

MEETING:	LANGUAGE COMITTEEE
DATE:	14 January 2016
TITLE:	LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS
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PURPOSE OF REPORT	PRESENT THE MOST RECENT COMPLAINTS TO THE COMMITTEE.

FORMAL COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE LANGUAGE PLAN

DATE	COMPLAINT	RESPONSE.
June 2015	<p>A complaint was received from the Welsh Language Commissioner (ref. 1970) regarding an alleged failure to provide a Welsh language service. The complaint was in connection to documents listed on the Council website as part of the public consultation on the Joint Local Development Plan. A list of documents had been published on the website with a note explaining to the public that copies could be had, but in English only. These were technical documents from an external company.</p>	<p>Having looked into the mater, it was confirmed that the documents had been offered in English only, but that they would be translated in due course as part of the usual post-consultation process. The Planning Department had not received any requests for these documents in English or in Welsh, and they had not been published in full on the Council website as they were not a part of the official document bundle of the consultation on the Development Plan. The list had been prepared and offered as documents holding additional information that could be of interest, rather than documents which held information essential to the consultation process. The Planning (Policy) Manager of the Joint Planning Policy Unit took full responsibility for the decision to include the list only on the website, and not to include the full documents bilingually.</p> <p>There was regular correspondence between the Commissioners' officers and the Language Unit in the Council over some months, and the matter was bought to a close in December 2015 without any further action. The Commissioner is of the opinion that the Council have broken the terms of the language plan as the documents we're listed publicly, and that they were as a result "public documents". The Council was clear that there was no intention by the Planning Department to mislead or withhold information relevant to the consultation. The wording of the new language policy being developed for the Council will be looked at carefully to ensure that the guidance on public documents is clear.</p>
September 2015	<p>A complaint was received from the Welsh Language Commissioner (ref 2057 – received 10 September 2015) regarding an alleged failure to</p>	<p>As a result of the sensitive nature of the complaint, a thorough investigation of the circumstances was held. It was confirmed that the Council Registry Office was not responsible for sending out English only/bilingual certificates to the complainant, but</p>

	<p>provide a bilingual death certificate and to fail to note the cause of death in Welsh.</p>	<p>that they had in fact been sent by the Coroners office. The Registry office had issued a bilingual certificate to the complainant in August 2015 (and explained that it was not possible to issue a Welsh only certificate), but had failed to note the cause of death in Welsh as a result of constraints put upon the Registrars by the Registration of Births and Deaths (Welsh Language) Regs, 1987 and the guidelines by the General Registry Office, that state that the cause of death must be recorded exactly as it appears on the certificate by the Coroner.</p> <p>It appears that this is a common problem, and that causes of death are frequently noted in English only, as there is only one Coroner who is a Welsh speaker.</p> <p>A response was sent to the Commissioner's office explaining the circumstances and also asking for any help or advice they could offer to influence these external departments of the government, which have not been devolved, but which are having an impact on the Council's ability to provide a full bilingual service to the residents of Gwynedd.</p>
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INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

DATE	COMPLAINT	RESPONSE.
<p>September 2015</p>	<p>An English only invitation was forwarded to us (for our information) by a member of the Pwllheli Town Council. The invitation was for an event to be held in Plas Heli. A general dissatisfaction was expressed in the email sent to us about the use of the Welsh language by Plas Heli and a query was made about the Language Policy of the Plas.</p>	<p>Plas Heli was contacted, and it was reported that they had used an external agency to promote the event in question, and that they were unaware that an English only invite had been sent. They contacted the agency and a Welsh invite was sent within a few days.</p> <p>On the matter of the language policy: It is not clear if Plas Heli has an official language policy or not. According to the service level agreement between the Council and Plas Heli, they were expected to adopt and publish a Welsh Language Policy along side other health and safety and operational policies, but we have not been able to get a copy despite several requests.</p>
<p>December 2015</p>	<p>A freedom of information request was received regarding the Gwynedd and Anglesey Housing and the Welsh Language Survey commissioned by hunaniaith. A claim was being made that the research had not been weighed properly and that the Council had not received</p>	<p>A reply was sent from the Democratic and Delivery Senior Manager, stating clearly that the intention of the research was not to provide a detailed, comprehensive picture, and that the work had accomplished the brief set by hunaniaith.</p>

	advice from an independent, professional statistician on the methodology used.	
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