

Meeting	Gwynedd Council Cabinet
Meeting date	March 8, 2022
Cabinet Member	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams
Officer	Rhian Parry Jones
Item Title	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032

1. DECISION SOUGHT

The Cabinet is asked to approve the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2032, before the Authority submits it to the Welsh Government for approval.

2. REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

In accordance with Welsh Government guidance, the Plan needs to be approved by Cabinet and signed by the person with statutory responsibility for education within the authority.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The purpose of The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is to outline a vision of a Welsh and bilingual education system that places the needs of our learners at the heart of our provision.
- 3.2 These first plans came into effect on 1 April 2014 for a period of three years to March 2017, and the Plan was updated for the following three years. Due to the unprecedented circumstances of the Covid-19 Pandemic, their duration was extended by one additional year. This new Plan will be operational for a period of ten years from September 2022 to 31st August 2032.
- 3.3 The Strategy is interpreted in the context of Gwynedd Council's Language Policy thereby achieving the outcomes. The Authority will ensure that key elements are reflected upon and appropriately addressed in the Strategic Plan.
- 3.4 The Strategy has been prepared addressing the objectives and the requirements of the public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must in making decisions have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics and having due regard to the socio-economic duty under Section 1 of the Act.
- 3.5 The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and is globally responsible. The Strategy has been prepared addressing the objectives and the requirements of the Act.
- 3.6 The Plan sets a clear vision and direction for ensuring that Gwynedd's learners attain the highest standards to maintain the language, culture and economy locally.

4. REASON AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION

- 4.1. Approving the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan will enable the Welsh Government to monitor how local authorities respond to and contribute to the need to implement the aims of the Strategy by:
- ensuring that all stages of local authority education processes take full account of Welsh-medium education;
 - expanding Welsh-medium education, where required, on the basis of better planning;
 - ensure that Welsh-medium education support services are delivered on a consortia basis;
 - improve standards and extend the use of Welsh among children and young people;
 - demonstrate progress against the specific targets of the Welsh Medium Education Strategy.
- 4.2 Approving the Strategy in the context of Gwynedd Council’s Language Policy will achieve the seven outcomes outlined in it:

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN: OUTCOMES	
1	More nursery children/3-year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
2	More reception class children/ 5-year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
3	More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another
4	More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh
5	More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school
6	An increase in Welsh-medium education provision for learners with additional learning needs (in accordance with duties determined by the ALN Act)
7	Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh

5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

Subject to Cabinet approval, and then Welsh Government approval, Local Authorities will be required to commence implementation of the WESP from 1 September 2022.

6. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

A public consultation on the draft Plan, for a period of eight weeks, took place from 15 October to 17 December 2021. In accordance with the The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing Demand for Welsh Medium Education (Wales) Regulations 2013 the following have been consulted:

- The Welsh Language Commissioner
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- Mudiad Meithrin
- County Schools
- Post 16 Colleges / Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
- The Diocese of the Church in Wales
- Constituency and Regional Assembly Members
- Members of Parliament representing Gwynedd
- Welsh Government
- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
- The Regional Education Consortium (GwE)
- Parents for Welsh Medium Education
- Association of Schools for Welsh Medium Education

- Cymdeithas yr Iaith Education Campaign Group
- Mentrau Iaith Cymru
- Community / Town Council
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Council Services

Below is a summary of the nature of the comments received, and the main messages:

- Generally, sound and detailed planning.
- Many see success for Welsh-medium primary education in Gwynedd but more concerns arise about progression to the secondary sector.
- It is not sufficient to refer to the County's general Language Policy in the Plan; rather it is necessary to discuss the provision throughout the County from the early years onwards.
- Need to clarify what bilingual education means by conveying a message that bilingualism is a result not a method.
- There needs to be a rigorous process for assessing and revising policy proposals in the future, in order to maximise the positive effects on the Welsh language and the achievement of the WESP.
- It would be useful to include data for the number and percentage of pupils studying 5 or more GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh in the County, the percentage of subjects available entirely through the medium of Welsh for GCSE in the County and percentage of subjects available entirely through the medium of Welsh at A level.
- Overall, the key objectives, targets and how the authority will achieve them are not clear enough.

Modifications to the WESP have been made following some of the main comments received above in order to strengthen the revised document. The main changes that have been added to the document are a brief explanation of the language designations and Language Policy, and the addition of data to the 10 year target tables at the end of each outcome.

7. STATUTORY OFFICERS' COMMENTS

Statutory Finance Officer: The report's author has confirmed that there are no financial implications arising from this report, as the Education Department will operate their Welsh in Education Strategic Plan from within the relevant grants' resources. Consequently, I have no comments to add from the perspective of financial propriety.

Monitoring Officer: As set out in the report the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is now a statutory document. One of the consequences is that there is a consultative and approval processes to be followed in order to create the Strategy. The consultation document was approved by the Cabinet in July 2021. This report brings the results of the consultation before the Cabinet for consideration and response. It is important therefore that the Cabinet considers the results in considering the decision to adopt the Strategy.

An equality assessment will need to be prepared including the socio-economic duty.

Appendix 1 – Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032