

LANGUAGE COMMITTEE, TUESDAY 9 JULY 2019

PRESENT: Olaf Cai Larsen (Vice-chair).

COUNCILLORS: Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Aled Ll. Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Charles Wyn Jones, Elwyn Jones, Eric M. Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams.

OFFICERS: Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Manager), Gwenllïan Mair Williams (Workplace Language Development Officer), Siôn Elwyn Hughes (Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer), Rhonwen Jones (Member Support Officer).

OTHERS INVITED: Councillor Edgar Wyn Owen (Council Chair).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

In relation to item seven (7) on the agenda, Debbie A. W. Jones (Education Corporate Services Officer).

For item eight (8), Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member - Language).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved to elect Councillor Elin Walker Jones as Chair for 2019/20.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved to elect Councillor Cai Larsen as Vice-chair for 2019/20.

The outgoing chair, Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd, was thanked for his work as chair for the past two years.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Judith Humphreys, Elin Walker Jones and John Pughe Roberts.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 1 May, 2019 as a true record.

Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd asked for an update on a decision made on item seven (7), *'Hunaniaith - Gwynedd's Language Initiative - Targeting Young People aged 15+'*, regarding a letter to take further action to gain the interest and commitment of Grŵp Llandrillo Menai tutors. The Workplace Language Development Officer responded that she had sent a letter to the Group, but that no feedback had been received. It had been resolved at the previous committee meeting that a committee member would also write a letter. This had not been done.

7. WELSH GOVERNMENT WESP CONSULTATION:

A presentation was given by the Education Corporate Services Officer on the Draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plans Regulations (Wales) 2019 and guidance (WESP) consultation.

Members were asked to submit any observations to be included as part of Gwynedd's formal response to the consultation. It was noted that a response to the consultation was required by the beginning of September 2019.

Observations by Members:

- An interesting presentation.
- Concern was noted as to why we were not already developing Welsh-medium education.
- The introduction of the factor to delete the measuring of demand was welcomed.
- Questions were raised as to where the Language Centres and the Language Charter were included in the consultation.
- Questions were raised as to whether this consultation referred to Welsh-medium education or bilingual education.
- A question was raised as to the meaning of "Welsh-language immersion".
- Disappointment was noted regarding the fact that there was no mention of additional resources to support this consultation.
- It was noted that there was a need for the consultation to address the language of play at school and after-school events. There was also room to ensure that governors and friends of the school played a role.
- It was suggested that there was an opportunity to establish Welsh language champions.
- Concern was noted regarding the number of Welsh speakers in Gwynedd, and also regarding the progress of education through the medium of Welsh in Wales.
- In addition, the need for Welsh-speaking workforce and teachers providing education through the medium of Welsh was raised.

The Education Corporate Services Officer expanded upon the observations. She confirmed that the consultation was currently in draft form and that anyone was welcome to give their feedback on the consultation by the beginning of September 2019.

She elaborated on specific points.

- The Language Centres were addressed under outcomes, progression and immersion.
- WESP and the new regulations did not change Gwynedd's Language Policy.
- There was no specific definition of educational immersion. Immersion happened in different ways across the counties of Wales. In Gwynedd, the foundation phase

was considered, as children between three and seven years of age were immersed through the medium of Welsh. Children between seven and 14 years of age gained access to language centres in order to be immersed in the Welsh language so that they were able to cope at mainstream schools.

- WESP in its entirety, along with Welsh Government, set all statutory duties for local authorities relating to this field. It was important to think about those who were responsible for staff recruitment at Gwynedd schools, namely Governors. This raised the point that work was needed to equip Governors, such as raising awareness of the expectations.
- In terms of informal use of the Welsh language outside of school hours, it was possible to draw up guidance as to how someone would encourage the use of language partnership, which was a new element to the WESP guidance dialogue regarding working in partnership with organisations around schools and within communities. There was therefore a need to think of resources for working in partnership with Menter Iaith, the Urdd, Young Farmers' Clubs and other organisations. A concern facing schools and a question raised was whether these organisations would put pressure on the schools financially and in terms of resources. There was a need to think about what these organisation were able to contribute and who would co-ordinate the work.
- Detailed work on the consultation would begin in Gwynedd from September 2019 onwards. As the timetable was restrictive in terms of the time available to receive observations, the Education department had requested an extension. However, no response had been received thus far.
- In response to the observation regarding the seven outcomes, the question which raised concern was where Wales would recruit teachers to provide education through the medium of Welsh. The challenge was to increase the teaching of the language within schools. This was the picture faced in terms of the Wales-wide vision; however, at present, this was not relevant to Gwynedd.

A link was attached to the consultation for information, and in order to submit observations: https://llyw.cymru/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-05/dogfen-ymgynghori-rheoliadau-cynlluniau-strategol-cymraeg-mewn-addysg-cymru-2019-ar-canllawiau-drafft_0.pdf

The information and the report were **ACCEPTED** and it was noted that this was a major step in the right direction.

8. **CABINET MEMBER REPORT:**

The Cabinet Member for Education provided an update on the key developments in the Welsh language field since the previous committee meeting.

Observations: Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd expressed that it would be worth extending an invitation to Aled Roberts, the new Commissioner, to attend the next committee meeting. The Cabinet Member for Education would contact him.

RESOLVED:

To accept the report.

9. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS 2018-19

This report was published annually. The report was submitted by the Workplace Language Development Officer and the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer, reporting on Welsh-medium training for Council staff and how to develop their language skills.

The report was submitted to the Cabinet in June 2019 for approval and to be uploaded publicly to the Council's website.

This was a report which looked at specific standards for workers' Welsh language skills. A question often raised was that regarding staff's current training situation in all departments of the Council other than the education department. It was important to emphasise that the report did not include GwE nor the Trunk Roads Agency as they were regional partners.

In the current year, the department had been able to look back over four (4) years' worth of data regarding service provision standards; standards set for the Council by the Welsh Language Commissioner. See the link on the website:

<https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/cy/Cyngor/Dogfennau-Cyngor/Strategaethau-a-pholisiau/Cynllun-iaith/Cynllun-Hybu%27r-Gymraeg-yng-Ngwynedd-2018-2023.pdf>

regarding the Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd 2018-2023, an effort to identify the main challenges and opportunities facing the Welsh language.

Observations by members:

- When providing their answer to the question regarding speaking and understanding the Welsh language included on the job application form, did applicants answer truthfully?
- How was it possible to assess impact and data?
- Data regarding support workers - some of them did not speak Welsh.
- Leisure centres?
- What was the definition of training language?
- Was it possible to provide a translation service?

In response to the above observations by the Workplace Language Development Officer and the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer, it was shown that it was possible for members of this committee to provide input with suggestions / recommendations for improvement on the report for the following year.

When interviewing applicants, it was possible to compare their linguistic skills using the interview standard, judging their linguistic responses against the results noted in the job description.

It was expressed that the unit had been working with the Equality Officer on data impact assessments in recent months. A number of factors had led to what we were trying to achieve, and a question was raised as to how the assessments could be improved.

It was added that when the standards regarding the definition of language and training came into force, a number of these referred to policy formulation. The attitude of officers at the time had been to work out the best way of achieving the standards. The Commissioner's assurance report had been presented before the Language Committee the previous summer to draw attention to the matter of language assessments and equality, and to consider the best way to act. There was no way of working to the

programme in terms of the requirements, and members had been asked to consider the policy and the best impact upon the language.

Recently, the Equality Plan had looked back at the assessments to determine whether there were improvements to be made, and whether these assessments had been conducted correctly. This was developmental work which had been committed to by Council heads of service and managers.

It was noted that data for Welsh-speaking support workers in the education and care departments had been raised. There was a need to consider the fact that these were the departments employing workers directly. The obstacles facing us as a body was recruiting in line with the relevant skills required for the post in addition to the ability to present through the medium of Welsh. Work was being done with the departments to determine who needed training, giving priority to frontline staff.

Reference was made to the fact that leisure centres had been included in this year's report.

It was found that there was a lack of external experts who spoke Welsh, and that this was a challenge in terms of external training courses. There was a need to look into gaining an accurate idea of external training facilities before being able to provide a translation service.

DECISION:

To accept the report.

10. WELSH LANGUAGE PRAISE AND COMPLAINTS REPORT:

The latest information on complaints and examples of success in promoting the use of the Welsh Language within Council Services was presented to the committee by the Workplace Language Development Officer.

The importance of acknowledging Council workers' successes was emphasised; those who had gone the extra mile in promoting the Welsh language and ensuring that the residents of Gwynedd received a high-quality service through the medium of Welsh.

It was noted that unit managers took responsibility for improving their workers' confidence when working through the medium of Welsh.

Complaints and enquiries received by the service regarding the Council's Language Policy were read.

1. The European Elections form had been distributed in English only. It was explained that the forms had been sent out by an external company. The Council was looking into this.
2. A member of staff had presented information in English during a session. The matter had been raised with the service manager, and it had been confirmed that it was a lack of confidence on the part of the individual which had led to the situation. The manager had discussed with the Language unit to offer training, sharing links to relevant terms in the field.

OBSERVATIONS:

The development was welcomed, noting that there was a need to keep an eye on the situation and avoid slippage.

RESOLVED:

To accept the report.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.50am.

CHAIR