

MEETING	Language Committee
DATE	30 January 2023
TITLE	Welsh Language Promotion Plan - Corporate Support
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	To inform Members of the efforts of the Corporate Support Department to promote the use of the Welsh language.
AUTHOR	Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Support Department
ACTION	To accept the report and offer observations

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report is presented to provide information to the Language Committee on the Corporate Support Department's contribution to promoting the Welsh language within and outside the Council.
- 1.2 Implementing the Council's Language Policy forms a core part of the day-to-day work of the Department's services with the Welsh language being the only language of communication for all the Department's internal activities and also in a large proportion of our work with other departments, the public as well as external organisations and agencies.
- 1.3 The Department leads on the corporate priority within the Council Plan involving "Promoting the Use of the Welsh language within the Council" with the Language Learning and Development Officer within the Learning and Organisational Development Service driving our efforts to that end. As members of the Language Committee, you will be aware of the progress of that work and the positive impact it is having on the use of the language within the Departments.
- 1.4 Within the Corporate Support Department, it is confirmed that the linguistic requirements of every post have been reviewed as part of this Plan and that 95.1% of staff have completed a self-assessment of their ability to meet those requirements. Of the staff who have completed a self-assessment, 98.3% of them reach or exceed the linguistic requirements to fulfil the duties within their posts.
- 1.5 The Department's involvement with the Plan itself has ended by now as it is accepted that the Department has designated the listening and speaking, reading and understanding and written requirements for every post and that an assessment of the needs of any member of staff against those requirements forms a continuous part of personal performance and appraisal. Nevertheless, many of the Department's staff are eager to improve their written Welsh skills and take advantage of the opportunities to do so within the Council's provision.
- 1.6 The Language Unit (which includes Hunaniaith) is located within the Democracy and Language Service in the Department and officers within the Unit are pivotal in driving the objectives of the Welsh Language Promotion Plan. The Corporate Support Department leads on nine of the corporate priorities in the current Council Plan and three of those priorities specifically involve the objectives within the Welsh Language Plan i.e.
 - Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's services
 - The Welsh Language in Public Services

- Native Welsh Place Names

2. RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S QUESTIONS

A matter that the members wish to discuss:	Question
<p><u>Promoting and advancing</u></p> <p>How do we go beyond the bilingual provision to increase the opportunities for people to use the Welsh language in the community, to contribute to the national target of creating a Million speakers, and to the Well-being goal of ensuring that the people of Gwynedd are "Able to live in a natural Welsh community"?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can you highlight any projects within your department that contribute to one of the Council's language strategy priorities, namely the Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd?</i> <p>i) It is continual work to Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's Services, and we are aware that there is a need to continue to maintain our staff's language skills.</p> <p>The Language Designations project is nearing completion, but the work of gathering language self-assessments from staff will continue. This work is now part of day-to-day work and is now self-sustaining to a large extent as systems and arrangements have been put into place to ensure that staff across the Council complete the self-assessment. The Language Designations Forum was established to ensure that every department carries on with the work and that there is an opportunity to note any challenges.</p> <p>As a result of the project, the internal Language Site has also been established, so that information about language training and useful resources (such as the Welsh Tip of the Month) are available for staff at any time.</p> <p>The work of arranging and providing training for staff will continue. A number of external courses are available for Council staff to develop their language skills and gain confidence to use Welsh in the workplace. Staff members who do not reach the language designations of their posts will be given priority, as well as front-line staff. Further attention will also be provided to develop our internal language training.</p> <p>ii) The Welsh Language and Public Services project seeks to address the inconsistency in the provision of bilingual services by public bodies in Gwynedd which means that it is not always possible for residents to use the Welsh language naturally when communicating with public bodies.</p> <p>Public organisations in Gwynedd and Anglesey estimate that fewer people choose Welsh-medium services compared to the number of Welsh-speakers in both counties. By working with partners who are a part of the Public Services Board's Welsh Language Sub-group, we have commissioned a study of 12 traditional receptions in order to consider how we can encourage more people to engage with us in Welsh, and to be comfortable to do so. A train the trainer package has been created for managers along with a training resources pack, which will focus on</p>

equipping staff to encourage more use of the Welsh language in receptions.

We are also collaborating with a Bangor University student on a project that will examine the public's language choice when dealing with Cyngor Gwynedd services only - either over the phone, face-to-face or on-line.

iii) As you know, the work involving **Native Welsh Place Names** has been established as a new improvement priority in the latest review of the Council Plan in order to;

- reconcile the way the Council operates when recognising Welsh names
- ensure that the Welsh versions of place names are given priority with external partners
- seek to take proactive steps to protect and prevent more changes to native names

Over the past year, attention has been given to Council buildings, house names, street names, place names and to use the name, Cyngor Gwynedd.

It was also managed to launch a Place Names Interactive Map in order to encourage the public to be part of the project. A workshop was held with a primary school to promote the map project and to give children an opportunity to populate the map. It is intended to further promote the map amongst more primary and secondary schools. Appropriate resources and training on house and place names were also prepared for staff. A beneficial discussion was also held with external bodies such as OS Map, Welsh Government and the Snowdonia National Park.

iv) In recent years, despite the recognition given to the special linguistic situation of Gwynedd and the background of establishing **Hunaniaith (Gwynedd's Language Initiative)** as a strategic unit within Cyngor Gwynedd, the main income source - a Grant Scheme to Promote and Facilitate the Use of Welsh, Welsh Government - has mainly focused on funding activity that promotes and supports social use of Welsh in accordance with Theme 2 of the national language strategy, Cymraeg 2050, 'Increasing the Use of Welsh'. The emphasis of that grant scheme is on operating at grass roots level to promote and facilitate an increase in the social use made of the Welsh language.

This community focus is reinforced by Hunaniaith's current work programme and the operational priorities noted under the current grant conditions, namely:

- influence the language of the family
- strengthen the link between the school and the community
- offer activities to a wide range of residents
- develop an understanding of the linguistic practices of the residents of Gwynedd

As a result of Council investment, it was managed to appoint a full-time Chief Officer for the language initiative in order to lead further developments, by focusing on attracting new grants and generating an income, improving community contact, attracting more community members to the Strategic Group, and working towards being an

	<p>independent entity. It was managed to attract different members and establish a new Steering/Strategic Group and the aim is to launch the new-look initiative, as a sustainable, independent entity, at the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol in Llŷn and Eifionydd in 2023.</p> <p>v) In order to ensure one central point on the Council website for information associated with the Welsh language, a new web-page was created - The Welsh Language. The web-page includes various information about the use of the Welsh language in Gwynedd. A new interactive map was developed, which shows where Welsh medium activities are available, as well as a digital information pack for incomers about Gwynedd's culture and language.</p>
<p><u>Externalisation of work and awarding third party contracts</u></p> <p>How do we ensure that the quality of the bilingual service is maintained when externalising work and awarding contracts?</p>	<p>1. If the department awards work externally on contract, can you refer to any good practice, either when imposing conditions or when monitoring in order to ensure compliance with the linguistic conditions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are very few contracts that the Department sets in relation to the services for which it is responsible but the specialist guidance on procurement matters is offered corporately by our Procurement Service which advises the Category Management Units located within the Environment, Adults, Health and Well-being and Highways and Municipal Departments. Those Units are directly responsible for inviting, setting and monitoring contracts with the relevant services across the Council. • The Committee will already have received details regarding how the Welsh language is given a prominent place within the contracts set by the Council, from the reports submitted by the departments where the category management units are located, but I do wish to draw attention to a pilot scheme that we are currently undertaking in relation to introducing "social value" as an additional criterion when considering setting contracts in the future. • We continue to trial this new methodology to assess tenders based on social value, alongside the historical criteria of price and quality, with three contracts that currently need to be renewed. The procurement process to set the Adults Service' Direct Payments contract has already been completed and the additional benefits that derived from using the new methodology included commitments from the winning company to provide jobs for local people, work experiences, training, support for local charities and to develop the Welsh skills of its workforce. • Further work needs to be undertaken with the category teams to identify further opportunities to trial the methodology. This has already commenced and the Department will arrange a series of presentations this year to promote the potential opportunities to maximise all social benefits, which include promoting the use of the Welsh language.

Operating
bilingually

How do we manage to act on the requirements of the Language Policy and Welsh Language Standards?

3. Are there any obstacles that prevent you as a department from offering a full service in Welsh?

- It was reported last year that the Support Service is responsible for coordinating arrangements **to carry out criminal record checks**, and that there was a barrier as the new on-line system by the Criminal Records Office to undertake this work was only available in English. It was also reported that assurance had been given that the system would soon be available bilingually, and that this followed substantial pressure by the Council and the Commissioner's office. Unfortunately, we are still waiting to receive this service and, therefore, it remains a barrier for the people of Gwynedd to use the Welsh language.
- The lack of quality bilingual training provision continues to be an obstacle for our Apprenticeships, especially for higher apprenticeships. This local Scheme within the Council is an extremely successful one, offering work experience opportunities through the medium of Welsh. 41 apprentices are currently part of the Council's scheme, and each of those have signed the "Welsh language Ambition Statement", as well as the providers. As part of the Plan, officers from the Department's Learning and Development Service try to persuade and encourage apprenticeship providers to offer as much of their provision as possible through the medium of Welsh. Work is currently underway to try to assess the current situation in terms of the language medium of the educational provision offered, with the aim of working together with the providers to identify opportunities to improve the provision, to identify additional resources to offered in Welsh as well as further opportunities to promote the Welsh language.
- The Equality Advisor and the Language Advisor continue to collaborate closely to develop the **integrated impact assessment** (equality, language and economic disadvantage) procedure within the Council. A digital assessment is currently being developed by the IT service, and although there has been a delay in launching this, it is hoped that it will soon be ready for use, and facilitate the monitoring work. The other barrier in this field at present is that assessments are not undertaken early enough in the planning process, and that officers' awareness of this will need to be raised over the next year in order to improve action.
- There is currently a number of barriers in the field of registration, with residents failing to register in Welsh only, and unable to register a birth outside Wales (should there be a situation where a child is born in a hospital outside the boundary for example) in Welsh/bilingually. The Customer Contact and Registration Service, with support from the Language and Scrutiny Unit, hopes to address this matter and put pressure on relevant agencies during the year.

Developing new opportunities

4. Do you have ideas about new ways we can promote the Welsh language in the county's communities - either in your own services or by collaborating with others?

- One of the biggest challenges which has become apparent over the past three years is in relation to the ability to recruit and appoint to key posts across the Council. The Human Resources Service and the Learning and Organisational Development Service lead on the corporate improvement priority involving "**Workforce Planning**" and despite the successes to report already in the context of this work, the challenge of ensuring service continuity, in the preferred language of our taxpayers, is a real one. The ability to work virtually (often from home) has the potential to give local individuals much more choice of employment which, previously, may have emphasised the ability to live close to their place of work. On the contrary, there is also an opportunity to attract individuals to work for the Council who may not have considered this prior to the pandemic. To this end, we will aim to build on the strong foundations we already have through the apprenticeship scheme, the Managers and Specialists of Tomorrow scheme as well as the internal Developing Potential programme while strengthening our links and the collaboration between us and employment services within the Council and more widely in order to establish the Council firmly as an employer of choice.
- Examples have been provided in the report of what we have developed and influenced in the context of the services through the medium of Welsh, often with the co-operation of other organisations. The recent investment to seek to extend the work of **Hunaniaith** within our communities and try to attract more community contribution to that work will be crucial, while the efforts of the Sub-group within the **Public Services Board** to persuade more Welsh-speakers to use the Welsh language with the public organisations will be extremely important.