

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report for a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting:	27 November 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gareth Thomas
Contact Officer:	Debbie Anne Williams Jones
Contact Telephone Number:	32489
Title of Item:	Resources for the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

- (a) To commit £20,000 of funding from now until the end of March 2019 from the Transformation Fund to fund the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator post. The post will be a means of delivering on one of the commitments in the Council Plan, which will lead to further increase in pupils' social and curricular use of the Welsh language.
- (b) To return to the Cabinet with a request for further resources to fund the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator post from 2019/20 onwards, should the discussions with the regional consortium (GwE) to fund the post in future not prove successful.

2 THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

Realising the vision and objectives of the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy has been included in the Council Plan for 2018-2023.

Forming and implementing the requirements of the Secondary Sector Language Strategy is a direct response to the call from the county's primary and secondary schools, along with Elected Members to see succession to the primary schools Language Charter, ensuring further increase in the social and curricular use of the Welsh language among young people.

A report was submitted to Cabinet a year ago requesting commitment of additional resources over a three year period in order to realise the Strategy's objectives, and be able to provide specialist support to the county's secondary schools over time.

The request for additional resources was based on the same commitment of resources that was provided to establish the Language Charter in the primary schools, by funding the Coordinator post over a three-year period.

The Cabinet's response at the time was for Councillors Mair Rowlands and Gareth Thomas to write to the relevant Welsh Government Cabinet Secretaries requesting that they provide the £120,000 (£40,000 a year for three years 2018/19 -2020/21) to fund the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator post to lead on further increase in pupils' social and curricular use of the Welsh language.

As a result of the Cabinet's response, we have corresponded with Eluned Morgan AM, Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, requesting financial backing to support the Secondary Sector Language Strategy via the post of Coordinator. As a result of this correspondence, we were referred by Welsh Government to the regional consortium (GwE); however, following discussions, it is given to understand that it would not be possible for the consortium to fund the Coordinator post during 2018/19. (A copy of the correspondence can be seen in Appendix 1).

3 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project in the Council Plan is to ensure firm progression and to build on the success of the pioneering project of the Language Charter which is operational in Gwynedd's primary schools, and which has now been rolled out nationally. At the request of Welsh Government, following the positive reports about the success of the Charter in Gwynedd, permission was granted to use Gwynedd's expertise and good practice to extend the project to other areas in Wales.

To ensure firm progression to the Primary Language Charter, and to continue to improve our young people's Welsh language skills, the Secondary Sector Language Strategy was developed to provide clear guidance on how to plan intervention to improve awareness and increase the use of the language among young people in the secondary sector.

The Strategy focuses on the Welsh language and on education, and includes curricular elements as well as social use of the language. There are four main fields to which the Strategy attempts to respond:

- Welsh First Language
- Second Language Welsh
- The Welsh Language as a medium
- Social use of Welsh among young people

Since April 2017, a Coordinator was appointed on secondment from the Secondary Sector Language Centre at Porthmadog - a person who possesses expertise and credibility among the heads of secondary schools, and has the ability to convince and challenge accordingly - to lead the Secondary School Language Strategy.

The following has been achieved following the Coordinator's appointment:

- forming the Secondary Sector Language Strategy jointly with a working group of Gwynedd secondary school heads;
- a unique action plan has been formed by every secondary school in response to the objectives of the Language Strategy;
- meetings and discussions between the Coordinator and staff at a number of secondary schools have been held;
- a brand new partnership has been established with hunaniaith to respond specifically to two aims within the strategy, namely:
 - young people
 - the school and the community.

The Coordinator's employment ended on 31 August 2018, after she accepted a post with the regional consortium, GwE.

Consequently, since October 2018, a new Coordinator has been appointed, who will focus on achieving the following elements:

- Further supporting the 14 secondary schools to implement the main priorities of the Strategy
- Create and implement comprehensive training programmes for secondary teachers in the methodologies of bilingual teaching and learning
- Further promote the value and advantages and usefulness of bilingualism in order to strengthen the pupils' incentive to develop into people who are fluent in both languages.
- Create and implement effective arrangements to monitor the implementation of the strategy.

4 THE REASONING AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

Receiving the additional resource from the Council would provide the project with firm continuity and progress via the Coordinator post, and would ensure that Gwynedd continues to lead on pioneering work across the north and nationally.

5 NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

In accepting the Cabinet's decision to fund the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator post, every secondary school will receive appropriate guidance and support to implement the requirements leading to an increase in young people's social and curricular use of the Welsh language.

Should the discussions with the regional consortium (GwE) not lead to financial support for the Coordinator post from 2019/20 onwards, it is requested that we return to the Cabinet with a request for further resources to continue to fund the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator post.

6 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

6.1 Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. Monitoring Officer:

No observations from a propriety perspective.

ii. Head of Finance Department:

“As neither Welsh Government nor the Regional Consortium has freed up funding for the Secondary Coordinator post, resources are requested from the Council’s Transformation Fund. There will be several deserving needs / uses competing for the scarce resources from this fund and prioritising the relevant requests will be a matter for the Cabinet members.”