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| MEETING: | LANGUAGE COMMITTEE |
| DATE: | 4 JULY 2017 |
| TITLE: | THE COUNCIL'S PERSPECTIVE ON: ACHIEVING THE AMBITION: INQUIRY INTO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S NEW WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY |
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| PURPOSE OF THE REPORT | <p>The Language Committee is duty bound to fulfil a consultative role on language promotion strategies within the county.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to present the Council's perspective on Achieving the Ambition: Inquiry into the Welsh Government's New Welsh Language Strategy, and to consider any opportunities and threats raised by the recommendations to the Welsh language in Gwynedd.</p> |

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Language Committee is duty bound to fulfil a consultative role on language promotion strategies within the county.

2. CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: A MILLION WELSH SPEAKERS BY 2050

- 2.1 On 1 August 2016, Welsh Government published a consultation document: *Consultation on a Welsh Government draft strategy: A million Welsh speakers by 2050*.
- 2.2 The consultation document reflected the long-term vision of Welsh Government for the Welsh language, and that by the year 2050: *'The Welsh language is thriving, and the number of speakers has risen to a million. It is natural to use it in every aspect of life, and among those who do not speak it there is goodwill towards it and an appreciation of its contribution to the culture and economy of Wales'*.
- 2.3 In order to realise the strategy's aim of doubling the number of Welsh speakers by the middle of the century, Welsh Government has identified six key areas for action:

1. Planning and language policy
2. Normalisation
3. Education
4. People
5. Support
6. Rights

A copy of the consultation document is available in Appendix 1.

- 2.4 The then Deputy Council Leader with responsibility for the Welsh language drafted a response to the consultation document on behalf of the Council. A copy of the draft response is included in Appendix 2.

3. ACHIEVING THE AMBITION - INQUIRY INTO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S NEW WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY (MAY 2017)

- 3.1 In May 2017, the report of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee was published and it agreed that it was an opportune time to conduct an Inquiry into the new strategy. The aim of the inquiry was to inform and influence the new strategy at a formative step in its development.
- 3.2 It is noted that the Committee fully supports the bold aim of the policy reaching a million speakers by 2050; nevertheless, it also notes that its main concern is that the implications of the strategic aim have not yet been fully thought through and that there is a lack of detail and clarity about how aim will be achieved.
- 3.3 The Committee has submitted 23 recommendations, and it is noted that the majority of them are concerned with the practicalities of how this ambition can be achieved and the need for clarity on the staging points along the way.
- 3.4 The following table presents the recommendations of the inquiry and compares whether or not its recommendations agree with the Council's response to the consultation document, and any further opportunities/threats envisaged for Gwynedd:

| RECOMMENDATION | | AGREE WITH GC's RESPONSE | OPPORTUNITIES / THREATS |
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| 1. | We recommend that the Government should publish its underlying assumptions about the increase in Welsh speakers it expects from its proposed interventions and consults further on detailed, outcome-focussed, targets and milestones before adopting them for the new strategy | ✓ | |
| 2. | We recommend that the final strategy should give due weight to the importance of nurturing language use in communities, in social life and in workplaces. This should be done alongside language acquisition through Welsh-medium education, early years' education and improving the quality of Welsh language teaching in English-medium schools and Welsh language outcomes for pupils. | ✓ | OPPORTUNITY Maintaining and increasing the language use in the communities and in social life is crucial to Gwynedd. |
| 3. | We recommend that the proposed new Agency for the Promotion of Welsh has a clear focus from the outset in helping deliver the overall strategic aim of a million Welsh speakers particularly through helping parents understand the benefits of bilingual education and of learning Welsh in schools outside the Welsh-medium sector. | X ✓ | OPPORTUNITY/THREAT In the Council's response to the Welsh Language Bill, we noted that we did not support establishing a new Agency to support the Welsh language. Convincing parents to understand and appreciate the advantages of bilingual education is crucial to maintaining and rejuvenating the Welsh language in Gwynedd, and it is essential that the messages conveyed respond to a local context and position; in Gwynedd's case there are negative attitudes, apathy, and lack of understanding and |

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| | | | awareness of the value of the language. |
| 4. | <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out as an urgent priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its assessment of how many additional teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh will be needed to achieve the strategy's overall aim; • When those teachers will be needed; and • How it will identify, recruit and train those teachers for when they are needed. | ✓ | |
| 5. | <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government considers what additional help and support it needs to provide to private sector employers and businesses to enable them to develop and expand their Welsh language provision as part of meeting the overall aim of the strategy</p> | ✓ | |
| 6. | <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government publishes as a matter of urgency it's assessment of the additional resources that will be needed to support the strategic aim of 1 million Welsh speakers by the year 2050. This should include the projected profile of spending over the early part of the strategy and an assessment of the comparative cost of what the various interventions that will be required are likely to be</p> | ✓ | <p>THREAT</p> <p>In light of so much emphasis on the Welsh-medium education sector to deliver the aim of the Language Strategy, the resources needed to achieve this are substantial, and this could have a detrimental impact on the resources provided to maintain and support the Welsh language in the education sector and in the community in Gwynedd.</p> |
| 7. | <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government responds specifically to Mudiad Meithrin's assessment that an additional 650 new 'cylch meithrin' will be needed to support the strategy</p> | ✓ | <p>OPPORTUNITY / THREAT</p> <p>There is an opportunity to ensure that the 30 hour provision of free child care will be in Welsh, as a medium to contribute to achieve the aim of the strategy. Without this, the</p> |

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| | | | entire essence of the strategy will be undermined. |
| 8. | We recommend that expanding Welsh-medium early years provision should be a priority area when considering additional funding under the strategy. | ✓ | It is necessary to ensure that this investment is disseminated across Wales, not only in terms of extending the provision, but also to strengthen and endorse the current Welsh-medium offer. |
| 9. | We recommend that the Welsh Government should consider providing free tuition in Welsh to parents who put their children into Welsh-language pre-school provision | ✓ | |
| 10. | We recommend that the Welsh Government takes steps to improve the information it has available on the Welsh-medium capabilities of early years practitioners so that it can plan properly to ensure that practitioners have the right skill mix and progression opportunities to support the aims of the strategy. | ✓ | |
| 11. | We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out in detail how it intends to move “schools along the language continuum” including examples of good practice models, with a particular focus on how it will address any concerns from parents and the wider community. | ✓ | THREAT This situation is not as relevant to Gwynedd. |
| 12. | We recommend that the final strategy should emphasise the need to move greater number of pupils along the language continuum and how this will be achieved in all categories of schools in Wales. | ✓ | THREAT This situation is not as relevant to Gwynedd. |
| 13. | We recommend that the Welsh Government evaluates the efficacy of its current scheme for improving the level of Welsh of practicing teachers and sets out a projected timescale for how Welsh speaking teachers, who do not currently | ✓ | OPPORTUNITY This is relevant in particular to the workforce of Tywyn and Friars secondary schools in Gwynedd. |

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| | <p>teach in Welsh, can be encouraged to do so including providing more opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for them to transfer to Welsh medium education; and • for mentoring and others schemes to help build confidence in their ability in Welsh. | | |
| 14. | <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out clearly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how many additional teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh will be needed to achieve the strategy's overall aim; • when they will be needed; and • how many of these additional teachers will be drawn from the existing teaching workforce and how many through initial teacher training or other routes into the profession | ✓ | <p>OPPORTUNITY</p> <p>The geographical distribution of teachers should also be considered, as there may be problems in recruiting Welsh teachers in some specific areas (including Gwynedd).</p> |
| 15. | <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government considers how it can increase the supply of Welsh speaking students entering initial teacher training or other entry routes into the profession taking into account any wider recruitment implications this may have for recruiting teachers, both within Wales and in competition with other parts of the UK</p> | ✓ | |
| 16. | <p>We recommend that the Welsh Government considers the role of learning support staff in supporting the aims of the strategy and takes steps, along with Estyn and the Education Workforce Council, to</p> | ✓ | |

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| | establish a clearer picture of their current language skills to help inform future planning | | |
| 17. | We recommend that the new strategy should place equal emphasis on dramatically improving outcomes from Welsh second language teaching along with increasing the numbers receiving Welsh-medium or bilingual education. | ✓ | |
| 18. | We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out clearly how it will dramatically improve the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools. | ✓ | THREAT This situation is not as relevant to Gwynedd. |
| 19. | We recommend that the Welsh Government, along with the WJEC, reviews the provision of Welsh language learning resources for students to ensure that students receiving their education through the medium of Welsh are not disadvantaged. | ✓ | |
| 20. | We recommend a thorough evaluation of the Sabbatical Scheme, looking particularly at its value for money in improving classroom outcomes and in encouraging more teachers to teach Welsh or through the medium of Welsh. | ✓ | OPPORTUNITY In Gwynedd, the greatest obstacle that prevents teacher from taking up the Sabbatical Scheme is their unwillingness to be released from their workplace for a whole term. |
| 21. | We recommend that the proposed new Agency for the Promotion of Welsh, working with established organisations and local initiatives, promotes and markets Welsh as a community language with benefits to speakers as a skill and in the workplace | ✗ ✓ | OPPORTUNITY / THREAT In the Council's response to the Welsh Language Bill, we noted that we did not support establishing a new Agency to support the Welsh language. Nevertheless, we support the need to promote and market the Welsh language as a community language with benefits to speakers as a skill and in the |

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| | | | workplace |
| 22. | We recommend that the Welsh Government continues to support good quality, widely available Welsh for Adults provision but considers carefully its relative priority within the strategy compared to other priority areas | ✓ | |
| 23. | We recommend that the final strategy includes a clear definition of what will count as a Welsh speaker in evaluating whether the strategy is successful in its aim of creating a million speakers | ✓ | OPPORTUNITY / THREAT The clear definition of Welsh speaker must consider the use made of the language, because if this is not done, and if all levels of ability in Welsh is considered a 'speaker'; this could devalue the entire essence and purpose of the Strategy. |

3.5 Although the Council, in essence, does not disagree with any of the recommendations, as the list of recommendations is based on the content of the consultation document, which had an overwhelming emphasis on the Welsh-medium education sector as a vehicle for delivering the aim of a million speakers by 2050; nearly all the recommendations are therefore related to the education sector.

3.6 One of the Council's main messages in responding to the consultation document was the need for the Welsh Government's Language Strategy to address the different and varying needs within areas of Wales, especially in the strongholds. It also noted the need to focus on increasing use of the Welsh language in addition to increasing the number of speakers. This endorses the points made as part of Recommendation 2, but as only one recommendation of the 23 refers to this, we cannot emphasise enough that this is by far the most important recommendation to be reflected in the new strategy.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 It is understood that Welsh Government's intention is to publish the final version of the Language Strategy soon.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- discuss the contents of the Achieving the Ambition: Inquiry into the Welsh Government's New Welsh Language Strategy report and its Recommendations in relation to the position of the Welsh language in Gwynedd.

