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## LANGUAGE COMMITTEE THURSDAY 7 APRIL, 2022

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**PRESENT:** Alwyn Gruffydd (Chair)  
Judith Mary Humphreys (Vice-chair)

**Councillors:** Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Aled Evans, Elin Walker Jones, Olaf Cai Larsen, John Pughe Roberts and Elfed Williams.

**OFFICERS:** Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager), Llywela Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser), Gwenllian Mair Williams (Language Adviser), Llio Mai Hughes (Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer), Bet Huws (Gwynedd Language Development Officer - Meirionnydd), Mei Owen (Language Development Centre Officer) and Sioned Mai Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

**OTHERS INVITED:** Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Cabinet Member for Corporate Support).

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Item 5: Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director) and Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services).

Item 6: Huw Williams (Head of Gwynedd Consultancy)

Item 7: Sioned E. Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Beca Brown, Eric M. Jones, Eirwyn Williams and Elwyn Jones (Vice-chair of the Council)

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received.

**3. URGENT ITEMS**

No urgent items were received.

**4. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 25 January 2022 as a true record.

An update was sought on how many houses had now been purchased off the open market by the Housing Department. It was noted that the records referred to one house being purchased up to January 2022; enquiries were made about the latest situation. The Language Advisor would verify the number.

## 5. WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION PLAN: LEADERSHIP TEAM AND LEGAL SERVICES

The report was submitted by the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director and the Head of Legal Service, and attention was drawn to the following main points, in brief:

- The Chief Executive reported upon the recent development as a result of changing the Council's use of Microsoft software so that it would be available completely through the medium of Welsh. It was noted that 60% of staff used it voluntarily; this would be changed to be mandatory from the commencement date of the new Council.
- It was noted that the Council led on a number of regional partnerships such as GwE, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, North Wales Trunk Road Agency and the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee, with the responsibility for establishing, organising and planning the meetings. It was added that the Council was volunteering to lead on the above as it was an opportunity to influence the language use of the bodies by ensuring that it was established through the medium of Welsh from the outset and implemented the Council's language policy.
- Reference was made to the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board, which was attended by the Chief Executive, and that it was an opportunity to influence the use made of the Welsh language by other public organisations.
- Disappointment was expressed at some organisations where it was a battle to be able to contribute in Welsh in some meetings. It was noted that Welsh Government was one organisation where very little effort was made to provide an interpreter. It was suggested that the Council should correspond publicly with the Government to express its disappointment.
- The Corporate Director reported on the main fields under her leadership and she noted examples of trying to influence language use in those fields. Examples of this was always enquiring for Welsh copies of reports at every meeting and ensuring that the interpretation provision was available, particularly in on-line meetings.
- It was believed that the above examples encouraged others to ask the same questions and that an improvement could be seen compared with the situation ten years ago.
- Reference was made to the More than Just Words agenda, partnership work and collaboration within the care and community safety fields and the role of Director within Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board as an official contact. Details were given on the More than Just Words Forum, noting that national approval had been received for the forum's work in the North, which shared good practice and collaboration.
- The Corporate Director reported that she contributed in Welsh at every Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board meeting, as did a number of other members, and that this was encouraged and appreciated by the Chair and Chief Executive of the Health Board.
- Reference was made to the launch of Foster Wales, and the joint work done to

influence and manage to obtain the logo in Welsh first and in English second.

- The Head of Legal Service reported on the Legal Service, noting that it was a small service in terms of its size, but that it overlapped other Departments by providing legal and propriety support. Reference was made to the support being provided to the Coroner within the Legal Service, as well as the elections unit.
- It was highlighted that the Council was leading on regional matters, noting that the legal service had been contributing in terms of the governance of these matters. This meant that the service could give a prominent role to the Welsh language when establishing the regional partnerships and creating confidence that technical legal agreements could be produced in Welsh. It was added that the same status was now being given to Welsh and English legal documents, and that it was now uncommon not to receive bilingual versions of documents, which was a very encouraging development.
- Details were given on the Coroner service and the recent uncertainty regarding merging the service into a North Wales service. It was reported that the service would continue as a North West Wales service between Gwynedd and Anglesey where it would be easier to ensure the Welsh implementation of the service.
- Reference was made to the legal service's use of the external commissioning of work, and it was reported that this was inevitable at times. Reference was made to the challenges of getting hold of Welsh-speaking locums, emphasising that the aim was to appoint Welsh-speaking Solicitors. It was reported further that better packages were being offered during recruitment, in the hope of being able to attract more Welsh-speakers to the posts.

Members of the committee were given an opportunity to ask questions:

- Pride was expressed in what the Council was doing to lead the way for others and to create a bilingual workforce and gratitude was expressed for this work.
- Support was given to the idea of corresponding formally with the public bodies, particularly the Welsh Government, and possibly the Health Board, to express disappointment in their efforts to enable officers to contribute easily in Welsh at meetings. The above was supported unanimously by the Members.
- It was believed that the Council played a leading and important role in terms of ensuring respect to the Welsh language in regional and national forums, and gratitude was expressed for this work. It was added that it was very encouraging that the Council was taking on this responsibility.
- It was felt that a number of the public organisations were eager to create change and improve but were unsure how to develop bilingual language material in the workplace. It was questioned whether it was possible for Gwynedd Council to give them a work plan in order to assist them.
- It was agreed that the word 'Council' should be removed from the Council's name.
- The Corporate Director was thanked for all of her work; which was on top of her day-to-day work. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Support reported that she had received feedback that this guidance from the Director in the context of the Welsh language gave others confidence and encouraged them to use the language.

- The Head of Legal Services was asked whether communication took place with Law Schools in Universities such as Cardiff or Liverpool in order to assist with the recruitment of Solicitors to the Council.
- It was asked in a situation where there would be any difference between the Welsh version and English version of a Legal document, which version would take priority?
- It was asked why English addresses were on the electoral roll and whether it was possible to receive the database in Welsh. It was expressed that similar matters existed within the Planning Department.
- The Legal service was praised for its developments in the context of the language in terms of developing new legal terminology in Welsh. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to attract Welsh solicitors; it was asked whether support was provided to locums to learn Welsh or develop their Welsh.

In response, the Chief Executive noted:

- That Gwynedd had led on the use of the Welsh language in the public sector for decades and that agencies, Councils and other bodies always looked at what Gwynedd Council was doing. This responsibility was welcomed and it was noted that it was essential for this good work to continue.
- An observation was made that the best translation service in the country existed in Gwynedd Council.
- Reference was made to the work being done to change the Council's name and that a number of bureaucratic legal obstructions had arisen over the years. It was reported, with the support of the Head of Legal Service, that an external solicitor had been commissioned to help and now the Chief Executive was confident that a significant change could be made.

In response, the Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor noted:

- That it was possible for Gwynedd Council to share examples of good practice with public organisations in order to assist them. It was added that the Government had established a new unit under the leadership of Jeremy Evas in order to give particular attention to the Welsh language. It was suggested that it would be an idea to send the letter previously referred to for the attention of the Minister and Jeremy Evas.

In response, the Head of Legal Service noted:

- That he tended to look for experienced people to recruit as Solicitors in the Council, instead of newly graduated applicants, except for the professional trainee opportunities.
- That there was bilingual legislation in Wales, which meant that neither language had a specific status. The importance of ensuring that the translation was correct, but that the interpretation was done by comparing and referring to both languages was noted; it was confirmed that both versions had a status.
- The electoral unit would look at the matter of English addresses on the electoral roll, in order to see what was possible.
- That it was a challenge for non Welsh-speaking locums to work for the Council, but that they had a positive attitude and a willingness to collaborate. Reference

was made to cases where the paperwork was in Welsh and that support and mentoring was provided for the locums. It was reported that the relationship was constructive and productive and that there was an understanding and appreciation of the language. It was noted that although the locums did not learn Welsh, that they certainly got acquainted with the Gwynedd Council principle.

## DECISION

- **To accept the report and note the observations received.**
- **It was agreed for the Chief Executive to write a letter to the Government on behalf of the Language Committee expressing concern that it was not always possible for Gwynedd Council staff and others to contribute in Welsh in virtual meetings arranged by the Welsh Government and to encourage them to ensure that simultaneous translation service provision is available without asking in virtual meetings.**

## 6. WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION PLAN: GWYNEDD CONSULTANCY DEPARTMENT

The report was submitted by the Head of Gwynedd Consultancy, noting that the Department was dealing with the engineering world, which was considered to be quite an English industry. This led to problems with recruiting staff with high standard language skills. It was noted that the Department was working on a number of projects and plans to help staff meet the language designations of their posts and to improve the linguistic skills of the workforce; details of these projects were available in the report. Reference was made to the following points in the report:

- The Welsh Language Learning and Development Officers were thanked for their work supporting the Department's staff to assess their own linguistic ability and to provide further training where needed.
- Reference was made to individuals within the Department who had made progress and were encouraged to speak Welsh as a result of schemes such as the Cynllun Cyfeillion or Cynllun Arfer via the University.
- It was noted that the Department encouraged teams to hold their conversations through the medium of Welsh. It was acknowledged that the lockdown period had disrupted this progress somewhat and it was intended to recommence the support for teams to use the Welsh language as the workforce's day-to-day language.
- It was emphasised that the Department would seek to extend their use of the Welsh language internally and with other bodies such as contractors and advisers further by corresponding in Welsh; it was believed that this showed an impact and had an influence.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following matters were raised:

- Thanks was expressed for the presentation and for all of the Department's work. It was noted that the success of the Cynllun Adfer via the University was very interesting and it was asked whether other Councils and Organisations were aware of this and whether it could be marketed.
- It was asked whether the courses for staff to receive professional engineering qualifications being offered in Welsh, and if not, was there room to ask Coleg

Cymraeg Cenedlaethol for support to ensure that the courses were being offered bilingually. It was questioned what Education establishments were doing to assist the Department which sought to provide a Welsh workforce with relevant qualifications.

- A comment was made about the technical terminology associated with the field and it was suggested that it was possible to continue to have conversations about the work in Welsh, despite the fact that terminology used was in English. It was believed that it was important to discuss work in Welsh, whilst continuing to use the English technical terminology, in order to raise the confidence of staff.

In response, the Head of Gwynedd Consultancy noted:

- It was expressed that work was not being done by the Department to promote the Cynllun Adfer, but rather there was reporting back between the Council and the University. The Language Adviser added that the Language service was a part of the Management Board for this project. It was noted that it was a University research project, with the University leading on this with a number of other public bodies participating in the research. It was believed that the responsibility fell on the University to share the good practice and promote the success of the Scheme. It was reported that the direction of the work had taken a different path as a result of the pandemic and that no recent update had been received. It was reiterated that the Language service could ask for an update from the University and ask what were the plans to extend the scheme for the future. It was added that the feedback received from the University had been very positive.
- It was reported that progress could be seen where more courses were being offered through the medium of Welsh. It was also noted that the Department's staff were more prepared to ask for Welsh-medium courses. The tendency was that degree courses were normally in English and that BTEC courses were sometimes offered in Welsh. It was believed that it was an opportunity to more strongly persuade the Educational world and have more political persuasion on Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.
- It was agreed that the terminology associated with the engineering world was technical. It was noted that examples of successes could be seen; it was reported that 'cylchfan' was used today, however ten years ago 'roundabout' was most commonly used. It was believed that small things like this made a difference and extended the staff's vocabulary.

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report and note the observations received.**

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION PLAN: ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT**

The report was presented by the Head of Economy and Community Department, and she referred briefly to the following main points:

- It was noted that a small reduction had been seen in the number of staff who had met the language designation of their posts, compared with the previous year. It was believed that this was a reflection of the increase in the number of temporary staff appointed over the past year, e.g. additional wardens in order to respond to the Covid situation.

- It was reported that opportunities had arisen to develop the language of those who did not meet the requirements. It was noted that individuals had taken advantage of the opportunities and had appreciated the support and encouragement given to develop their language skills. It was added that challenges existed when completing a language self-assessment as so many temporary seasonal staff were in the Department and some had now left.
- Some new service fields introduced during the Covid period were highlighted. Then, the opportunity was taken to place emphasis on providing the information in Welsh and promoting the services available in Welsh.
- It was reported that the Libraries and Archives Service were valuable resources for families which enabled children to hear the Welsh language and participate in activities. The importance of the Archives service which provided information packs and Welsh materials to Gwynedd Schools was emphasised; now there was an increased emphasis on this resource.
- Reference was made to the work of promoting Welsh culture that was being done by the Tourism, Marketing and Events Service. Reference was made to the work currently underway on the linguistic impact of the increasing number of tourists in the County. It was noted that measures were now in place to measure the impact on the language of the County.
- The Department's expectation on partners who collaborated with them to provide materials bilingually was expressed. It was added that the Department ensured that websites and apps were available bilingually, and they ensured that they were available in Welsh to other Counties and partnerships. It was reported that the Department had strengthened the language requirements as a condition in tenders when awarding contracts.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following matters were raised:

- Gratitude was expressed for the full report and it was expressed, whilst acknowledging the magnitude of the task, that it would be interesting to see the outcome of the work on the impact of tourists on the language.
- Enquiries were made as to when this work would be published.
- It was noted that location played a part in how harmful tourism could be to the language in a specific area. This work was welcomed and it was believed that the results would be interesting.
- It was asked whether it was possible to measure how much tourism that the history, language and culture of Wales attract to Gwynedd and to Wales, i.e. more cultural tourism.
- Disappointment was expressed that the Arts Council did not support projects that promoted the use of the Welsh language.

In response, the Head of Economy and Community Department noted:

- That many factors contributed to the impact of tourists on the language and that it was not easy to analyse the impact. It was reported that this work had now been commissioned. It was believed that the results would be very interesting and that the Department would be happy to share the information with the Committee in

the next cycle.

- It was noted that work on the Visitor Economy Plan had been prepared and had received Cabinet approval to the consultation period. It was hoped that the consultation work would come to an end in June. It was anticipated that the Visitor Economy Plan would be approved after the summer. It was noted that the work on identifying measures was currently under-way and that the Department would have a better idea of the indicators by the summer.
- Members concurred with the comment that location was a factor in the impact of tourism on the language of a specific area. It was highlighted that if there were numerous Airbnb houses in villages then this could have a negative impact on the language, compared with the impact of tourists on larger towns.
- That no data existed to show how much tourism was attracted to the area based on culture alone. It was believed that this was a combination of factors, including the area's culture, environment and attractions. Instead, the plan that had been operational had been focusing on attempting to extend the season so that tourists visited throughout the year, and not just in the summer season. It was reported that this had a negative impact on the quality of the jobs and salaries being offered in the sector. It was added that Hafan y Môr now offered annual contracts, instead of seasonal contracts, so that the staff were paid throughout the year. It was reiterated that the Department was seeking to focus on cultural tourism that tended to visit outside the season, and was looking to strengthen the value of Welsh culture as an attraction in its own right.
- It was reported that the Arts Council had not been objecting projects, but it had rather been prioritising resources and had not been promoting. It was believed that this was an opportunity to influence; it was noted that the Department was collaborating and that it had already started to draw their attention to the opportunities which they were missing.

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report and note the observations received.**

## **8. UPDATE ON THE WORK OF HUNANIAITH - GWYNEDD'S LANGUAGE INITIATIVE**

The Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor submitted the report. An overview was provided of the work and priorities of Hunaniaith, Gwynedd's Language Initiative. Reference was made to the report which detailed the initiative's various projects that were undertaken during the past year. Members were encouraged to watch the videos, with reference being made to the language awareness video; the links to the videos could be seen in the report.

Members were given the opportunity to ask further questions:

- Enquiries were made about the mindset of moving Hunaniaith away from the Council.
- Reference was made to the language awareness video created by the Hunaniaith team which referred to the seven important things about the History of Wales; the video was deemed to be excellent and a powerful resource. It was confirmed that a version of the video was also available with English subtitles.

It was explained that the strategic group was eager for Hunaniaith to be a more



independent entity from the Council and that this would have its advantages; it was noted that many other language initiatives were community initiatives. It was added that the future sustainability of the initiative would need to be ensured. An update would be provided to the Committee in the new term.

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report and note the observations received.**

## **9. PRAISE AND COMPLAINTS REPORT**

The Language Advisor submitted the report, which noted the complaints and examples of successes experienced when promoting the use of the Welsh language in the Council.

Reference was made to the recent developments, including the language awareness sessions for Council staff that had recommenced virtually recently. These sessions would be run by the Language Advisor and Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer and had received very positive feedback; the sessions would continue and would be offered to more Departments across the Council.

Reference was made to the complaints, along with the recent adjudication following an investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner with regards to the language requirements of the post of Chief Executive. It was reported that further actions had been taken, emphasising that this case or adjudication was not a reflection on the Council's usual arrangements. Details were given of the new conditions that were now in place as a part of the recruitment policy; those conditions would be added to the language policy. This meant that the language requirements would be noted clearly on every occasion.

A report was given on some recent enquiries; some of which were a part of broader national enquiries; further details could be seen in the report. Reference was also made to the three complaints received relating to the Council's language policy; one as a result of IT matters that were in the process of attempting to be resolved and further work that was in progress to address the matter. No complaint was relevant to the Council as the Council had no powers to enforce in respect of the language matters of private sector businesses. The final complaint regarding an English-only pamphlet received by the public had been resolved; arrangements were made to translate the pamphlet urgently as well as check and update further materials within the Department in question.

Members were given the opportunity to ask further questions:

- Attention was drawn to the fact that the same type of complaints and issues arose compared with other years.
- The members expressed their thanks for the report.

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report and note the observations received.**

At the end of the meeting, members took the opportunity to extend the Committee's condolences to the family of Aled Roberts, Welsh Language Commissioner, as he had passed away recently.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.45am

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**CHAIR**