MEETING	Language Committee
DATE	5 July 2016
TITLE	Internal Language Audit
AUTHOR	Gwenllian Mair Williams Welsh Language Development Officer
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	Submit a summary of the findings of the Welsh Language Audit and present suggestions for further action.

1. Background

1.1   As part of the Council's Strategic Plan for 2015-17, a commitment was made to undertake an Audit of the Welsh Language situation within the Council. The aim was to discover to what extent the Council and its officers are able to implement the Language Scheme and manage to *"normalise the Welsh language in its departments and the services it provides to the county's residents"*.

1.2   The second aim of the work is to consider to what extent the Council goes a step further and succeeds in taking advantage of every opportunity to promote the Welsh language through those services that are provided directly to the county's residents, and through third party arrangements and agreements.

1.3   To achieve that, a review was undertaken which would set out the current context and reveal the services or areas where action needs to be taken to improve the service offered to the public.

1.4   The aim is to proceed to work closely with some services in order to ensure that the second aim, namely to take advantage of every opportunity to promote the Welsh language through all Council services, is realised.

2. The Process

2.1   It was resolved to implement three different aims to achieve the audit's requirements, in order to obtain information as comprehensively as possible about the situation of the Welsh language within the Council. These are the elements:
   a) Questionnaire for managers
   b) Mystery shopper exercise
   c) Information from Councillors

Questionnaire for managers

2.2   All Council managers were invited to complete an on-line questionnaire, which asked 14 questions about their ability to offer a service through the medium of Welsh and English for the public. It was also an opportunity for them to be honest and open about any aspects that prevented them from being able to offer a full Welsh service for the public.

2.3   Responses were received for **202** Council services and then those responses were analysed in order to try to detect any general trends, as well as specific matters that would need to be addressed.

Mystery shopper exercise

2.4   A mystery shopper exercise was undertaken as further research work in two front line services where concerns or complaints had been received in the past about their ability to provide a Welsh-medium service for the public, namely the leisure and youth service.

2.5   A mystery shopper exercise was undertaken in 4 leisure centres - Bethesda, Bangor, Pwllheli and Barmouth - in the form of face to face visits and telephone enquiries. The main aim of this exercise was to prove what would be offered by the staff as information about classes and the visibility of the language at the centres themselves. In these cases, the response proved well with staff responding positively when the customer began the enquiry in Welsh.

2.6   Also, *Hunaniaith* officers visited youth clubs across the county during the review period, and they were asked to record their observations about the linguistic nature of the 10 clubs that were visited.

Information from Councillors

2.7   An update on the audit work was provided in the February edition of *Rhaeadr*, and an invitation was extended in it to all of the Council's elected members to contribute information to the audit based on their experiences of accessing Council services. (No further information was received as a result of this request.)

3.   **Main messages**

Questionnaire for managers

3.1   Generally, the responses received to the questionnaire confirm that the majority of Council services **are** able to provide a service through the medium of Welsh for the public, and also go a step further and have the desire to promote the Welsh language through their services. *89.6% of managers note that they are confident that every member of their staff can communicate effectively in Welsh and can fully deal with any enquiries in Welsh when they are asked to do so.*

3.2   The message regarding staff language skills is also positive, with the vast majority of Council staff able to speak Welsh.

*143 (71%) of the 202 Managers that responded stated that **every** member of staff in their units **were fluent** Welsh speakers.*

3.3   Beyond these positive main messages, the questionnaire results can be divided into two categories, namely:
- More significant weaknesses
- Superficial weaknesses

More significant weaknesses

Language skills

3.4   In the questionnaire, **185 (91.5%)** Managers confirmed that there were fluent Welsh speakers in their units, with **28** managers **(14%)** noting that they had staff in their units who could speak some Welsh, whilst **13 (6.4%)** other managers confirmed that they had staff in their units who could not speak Welsh at all.

In response to further enquiries, confirmation was received from 5 managers that the Welsh language was not a necessary skill to fulfil those posts, as they did not have a direct contact with the public.

3.5   Given the results of the questionnaire for managers in their entirety, some oversight was discovered in the results in terms of staff's **ability** to speak Welsh compared with the Welsh language **skills** of staff on the other hand. By seeking to understand and analyse the information submitted, it is suggested that there are examples of a lack of confidence among some Council staff members to use the Welsh language.

18 managers confirmed that they were not entirely confident that every member of their staff can communicate effectively in Welsh.

44 managers confirmed that they were not entirely confident that every member of their staff can communicate effectively in writing in Welsh.

3.6   Observations from the youth clubs highlighted an all too common practice of communicating in English among the leaders and young people. Even when the leaders spoke Welsh with the young people, the young people tended to speak English with each other, with no intervention from the leaders. This displays a practice which corroborates the concern from other directions regarding the lack of social use of the Welsh language among the county's young people. Only 4 of the 10 clubs visited were monolingual Welsh. This is a clear cause for concern, and suggests a lack of confidence from some employed officers to use the Welsh skills they have, as well as a lack of awareness among some of the role they have to influence the social language of young people.

3.7   When responding to the questionnaire, **185** managers noted that staff in their units were receiving or had received training to improve their language skills, whilst **9** managers had also provided additional observations referring to a lack or need for training.

<u>Common obstacles</u>

3.8   When responding to the questionnaire, **14** managers recognised some element of weakness or a gap in their service which prevented them from being able to offer a full Welsh service. From further analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, **7** cases were involved with staffing problems and recruitment difficulties in some areas or work fields.

<u>Contracts</u>

3.9   **100 (49.5%)** managers noted that their units or services set agreements with third party providers. From those **100**, **57** said that the agreements included linguistic requirements, and they were asked to note the wording of those conditions.

3.10   12 exceptional examples were received, where the wording provided in the agreements were comprehensive and elaborated on the expectations, and did not refer to the Language Policy alone. The rest either had a similar wording to *"Comply with the Council's language policy"* or had a short sentence such as *"[That] they agree to translate any document sent to them at their own cost".*

Superficial weaknesses

3.11   When responding to the questionnaire, **14** managers recognised some element of weakness or a gap in their service which prevented them from being able to offer a full Welsh service. A further analysis of these responses from the 14 managers was undertaken in order to better understand the difficulties that had been mentioned.

3.12   It was seen that **7** cases were involved with a lack of Welsh language provision from external parties, such as:
- the lack of availability of Welsh or bilingual forms
- Welsh or bilingual computer systems not available
Although these are often things that cannot possibly be changed, there are examples where we can bring pressure on other bodies to offer more of their service through the medium of Welsh.

3.13   13 units also reported that they often do not produce bilingual materials, and although reasons given for this were coherent - 6 examples of failing to provide bilingual materials due to a lack of systems (such as RAISE) or a lack of statutory forms - there is a need to consider whether we can do more to avoid these situations.

3.14   Attention was also drawn in the audit to the custom of corresponding with other public bodies, including Local Authorities and the Government in English, and to the lack of bilingual information when referring the public to external websites and information sources.

3.15 On the surface, the mystery shopper exercise in the leisure centres showed a good response, with staff responding positively when the customer began the enquiry in Welsh. However, a suggestion was also received that lessons at the centres were not always held through the medium of Welsh. This included lessons for children and adults.

3.16 Looking positively at these results, these obstacles here also convey the desire and awareness of the Council's workforce to operate through the medium of Welsh.

4. Next steps

4.1 We will agree on a detailed work programme in order to respond to the results of the audit. The main themes and areas of concern have been identified, and a combination of formal and informal techniques will be required in order to respond to them, as well as completing work that is already in the pipeline.

4.2 The intervention also depends on the scale of the problem, with some matters that will be common to a high number of the workforce, and other interventions targeted more specifically for specific units or services.

4.3 Four services will be prioritised to be addressed further, on the basis of how frequent their units appeared to be recognising in the audit that there was room for further improvement. The four services are as follows:

- Economy and Community
- Adults
- Regulatory
- Consultancy

4.4 General interventions will also be planned and implemented based on the themes which were identified:

1. **Improve awareness of the expectations on staff to promote the Welsh language in every part of their work.**
   - Share audit findings with managers and encourage an open discussion at meetings about obstacles that are specific to their service.
   - Share guidelines that will set out clear expectations in terms of complying with the new Language Standards and Language Policy, and specifically the expectation when communicating with other public bodies.
   - Introduce an on-line Language Awareness model (already being developed)
   - Target specific units with a questionnaire on language use and confidence (language web) and practical awareness sessions that will be relevant to their specific work area.

2. **Develop a Language Skills Improvement Programme**
   - New arrangement to assess jobs' skills (such as the one already approved by the Language Committee)
   - Target training to the south of the county in response to the need to build confidence in the Welsh language both orally and in writing.

3. **Ensure that the Welsh language is given appropriate attention publicly and through collaboration.**
   - Refer the Language Committee Sub-group that is responsible for the Welsh Language Visibility Investigation to concerns regarding the way language is promoted in collaboration agreements and when activities are provided.
   - Examine arrangements to monitor agreements that include linguistic conditions.
   - Share guidance to set agreements that will ensure that clear expectations are set.

5. **Recommendation**
   Observations on the above report are invited from Committee members.