Menai Group in the sectors of Construction, Hair and Beauty, and Hospitality and Tourism. The feedback had been positive, and it was agreed that the content of the sessions was beneficial and appropriate, although some changes were needed, such as simplifying the terminology and including fewer open-ended questions, in order to facilitate participation and discussion.

A series of evaluation meetings were held following the events, and the officers agreed that the conference had been a success in relation to arrangements and content, although some refinements and minor changes would be needed if similar events were held in future. One concern expressed was the difficulties in attracting interest and the commitment of the group's tutors.

Members expressed their disappointment regarding this, and noted their desire to pursue it further. The Gwynedd Language Development Officer noted that she would write formally to Llandrillo Menai Group to share the feedback on the conference evaluation to share the concerns.

A committee member expressed a willingness to write a letter on behalf of the committee to Llandrillo Menai Group.

The proposal was accepted.

Members were given an opportunity to raise general questions about Hunaniaith's work, and Members asked how Hunaniaith chose the areas to target. In response, it was noted that the areas that had received attention over the last three years had been largely chosen on the basis of the Census data and Welsh Government's recommendations. It was noted that other data sources needed to be examined, such as the Language Charter, in order to determine future target areas.

Welsh in Business

Information was presented by the Gwynedd Language Development on behalf of Paul Carroll Jones (Welsh in Business).

Welsh in Business was one of the national projects run by the Wales Language Initiatives.

The project's aim was to:

- Offer support and advice to businesses on their use of the Welsh language.
- A free service.
- Principally tailored to small and medium sized, and micro businesses.

It was explained that small businesses in Wales could request support with communication, ordering goods, developing websites and social media through the

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medium of Welsh. It was also noted that support was available with advertising and staff recruitment, and the provision of free translation services.

RESOLVED:

To accept the report.

8. LANGUAGE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Submitted - the Democracy and Language Manager's report, seeking the views of Committee Members on the frequency and number of Committee meetings each year. Members were of the opinion that the current number of meetings should be retained, and the importance of the Welsh language to all should be noted.

RESOLVED:

To continue with the current arrangements of holding four committee meetings each year.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.35 p.m.

CHAIR