

<u>MEETING</u>	Language Committee
<u>DATE</u>	24 April 2023
<u>TITLE</u>	Welsh Language Promotion Plan – Corporate Leadership and Legal Services Teams.
<u>PURPOSE</u>	To present information on the contribution of the Corporate Leadership and Legal Service Teams in encouraging and promoting the Welsh language.
<u>AUTHOR</u>	Geraint Owen – Corporate Director Iwan Evans – Head of Legal Services

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. This report has been prepared to share information with the Language Committee on how the Leadership Team and Legal Services are encouraging and promoting the Welsh language.

1.2. The Leadership Team employs 16 staff including the Chief Executive, the two Corporate Directors, their executive team and, since the 1st November, 2022, officers from the Council Business Support Service (which was transferred from the Corporate Support Department). In addition, the Legal Service employs 23 members of staff.

In his role the Chief Executive, supported by the Corporate Directors, leads and manages the overall workforce of the Council.

The Legal Service provides legal support across the full range of the Council's work; supports the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer in the exercise of their propriety responsibilities; supports the Returning Officer and Electoral Officer and also the Coroner's Service in North West Wales.

1.3. Within the Leadership Team and Legal Service, it can be confirmed that all staff meet the language requirements of the post.

A matter that the members wish to discuss:	<i>Question</i>
<u>Boosting and promoting</u> How do we go beyond the bilingual	<p><i>1. 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the support of the Corporate Support Department, the Department has led on the drive for an additional staff

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"?

holiday on St David's Day, in order to promote and celebrate our Welshness. We were delighted to have been able to offer staff an extra day's holiday on March 1st, 2022 whilst further work is currently being undertaken with trade union colleagues in an attempt to ensure the same arrangement on a permanent basis from 2024 onwards.

- The Leadership Team has also been driving an attempt for all staff to opt to install the Welsh version of Microsoft on their devices. A significant increase in the number of individuals who are using the Welsh software has been realised over the past year whilst efforts continue in order to increase numbers beyond the current 63%.
- The Corporate Director, together with the Council Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Welsh Language, sit on the new county Language Forum which has been established by the Language Unit. The Forum will formally meet for the first time at the beginning of June. This development, together with establishing the Language Enterprise in its new guise later in the year will certainly provide further impetus in promoting the Welsh language in Gwynedd.
- The Corporate Director is also a member of the Project Group which is promoting "Prosiect 15" - an effort to increase material which is available in Welsh on social media. Finance has been earmarked to support this work which is being led by officers in the Language Unit.
- The Council, at its meeting on the 6 October, 2022 adopted the revised Language Policy. One of the developments within that Policy was the commitment to use the Council name in Welsh only at every possible opportunity. Steps have already been taken to act on this decision e.g. letter headings, reports, virtual meetings background whilst further work has been planned to extend this practice to public signage in future.
- The nature of the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors' roles mean that they regularly participate in multi-agency meetings at regional and national level. It is unfortunate that some organisations, including the Welsh Government, continue to hold such meetings through the medium of English all too often. Therefore, as representatives of Cyngor Gwynedd, it is vitally important that we insist on the right to contribute through the medium of Welsh at every opportunity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Chief Executive is a member of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and has had the opportunity to promote and support a scheme which looks at promoting the use of Welsh at other public organisations at Gwynedd’s “front doors”. This is one of the Board's main projects at present and there is an opportunity to ensure that other organisations benefit from Gwynedd's experience and success in this field.• The Chief Executive has responsibility for ensuring that our ambitions for promoting the use of the Welsh language are carried out in all Council Departments. The role requires the Chief Executive and the Corporate Directors to support departments at times whilst it also requires constructive challenging in some instances.• The Statutory Director for Social Services has specific responsibilities in terms of promoting the use of the Welsh language. All Local Authorities and Health Boards in Wales are required to appoint a senior leader as a Welsh Language Champion as part of the More than Just Words work programme. The Statutory Director undertakes that role in Gwynedd.• As part of that work, it is required, in accordance with the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014, that the champion ensures the use at all times of the “Proactive Offer”, which is to provide the service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it. In Gwynedd, in order to achieve that aim, the Director chairs the More than Just Words group. The Director is also represented on the North Wales Forum for More than Just Words.• Gwynedd provides the lead role in several regional partnerships. The Legal Service has been centrally involved in establishing the governance arrangements for these partnerships, for example the Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) for the North Wales region. There are several dynamics at work regarding ensuring that the arrangements of these bodies operate bilingually. However, our role and input means that the arrangements including the governance documentation for example, are prepared and provided in Welsh and English on an equal basis. Gwynedd’s ability to deliver technical and specialist issues in both English and Welsh means that we can provide assurance and confidence in achieving these objectives. This is now a principle that is clearly embedded in our partnership working and is becoming the norm.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although fulfilling the Coroner service is a matter for the individuals appointed to the roles, there are several aspects to the function relevant to the Legal Service. • As Gwynedd appoints the Coroner and Assistant Coroners we have a significant influence on the requirements for the post. This has meant that we have been able to ensure that those appointed to the roles locally possess the ability to carry out their duties through the medium of Welsh and English. This has been recognised by the Ministry of Justice and the Chief Coroner who has an overview of the arrangements. • Following the retirement of the Senior Coroner there was a presumption that the North West Wales area would be merged with the Central and North East Wales area to form one area. This will no longer go ahead as planned and it can be stated that the Welsh language requirement was central to that decision. Both Chief Coroner and Assistant Coroner were appointed during the past year, namely Kate Sutherland and Sarah Riley respectively. Both are Welsh speakers.
<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><i>2. 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?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. When we contract out work, we do our best to employ Welsh speakers. Where this is not possible, we ensure that simultaneous translation is available for any meetings held with external contractors so that everyone has the opportunity to speak the language of their choice when discussing the work in question. Any work published by external contractors will also be available bilingually. ii. The Legal Service currently commissions the use of locums and external lawyers to meet higher capacity and specialist requirements. It must be acknowledged that it is challenging to secure such provision that is available through the medium of Welsh. However, on every possible occasion we will prioritise the use of individuals who can work through the medium of Welsh. iii. Another aspect is the need to employ high-level specialist lawyers who have the ability to provide a service through the

	<p>medium of Welsh. Where possible we instruct solicitors and barristers who have the language skills. On some occasions it is possible to secure a service at the highest level to provide advice or opinion through the medium of Welsh. However, on issues that require either a wider team, specific expertise or project size it is difficult, and not always practical, to secure the provision entirely through the medium of Welsh. The ability to deliver through the medium of Welsh is specified on national framework agreements but, this is not universal provision across companies. This reflects heavily even within companies based here in Wales.</p>
<p><u>Operating bilingually</u></p> <p>How do we manage to act on the requirements of the Language Policy and Welsh Language Standards?</p>	<p>3. Are there any obstructions that prevent you as a department to offer a full service in Welsh?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Executive and Directors are required to work closely with external organisations. • The Statutory Director for Social Services, for example, works closely with the Health Board, and makes every effort to ensure that meetings between the Council and the Health Board are conducted in Welsh. The Health Board has a tendency to revert to English if anyone at the meeting is unable to understand Welsh, rather than arranging a simultaneous translator in advance. The Statutory Director's predecessor, through working with the Health Board's Area Director, has been able to ensure that the vast majority of meetings are conducted in Welsh. • The Statutory Director takes advantage of his influence as a Welsh speaker to encourage use of Welsh in meetings and workshops, by contributing in Welsh on all occasions and ensuring that Welsh provision is always available. • The Council refuses to respond to national questionnaires and requests unless they are presented in Welsh and in this respect we have recently challenged the Government in national meetings on their lack of bilingual provision. The Head of Children's Services, the Statutory Director and the Chief Executive recently refused to welcome Youth Justice inspectors since they were unable to communicate in Welsh. Following some deliberations, the Inspectorate (Home Office) agreed to delay their inspection in Gwynedd and Anglesey. As a consequence, a number of other authorities across West and Mid-Wales responded similarly and the Inspectorate is now actively recruiting Welsh speakers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Legal Service has endeavoured to reduce the outsourcing of its work. Overall, it has been very successful in doing this. However, recruitment problems over the last 12 months have meant that we have relied on employing more locum lawyers than would normally have been the case. It must be acknowledged that although we aim to find Welsh language provision every time, this is the exception as opposed to the norm. However, it is encouraging to be able to state that we have been successful in recruiting lawyers to the team over the past few months with the subsequent outlook that we will be able to reduce the requirement for locum lawyers. • It is important to recognise that Gwynedd’s Legal Service is almost unique among the 22 Authorities, having a team where all staff who can and do provide a full service through the medium of Welsh. This is ongoing and the issues identified have not changed the culture or nature of the Service.
<p><u>Developing new opportunities</u></p>	<p><i>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?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is room to reflect on the service and linguistic resources within the Legal Service such as technical documents we have produced. These resources could be shared externally under appropriate circumstances should resources allow. • As a Leadership Team, we will continue to promote and take advantage of all opportunities to ensure that the Welsh language is given its rightful place, not only in terms of the Council’s own work but also on a community level within the County as well as regionally and nationally.