

MEETING: **North Wales Corporate Joint Committee**
DATE: **22 July 2022**
SUBJECT: **ADOPT WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS**
CONTACT OFFICER: **Dafydd Gibbard, Chief Executive, Gwynedd Council**

DECISION SOUGHT:

- Agree for the Joint Committee to adopt temporary Language Standards until specific standards are set on the Joint Committee by the Welsh Language Commissioner
 - Commissioning support to conduct impact assessments and providing translation services (meetings and written) as required from Cyngor Gwynedd as the authority which currently supports the Corporate Joint Committee
 - Commissioning the resource for the Standard setting process with the Commissioner, together with monitoring the implementation of the Standards and producing any progress reports as required from Cyngor Gwynedd as the authority which currently supports the Corporate Joint Committee
-

1. Statutory Requirements and Expectations

Welsh Language Standards are set as statutory requirements on public bodies in Wales under Section 4 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Welsh Language Commissioner's office has advised that there is an intention to set language standards and the Joint Committees have added them to Regulation Number 1 of the Measure, which are the regulations that the Local Authorities and the National Park are already part of.

It is therefore expected that the Standards that will be imposed on the CJsCs will follow the same pattern as the Standards that have already been imposed on the individual authorities.

There is a specific process for setting standards on any body and it is currently uncertain how long this will take (the process can take up to 2 years). The Commissioner has therefore suggested that the CJC adopt the standards of one of the local authorities, as a temporary measure, and to ensure that the CJsCs operate in accordance with the principles of the Measure from the outset. Some of the other CJsCs across Wales have already acted on this, and have agreed to adopt the Standards of one of the connecting authorities.

In the North, there are not many differences between the Standards that have been imposed on the different Councils. The basic standards are all the same, with occasional variations or exceptions from some Councils in terms of the context where they need to be implemented. Therefore, if a Standard has already been set for all the authorities that are part of the Joint Committee it will be expected that the Joint Committee itself implements them as well. The Commissioner intends to carry out a mapping exercise over the next few weeks, which will look at highlighting the common standards between the different authorities and they will share that information with the Joint-Committee when it is ready.

2. Setting the Standards

The process outlined by the Commissioner's office for setting the Standards is slightly different from normal. They do not anticipate that an initial consultation stage will have to take place as usually happens, as the CJs have been added to Regulation No 1

The Commissioner will be formally contacting each CJC in the coming months, asking to attend a meeting of the CJC to hold a briefing session and outline the steps to follow. This meeting will be followed by a consultation process, with proposals submitted about the Standards that should be set.

It is understood that the Commissioner looks to be ambitious and to impose as many standards as possible on the joint committees, depending on the exact operational and structural nature of those joint committees.

3. Next steps – implementing the requirements of the standards

Members of the CJC are asked to discuss and consider adopting Standards that are in line with the Ambition Board's linguistic implementation principles as an interim measure until purposeful standards are placed on the Joint Corporate Committee by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

It is recommended in the first instance that focus is placed on those standards that are most relevant to the current structure and approach of the CJC, ensuring that any public services are delivered bilingually. The ability to provide services effectively and to be able to respect the linguistic choice and the need of the public should be prioritised.

This would also entail undertaking an assessment of the linguistic skills required for each new post that could be established by the CJC, in line with the expectation of the Standards. When advertising, a post will need to be categorised and indicate whether it is Essential or Desirable for the appointee to have those skills, or that there is an opportunity to learn having accepted the post.

The language officers of the relevant bodies are supportive of this idea of adopting the recommended standards as an interim measure, but it is believed that some practical issues also need clarity going forward, and in

particular who will be responsible for some aspects of the implementation of the Standards.

Some elements of the standards require a specific operational resource. That is, specific steps will need to be taken to ensure compliance which is more than asking staff to act bilingually. These areas include:

- Monitoring compliance and dealing with complaints
- Translation – written and simultaneous translation
- Assess the impact of policy decisions
- Recruitment arrangements

RECOMMENDATION

That the Corporate Joint Committee;

- **Agrees to adopt the Standards on the basis of what is currently relevant to the Ambition Board as an interim step, until the Commissioner has set certain standards.**
- **Commissioning support to conduct impact assessments and providing translation services (meetings and written) from Cyngor Gwynedd, as the authority which currently supports the Corporate Joint Committee**
- **Commissioning the resource for the Standard setting process with the Commissioner, together with monitoring the implementation of the Standards and producing any progress reports from Cyngor Gwynedd, as the authority which currently supports the Corporate Joint Committee**

COMMENTS OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer

These steps would be in line with the Language Commissioner Office's suggestion and would ensure that suitable temporary arrangements are in place. It is therefore a sensible and appropriate way to move forward.

Statutory Finance Officer

We need to respond to the Welsh Language Commissioner's office on this, and the recommendation to adopt the Standards based on those relevant to the Ambition Board is a pragmatic solution. Regarding resources for the Standards setting process with the Commissioner, the option of purchasing this service from a supporting authority would be consistent with the members' intention to adhere to a minimum budget for this year.