
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE 14/01/16

Present: Councillor Gweno Glyn (Chair)

Councillors: Elwyn Edwards, Tom Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Siân Gwenllian, Charles W. Jones, Eric M. Jones, Sion Jones, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Hefin Williams, John Wyn Williams and Owain Williams.

Also present: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Cabinet Member - Welsh Language).

Officers: Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery), Meilys Heulfryn Smith (Senior Business Manager), Gwenllian Williams (Language Development Officer), Catrin Parri (Workforce Development Officer / Welsh Language Co-ordinator) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Councillor Owain Williams was welcomed to the meeting.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor John Wyn Williams declared a personal interest in item 9 on the agenda - Update on a Meeting with Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd - as he was a member of the Board of CCG.

The member was not of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest and he participated fully in the discussion on the item.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 22 October, 2015 as a true record.

3. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER - THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Submitted – the verbal report of the Cabinet Member - Welsh Language, detailing recent developments in the field, including:-

- The conditional confirmation of the success of the grant to promote the use of the Welsh language.
- The work of establishing the new language centre in Bangor.
- A conference on 22 January in Llanrwst to launch the Language Charter across the north Wales counties.
- A conference on 13 January organised by Welsh Government as part of the consultation on a follow-on strategic framework on the More than Just Words scheme.
- Welsh Government consultation on proposed changes to the Technical Advice Note (TAN) 20 in relation to Planning and the Welsh language.
- The intention to build a relationship with Dr Rhian Hodges and Dr Cynog Prys from Bangor University, who specialise in linguistic policy and planning.
- Discussions on the Language Standards and their impact on the Council's Language Policy.

- The intention to submit the recommendations of the Language Investigation - The Use of the Welsh Language at External Meetings to the Cabinet on 19 January for adoption and implementation.

The following matters were discussed:-

(A) TAN 20 Consultation

The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery noted:-

- That the Planning Department intended to arrange a seminar for members on the afternoon of 8 March in order to give members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee, this committee and others an opportunity to influence the national guidance by contributing their observations on the proposed changes.
- In addition, that local guidance was being developed and that the Cabinet Member had expressed his intention to discuss the local guidance with the Communities Scrutiny Committee and this committee.

It was agreed, for ease, to circulate a link to the existing TAN 20 on the Welsh Government website to committee members.

(B) Collaboration with Bangor University

It was asked whether it would be possible to invite experts on linguistic policy and planning to a meeting of the Language Committee. The Cabinet Member replied by saying that further discussions were needed with the University first of all to sift through academic material to see what would be relevant to the Council and that it would be possible to come back to the Language Committee after developing the discussion further.

(C) Place Names

The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery noted:-

- As a result of the decision at the previous meeting to press for the inclusion of a clause regarding the Welsh language in the Historic Environment Bill, a response was received by the Chair of the committee in the *Senedd* which discussed the bill stating that the bill had been amended, in November 2015, to include a section which required Welsh Ministers to create and maintain a list of historic place names in Wales (namely the new section 33 in the Bill).
- That the Bill had also been amended to make it a requirement for Historic Environment Records (which would be prepared by local planning authorities) to provide a method of obtaining the details of every historic place name in the area of that authority which had been included in the list which would be created and maintained by Welsh Ministers.

During the discussion:-

- It was agreed to wait and see what the guidance would state and consider at that time how this Council and the local communities and the local parish councils could contribute to the process.
- A member referred to the unwillingness of *Snowdonia Active* to correspond through the medium of Welsh and it was asked whether it would be possible to persuade them. The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery asked the member to send the relevant details to the officers, but the Cabinet Member warned that he could not see how they could be forced to do so as they were

a private company. The need to support companies to be bilingual was emphasised, rather than finger-pointing. In response, the Cabinet Member explained that this was a fundamental part of the work of Hunaniaith and the Language Development Officer elaborated on the work of advising the business sector and noted that the outdoor sector was a difficult field as it served many customers from outside Wales.

- It was noted that a grant could be claimed from the Language Board in the past to have Welsh-language signage for businesses and vans and the Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery noted that the next language investigation would look at how visual the Welsh language was and the Council's influence to that end.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

4. PRESENTATION BY THE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM

A presentation was given by the Workforce Development Officer / Welsh Language Co-ordinator on the process of developing non-Welsh-speaking staff, with reference to the existing situation, the dispersal of staff who were Welsh-learners throughout the county, steps to support learners and the way forward.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and make observations. The following was discussed:-

- The difficulty of identifying people in the system as managers were not always clear regarding what the language level for the post was, and consequently the staff were not referred to language training.
- The difficulty in the care field in relation to the failure to provide the service in the client's preferred language due to difficulties with staff recruitment. It was noted that the situation was better in Council homes than in private homes. It was suggested that the company which provided care in Pant yr Eithin, Harlech did not meet the requirements of the contract and the Senior Business Manager agreed to obtain confirmation of the situation. The importance of working with children and young people in the schools and colleges in order to address the recruitment crisis in the care field was emphasised.
- The internal audit of the linguistic skills of staff.

The Workforce Development Officer / Welsh Language Co-ordinator was thanked for the presentation and for the discussion.

5. MORE THAN JUST WORDS

A presentation was given by the Senior Business Manager regarding the progress of the More Than Just Words Task Group, with reference to:-

- The background to Welsh Government's strategic framework for Welsh-language services in Health, Social Services and Social Care and the current consultation on a follow-on strategic framework which would be a stronger foundation to empower the fields of care and health to implement the strategy.
- The work and findings of the Task Group and the steps taken in response to that. It was explained that the Task Group had not met since May 2015 as it had been waiting for the new Language Standards in order to obtain clarity, but that the group needed to reconvene now. It was also noted that there was a need to review the membership of the Task Group in order to ensure that it was current.
- Examples of good work underway in the community.

- The need to change the monitoring procedure as only two officers were monitoring over 60-70 homes and 100 home carers.
- Technological developments in the field, such as a new information technology system which recorded client information and machine translation in the field of health and care.
- The idea of sharing resources in terms of workers with other councils and to see More Than Just Words being dispersed further afield.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and make observations. The following was discussed:-

- The need to give priority to addressing the need in Gwynedd for Welsh-speaking carers, or any carers, by establishing a collaboration scheme with schools and colleges over several years. It was noted, nevertheless, that there was much to take pride in in Gwynedd and that this momentum needed to be maintained.
- The need to have an input on a corporate level to the work of the Task Group. It was noted that there was much activity in the field on a local and regional level; however there was no scheme in place in order to respond to the problem.
- The need to respond to the consultation on the follow-on strategic framework. It was noted that the basic principles within it were very firm, but that it was the implementation that was a problem. The Member and Scrutiny Support Officer was asked to send a link to the document to the members and the Senior Business Manager urged everyone to take the time to read the document and respond to it by the closing date of 28 February.

RESOLVED

- (a) To ask the Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language, jointly with the Cabinet Member for Care, to have a discussion with Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director, who leads on this project, in order to see how More Than Just Words could be tied-in to any other strategy that the Council has to provide in the care field, consider what the Task Group has done to date and what it needs to do and to submit a report to this committee.**
- (b) That the members submit any observations on the follow-on strategic framework for the attention of the Senior Business Manager before 28 February.**

The Senior Business Manager was thanked for the presentation and for the discussion.

6. THE COUNCIL'S LANGUAGE STANDARDS AND POLICY

Submitted – the report of the Senior Manager (Democracy and Delivery) inviting the committee's observations on the draft language policy for the Council prior to it being submitted to the full Council on 3 March for adoption.

During the discussion:-

- It was emphasised that the minimum set by the Standards was too low to address this Council's ambition for the Welsh language in several of the fields and it was not wished to see the Council's current position being weakened.
- In response to an observation that the English version of the Council's website was the default option when searching for Gwynedd Council on search engines, the Language Development Officer explained that she believed that it was the individual user's cookies which caused the website to go to the English page rather than the Welsh. It was asked whether it would be possible to investigate this again and the Cabinet Member agreed to make enquiries.

RESOLVED

- (a) **As paragraphs 3.1 and 3.3 of the policy both referred to making contributions at meetings through the medium of Welsh or English, to delete paragraph 3.1 and insert paragraph 3.3 as the new paragraph 3.1.**
- (b) **To ask the Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery to enquire with the Head of Corporate Support Department whether there is a time-frame within which a non-Welsh-speaking person appointed to a post is expected to learn the language and what would happen should that person not reach the requirements within that time-frame, in order to submit the policy to the full Council in March.**

7. UPDATE ON THE MEETING WITH CARTREFI CYMUNEDOL GWYNEDD

Submitted - the report of the Language Development Officer presenting an update on a meeting with Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd as a result of a complaint received by the Language Committee regarding CCG's implementation of its Language Scheme and its intention to advertise two senior manager posts without the designation of the Welsh language being an essential skill.

During the discussion:-

- It was emphasised that the deputation that discussed with the Chief Executive of CCG did not accept the difficulties, and absolute opposition to the company's decision to contravene its own language policy and scheme was expressed.
- It was noted that CCG should be asked for written assurances that it would not contravene its language policy in future; that the Welsh language will be an essential skill for the post of Customer and Communities Director, which would be advertised shortly, and that the two non-Welsh-speaking managers appointed in 2015 were learning Welsh.
- It was suggested that councillors and people in general had a responsibility to seek to direct the right people to these types of jobs.
- It was noted that, in terms of the Council's perspective, any contracts with the third sector, or whoever else, must ensure that it was explicit that those bodies were required to adhere to their language policies and that it would be beneficial to have an update on that as duties or responsibilities transferred to other bodies as a result of any cuts.
- It was noted that the Language Commissioner's officers were undertaking a piece of work on the implications of outsourcing services on the Welsh language and that it would be beneficial to submit that piece of work to the committee so that it could be a factor that would be in the forefront of the Council's mind as it was required to make decisions to outsource.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To ask the Language Development Officer to arrange a meeting with the Chief Executive of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd to discuss the aforementioned opportunities and concerns, and to ask specifically for written assurances from them:-**
 - **That it will not contravene its language policy in future.**
 - **That the Welsh language will be an essential skill for the post of Customer and Communities Director, which will be advertised shortly.**
 - **That the two non-Welsh-speaking managers appointed in 2015 are learning Welsh.**
- (b) **To report back to this committee on the results of the work of the Language Commissioner on the implications of outsourcing services on the Welsh language.**

8. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

Submitted – the report of the Language Development Officer detailing the latest language complaints to hand.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 1.20 pm

CHAIRMAN