
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE (Extraordinary Meeting), 22.11.16

Present: Councillor Eirwyn Williams (Chairman)
Councillor Charles Jones (Vice-chairman)

Councillors: Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Gweno Glyn, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Alwyn Gruffydd, Eric M. Jones, Elfed Williams, Hefin Williams and John Wyn Williams.

Officers: Garem Jackson (Area Education Officer), Bethan Eleri Roberts (Performance Management Officer), Debbie Anne Jones (Welsh Language Services Manager) and Ann Roberts (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillor Owain Williams, Craig ab Iago and Dyfrig Siencyn (Cabinet Member - Welsh Language).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN - DRAFT

The Area Education Officer expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to have a further discussion on the draft of the Plan during the consultation period. It was explained that the Head of Education had worked closely with the officers to prepare the draft of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

The report was submitted and members' observations on the draft Plan were sought.

A member expressed that the Plan as a whole was not extensive enough in terms of Welsh-medium teaching and that the bilingual Education Policy exacerbated the situation by either teaching through the medium of English or bilingually.

It was reported that Education Department Officers were collaborating with an External Consultant to undertake a Study that would respond to the members' questions and observations on local issues. The report following the Study, including conclusions and recommendations, was expected in January 2017.

The following observations were received from members on the Aims and Objectives and on the seven Outcomes:-

Aim and Objectives

Strengthen the third bullet point to read: "In KS2, continue to develop pupils' mastery..."

Outcome 1 - More seven year old children educated through the medium of Welsh

- Strengthen the third bullet point to secure a system that provides a firm foundation in the Welsh language before English is introduced.

- It was noted that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Nevertheless, it was suggested that the sentence included in the current Language Policy needed to be strengthened: "the general aim of the Language Policy is bilingualism by setting firm foundations and targets".
- More challenging targets were required if the Government's target of having a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 was to be achieved.
- Welsh language lessons were needed as a subject across all years in order to obtain language continuum.
- Include the need to undertake a language impact assessment before commencing the reorganisation of schools.
- Children of all ages needed to be allowed to attend Language Centres as required, not just Year 2 children and above.

Outcome 2 - More learners continuing to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from primary to secondary school.

- More challenging targets required and a need to ensure consistency in the use of the 'second-language' definition when measuring performance against the targets.

In response to members' questions regarding the targets, it was explained that the Education Department had local figures and targets, but that the Government's template demanded a composite target for the county.

Outcome 3 - More 14-16 year old learners studying for qualification through the medium of Welsh
and

Outcome 4 – More learners aged 14-19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh in schools, colleges and work-based learning.

In response to a member's question regarding post-16 co-operative vocational courses provided by Coleg Menai for schools in the Arfon area only, it was explained that the Plan reported on schools rather than on pupils. It was noted that the situation of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor was different.

Outcome 5 - More learners with higher skills in Welsh

Foundation Phase Pupils gained a 5+ outcome for teacher assessments in Welsh (Level 2+/Outcome 5+)

In response to an observation by a member regarding the consistency of teacher assessments from school to school, it was reported that GwE was addressing the field of moderating and reconciliation in particular.

An example of the success of the Language Charter since its establishment was given, as more children chose the Secondary School known as the Welsh Secondary School in Bangor. It was reported that the new strategy would be implemented at the Secondary

Sector in 2017 and that discussions had commenced with the heads to set a baseline target.

Outcome 6 – Welsh-medium provision for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

- Need to ensure a Welsh ethos in the provision and specifically music.

Outcome 7 - Workforce planning and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- A member expressed concern about the standard of teachers' spelling. In response, it was reported that the need to continue communicating with Bangor University on a number of matters in an attempt to influence and provide observation had been identified and that the spelling issue would be followed up.
- There was a need to ensure that every post-holder could communicate through the medium of Welsh and English to support the statement that Welsh-medium education led to a higher salary and improved the chances of the young.

The Reporting Template

In response to a member's observation on the new reporting template, it was reported that Welsh Government had commenced the process of consulting on the effectiveness of the template. It was noted that Gwynedd's vision was broader and stronger and that the 2050 target could be reached by creating Welsh communities and a more relevant template to ensure that.

The next steps

It was reported that

- the observations of members would be submitted to the Head of Education
- 20 December 2016 - the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20 would be submitted to Government.
- Draft plan returned by Welsh Government.
- April - Local authorities to commence the implementation of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

Members were reminded that the public document had been launched for statutory consultation on 24 October for a period of 8 weeks and that members could respond as individuals should they wish. It was reported that there was no time to present the report again and provide further observations after the consultation's closing date.

Everyone was thanked for their observations.

RESOLVED to accept the observations for consideration for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20.

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 11:55am.