
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE 7/11/19

PRESENT: Elin Walker Jones (Chair)
Cai Larsen (Vice-chair).

COUNCILLORS: Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Judith Humphreys, Charles Wyn Jones, Elwyn Jones, Eric M. Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, John Pughe Roberts, Eirwyn Williams and Elfed Williams,

OFFICERS: Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor), Gwenllïan Mair Williams (Language Advisor), Siôn Elwyn Hughes (Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer), Lowri Haf Evans (Democratic Services Officer).

OTHERS INVITED: Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member for Corporate Support), Edgar Wyn Owen (Council Chair).

In relation to item 5 on the agenda Annwen Davies (Rural Gwynedd Development Scheme Manager)

In relation to item 6 on the agenda Amanda Davies (Byw'n Iach Managing Director)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Aled Evans.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent items were received.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 9 July 2019 as a true record, subject to the amendment of the decision on item 6 (minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2019).

'Hunaniaith - Menter Iaith Gwynedd - Targeting Young people aged 15+', regarding a letter to take further action to gain the interest and commitment of Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. 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.'

It was noted that the minutes should note that the Committee as an entity should also be writing a letter, rather than one member of the Committee. It was suggested that the letter that was sent should be reviewed at the next meeting.

It was confirmed that the Welsh Language Commissioner had received an invitation to attend the Committee.

5. ARFOR PROGRAMME

A verbal report and presentation was received from the Rural Gwynedd Development Scheme Manager, providing an update on the Arfor scheme. Following a budgetary agreement between Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, in February 2019, the Minister for the Economy, Ken Skates AM, confirmed that a budget of £2 million was available to Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils to trial innovative methods of supporting the economy in the Welsh language's strongholds. It was noted that the funding was available up to the end of 2020/21, with £466,250 available to be invested in Gwynedd on activities that would lead to the creation of new jobs that would support the language in our communities.

It was reported that two cross border projects had been established; Strategic Plan / Evaluation and the Bwrlwm Business Scheme. It was reiterated that the Strategic Plan looked at individual projects across the County and was in the process of setting up a business plan for submission. It was expressed that Bwrlwm Business had designed a welcome pack to encourage businesses to work through the medium of Welsh. It was noted that it was intended to commission a company to look at digital material across the four Counties to seek information and identify and share good practice.

Reference was made to the Gwynedd Arfor Steering Group which led the work in Gwynedd and which had identified a package of innovative projects to trial over the period that was in-keeping with the programme's criteria. It was reiterated that the Language Unit had been part of the group since the beginning. It was noted that a number of exciting projects had been established, and a language questionnaire had been drawn up to record the standard of project users / supporters so that the impact of Arfor could be measured.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main observations were noted by members:

- That a two year period was too short to promote and develop business initiatives. Needed to pressurise Welsh Government to get a longer period
- The funding received was insufficient
- Needed to consult with Menter Busnes to avoid duplicating work
- The impact would need to be measured in order to secure Arfor 2
- Needed to target and support young people who were less likely to use Welsh in business
- That there was a need to ensure that Welsh names were retained on the lands
- Arfor was initially an innovative idea, but the outcome was now much lower

- No certainty of the future of Arfor. It was proposed that the Committee write to the Minister, asking how the Arfor Scheme worked with the Government's wider schemes such as language schemes and the Economic strategy.

In response to an observation regarding how the scheme would continue after two years, it was highlighted that the intention of the Strategic Plan that was in development was to look at how the projects worked and measure the impact.

In response to a question regarding guidance from Welsh Government, it was highlighted that each scheme would be discussed with the Government.

RESOLVED that the Committee write to the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, asking for the Government's commitment to the scheme and how the Arfor Scheme worked with the Government's wider schemes such as language schemes and the Economic strategy.

Councillor John Pughe Roberts proposed for the Language Officers to consider a project relating to the work of Dr John Davies, Mallwyd. It was noted that he was the chief editor of edition 1620 of the Welsh translation of the Bible. In order to acknowledge the significant work of Dr John Davies, it was suggested to consider a project to celebrate 400 years of his work.

RESOLVED to arrange that Councillor John Pughe Roberts discusses the proposal with Hunaniaith officers.

6. BYW'N IACH

A verbal report was given by the Byw'n Iach Managing Director on the work that has been carried out by the company to protect the Welsh language as Council departments are externalised. It was explained that Byw'n Iach had been established in April 2019 as a company limited by guarantee under the management of Gwynedd Council, acting on behalf of the Council to manage the Leisure Centres of the County and provide a range of Sport, Health and Fitness services. As part of the agreement, it was noted that responsibility for the language had been included, and that collaboration with the Language Development Officers had ensured that the transfer process had been formalised.

It was reported that 250 staff members had transferred, and that the initial response had been positive, with praise for the staff's attitude towards change. A soft launch was held for the transfer, as there were no obvious changes to customer services. It was highlighted that the intention was to create a culture of ownership for all staff.

In the context of language, it was reported that the company had created a Language policy that was equivalent to Gwynedd Council's policy, which was relevant and practical to the Leisure field. It was emphasised that some of the policy objectives had remained the same but with additional clauses to create an influence within the Leisure sector. It was noted that work was being done to develop the workplace, with an intention of creating specialist jobs to undertake particular duties. It was reiterated that the language specifications in job descriptions had been challenged to be ambitious in mapping the need, and that a skills assessment had been completed as a foundation to prioritise a work programme for the teams.

The Council's Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer reiterated that every member of staff in the Leisure service who had received training was being assessed, and that the staff member and manager was ensuring that training took root. It was expressed that the initial feedback of the staff had been positive, and their efforts and

willingness to respond to the challenge were commended.

Gratitude was expressed for the information.

In response to an observation regarding the use of Welsh language music in fitness classes, it was noted that the music had been prepared by particular companies, and it was music without lyrics that was to be played. It would be difficult to create a Byw'n lach resource, however it was accepted that the observation could be considered.

In response to an observation regarding developing a career path, the intention to create specific jobs which would offer expertise in appropriate fields was highlighted. Training and support would be delivered, with the intention of creating more variety and opportunities for staff to develop. The need to invest in staff in order to ensure development was noted, along with the need to eliminate the idea that only casual jobs were being offered in the Leisure field.

In response to an observation with regard to considering a scheme to share profits with the staff, it was noted that this was not currently possible, but it was a plan that could be considered for the future. It was reiterated that Flintshire Council had adopted such a scheme, but that Byw'n lach had adopted an internal agreement with Gwynedd Council

In response to an observation regarding potential conflict between moving towards specialist staff and seeking staff that were confident in Welsh, it was emphasised that staff already employed were likely to be able to supply the specialist need. It was reiterated that there was an intention to make use of champions within centres to lead on specific fields, including the Welsh language. Continuous support will be given by the Language Unit and the Learning and Development Unit to support the expectations.

Observations from the discussion:

- That a language target needed to be incorporated into the Business Plan sheet (summary)
- That the English ethos amongst staff needed to be eliminated - needed to promote the staff to use Welsh when conversing
- That partners / colleges needed to be targeted to better prepare individuals for jobs in the leisure sector
- Encourage the company to advertise in local papers
- It was worth contacting Education Area Officers

RESOLVED to accept the information.

7. LANGUAGE SPECIFICATIONS

An update was received on the progress of the Language Specifications project and give Members an opportunity to ask questions or propose recommendations for any further action

The background of the project was explained, emphasising that the Language Committee (in 2015) had decided to examine the procedure for recording the language skills of staff in preparation for the emergence of the Welsh Language Standards in 2016. In January 2016, a further decision was made to review the language requirements and conditions of Council posts in order to impose realistic requirements alongside the post duties. In 2017, the second part of the project was started of ensuring that support was available for existing members of staff either to maintain their Welsh skills or reach the language requirements of their post if a gap existed.

Attention was drawn to some notable services that were worked with along with main

work developments, e.g. level self-evaluation questionnaire, training, after-care, Cyfeillion Cymraeg (Welsh Friends) and the successes of the project. It was hoped to continue to visit Services, work closely with the Byw'n Iach company and the staff of care homes.

Gratitude was expressed for the inspirational and encouraging information.

In response to a question regarding ensuring the continuation of the project, it was emphasised that it was hoped for Heads of Department and Service Managers to undertake the work of developing and supporting their staff. It was reiterated that staff turnover highlighted challenges, and that there was no real end to the project.

8. THE WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONERS ASSURANCE REPORT 2018-19 RIGHTS IN USE

A report was presented by the Language Advisor, briefly reporting on the findings of the Welsh Language Commissioner's Assurance Report. It was noted that the report was the result of work to monitor complaints, research, observing and questioning focus groups, which demonstrated findings about the success of organisations to implement and comply with the Standards.

The Commissioner's latest assurance report was published under the title Rights in Use in summer 2019. The report focused on the ability of organisations to guarantee that an individual's right to Welsh language services was satisfied and the public's use of these services.

Attention was drawn to the relevant matters in the report;

- That awareness needed to be raised of the requirements of the Standards
- There was a need to ensure that everyone across the Council was aware of their responsibilities and duties in terms of the Standards
- More activities needed to be considered to check services at random
- That the self-monitoring form needed to be used as a means of gathering information regularly by departments for compliance
- That sufficient time and staff resources be allocated to fulfil the role of monitoring the implementation of the Standards.
- That executive and specialist officers be included early enough in the planning and implementation of projects in order to make the best of every opportunity to promote the Welsh language.
- There was a need to motivate people to use Welsh and gather meaningful information with regard to an individual's language use.

The members expressed their thanks for the report, and the actions were welcomed.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main observations were noted by members:

- That the Council needed to communicate its expectation for people to contact the Council through the medium of Welsh

- Needed to emphasise that the Council's administrative language was Welsh
- Needed to promote the fact that a very high percentage of staff spoke Welsh
- There was a need to maximise the use of the Welsh language in information technology
- Heads of Departments should be invited in turn to share experiences / good practices on how they responded to the requirements of the Standards. There was a suggestion to report on the situation of the Welsh language in their departments, offering examples of successes and challenges so that the Committee was aware of the situation.
- A request for the Cabinet Member to present a brief report to meetings of the Committee, which would provide a strategic overview on the work of the Council
- A request to include reports on complaints / commendations as a fixed item on the agenda

Resolved:

- **To invite Heads of Departments to the Committee in turn to provide an update on the situation within their departments.**
- **Restore the practice of including complaint reports as a short, standing item on the agenda which would also include commendations.**
- **That the Cabinet Member presents a short report that would provide a strategic overview on developments in the field of the Welsh language within the Council.**

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.00 pm

CHAIRMAN