
LANGUAGE SUB-COMMITTEE, 06.03.12

Present: Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Chairman);
Councillor Liz Saville Roberts (Vice-chair).

Councillors Eric M. Jones and Councillor Dyfed Edwards (ex-officio member).

Officers: Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Morwena Edwards (Head of Provider and Leisure Department), Nia Davies (Planning Manager (Policy)), Ruth Richards (Equality and Language Policy Officer) and Eirian Roberts (Committee Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Elwyn Edwards, Llinos Merks and Sion S.Roberts; Debbie Williams Jones (Language Promotion Officer).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. URGENT BUSINESS

Copies of the Welsh Government's consultation document, "More than just words..." was distributed, namely a Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care.

The Equality and Language Policy Officer reported that although this was not an urgent matter per se, the Welsh Government had invited observations on the document by 30 April, 2012. She explained that this was the document that the Language Promotion Officer had been contributing towards over the previous months and the Language Promotion Officer and herself had already discussed the contents with the Social Services Department. However, a more corporate opinion was also sought on the document and the members were asked to forward any observations to her attention prior to the closing date. Another option would have been to call a special meeting of the sub-committee to discuss the document.

It was agreed that it would be a good idea to call a special meeting of the sub-committee as the response would be stronger should the members come to a conclusion on the matter as a committee.

RESOLVED to call a special meeting of this sub-group on 17 April to discuss the Welsh Government's consultation document "More than words..."

3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this sub-committee held on 11 October, 2011 as a true record.

4. GWYNEDD AND ANGLESEY JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Submitted – the report of the Planning Manager (Policy) detailing the process of preparing the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan, setting the context, explaining

how consideration was given to the Welsh language whilst writing the plan and outlining the process thus far along with further work that needed to be completed.

It was noted that more information was needed on the language impact assessment, its power and its status. It would be very important in far-reaching decisions and should it not have an impact it would be a null and void instrument. It was acknowledged that it was, possibly too early in the process, but if this was what would drive the Council's principles regarding the Welsh language it was important to learn more about it along with details stating what it would discuss and the schedule.

In response, the Planning Manager (Policy) explained that an initial draft version of the assessment was already in place. It was intended to establish a small group to ensure that the correct methodology was in place and the methodology could be brought before this sub-committee in due course.

The Equality and Language Policy Officer noted the language assessment was a live document that was being developed along side the plan itself and was a medium to identify any problems when they arose and also strengthen and add value.

It was noted that the JLDP's evidence document had noted that the existence of fewer areas where more than 70% of the population spoke Welsh was an issue that needed to be addressed in the Plan. The Chairman expressed his concern that the 2011 Census figures were likely to be horrific, i.e. that the number of areas where more than 70% of the people spoke Welsh would be very low. He emphasised that there was a need to strengthen TAN 20 in some way in order to improve the tools available so that the land use planning system could address the situation effectively. There would be a need to influence the Government in some way to achieve this.

The Corporate Director referred to the need to expand growth as this could be more sensitive to the needs of the Welsh language and he emphasised that the growth rate and the strategy in terms of expanding growth should be subject to a language assessment. In response, the Planning Manager (Policy) noted that the work of identifying the possible housing growth scale and the general direction in terms of the classification of that growth had been the subject of a Sustainability Appraisal. The SA had identified the need to protect, promote and improve the experience of the Welsh language as one of the sustainability objectives. Confirmation was given that the Welsh language impact assessment methodology would be adapted when developing detailed policies in the Plan that would promote specific types of development and development locations.

The Chairman noted that circumstances would change during the plan's preparation period and that it must be insisted that the Welsh language was given a voice on a governance level as well as a county level.

The Chairman asked whether this plan offered an opportunity to revive the local housing condition as this would be a way of ensuring that a substantial percentage of houses would be given to Welsh speakers.

In response the Planning Manager (Policy) noted that consideration would be given to questions such as what type of houses were needed and whether there was evidence to support forming a policy for local open market houses.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

5. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

Submitted – the report of the Equality and Language Policy Officer detailing the latest complaints that had come to hand involving the Council and other bodies, together with the response in every case.

The following matters were discussed specifically:-

(A) Complaints against the Council

- (i) By referring to the complaints regarding the Council's failure to offer an English version only in widely circulated material, it was suggested that the Council did not need to apologise as the Council's policy of delivering widely circulated material bilingually was very clear.
- (ii) By referring to the complaints regarding arrangements for a public meeting organised by the Youth Justice Team, concern was expressed that there was complete failure here and that the organisers were not aware of the Council's Language Policy.

The Equality and Language Policy Officer noted that she and the Welsh Language Promotion Officer would discuss the best ways of promoting language awareness with the Youth Justice Team and would report back to this sub-committee.

The Chairman noted that the lack of simultaneous translation at meetings was an increasing concern and that this had even penetrated to school governors' meetings by now. It was difficult to persuade meeting organisers to provide simultaneous translation at all, not to mention paying for the service and there had been examples of one non-Welsh speaking person on a governing body and the school had found it difficult to justify the cost of providing simultaneous translation service for one person in the current financial climate.

- (iii) By referring to a complaint from the Gwynedd Environmental Partnership regarding an English language presentation, the Equality and Language Policy Officer noted that a response had been received by the department very recently noting that a misunderstanding had been made regarding the meeting's requirements. However, it was expected that any department within the Council who was arranging such a meeting would know that the meeting should be held in Welsh. Therefore, it was intended to follow this up further with the department.
- (iv) The Corporate Director noted that some of the complaints against the Council highlighted the fact that officers had not followed the Language Policy. In light of this, he suggested that the failure of any member of staff to respect and support the Council's Language Policy should be highlighted in the annual staff appraisal process. The appraisal process already referred to respecting the Council's policies and in this context specific references should be made to the Language Policy.

The Equality and Language Policy Officer noted that there was also an opportunity to highlight areas where there was a specific problem in the annual report to the Welsh Language Board.

The Chairman noted that he was concerned about the situation, because if this could not be carried out correctly in this Council, how could this be achieved in the broader context when collaborating and privatising services.

(B) Complaints against other organisations

- (i) The Equality and Language Policy Officer noted that a letter had been received from Pentir Community Council, after the report had been prepared, asking for the latest information regarding the complaint involving the signs on the front of Padarn Buses vehicles and the lack of the Welsh language on the company's tickets. As the bus company repeatedly gave the same answers the Integrated Transport Unit Manager had suggested that representatives from the Language Sub-committee would meet the company's manager in person in order to seek a resolution to the situation.
- (ii) The Chairman referred to an issue which had been raised at the previous meeting, namely the use of the letters "WC" as the signs for toilets rather than the symbols which denote an outline of a man and a woman.

In response, the Equality and Language Policy Officer noted that she had contacted the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Unit and the Welsh Language Board regarding this and that the issue would be further addressed.

RESOLVED

- (a) To note the content of the report.**
(b) To arrange a meeting in person between the manager of Padarn Bus Company, the Chairman of the Language Sub-Committee and the relevant officers.

6. REPORT ON THE LANGUAGE CHAMPIONS OF LEISURE CENTRES IN THE WELSH SPEAKING AREA PLAN

The Head of Provider and Leisure Department submitted the report of the Language Promotion Officer on the establishment of the Language Champions in Leisure Centres in the Welsh Speaking Area plan, which included:-

- a copy of the Handbook that would be a means of providing the Language Champions with support and further guidance as they started their work of implementing the role in their workplace.
- The final report on the plan including details of the Language Champions in every county, how the training satisfied the identified objectives for the plan; feedback from the Champions from the training sessions, along with information on some of the Language Champions' commitments.

During the discussion the following main observations were noted:-

- It was noted that this was an excellent plan and the collaboration between the four counties was welcomed.
- It was emphasised that a difference could be made on this level and that this was a field that could be part of the change in linguistic pattern.
- The Language Champions were in a situation to influence young people as a result of their status.
- Care should be taken not to tick the boxes only as expectations needed to be realised.
- The Language Champions would be a way to influence the managerial body in the field of sport that often operated through the medium of English only.

The Sub-committee was asked to agree to accept the progress report on the work of the Language Champions and it was agreed that it would be appropriate to report back in around a year's time.

It was suggested that it would be interesting to hear from one of the champions on the day.

It was noted that Canolfan Bedwyr in Bangor University was developing the new *Terwiadur* and it had been suggested that the officers contact Delyth Prys from Canolfan Bedwyr to obtain a copy of the latest sports terminology.

The following matters were then discussed:-

- The possibility of extending the Language Champions Plan to other areas within the Council, such as home care.
- The importance of developing more career paths in the sports sector through the medium of Welsh as it obviously gave the workforce the confidence to communicate in Welsh. Reference was made to the opportunities that were available through the schools and the importance of ensuring that these were carried on from the schools to the colleges was emphasised.
- Methods of publicising the plan e.g. award ceremony. In addition, the Chairman suggested that the Communications Unit should be asked to publicise the plan e.g. in the local papers and drawing people's attention to the fact that there was a language champion in their local leisure centre.

To conclude, the Chairman noted that this was an exciting and innovative plan and he welcomed the collaboration with other councils who were, as Gwynedd, suffering more than anyone else in terms of losing the language. He expressed his hope that the situation could be restored somewhat and that this sub-committee would be celebrating the success of this venture within 12 months.

RESOLVED

- (a) To accept the content of the report.**
- (b) To agree to submit the final report on the Leisure Centres' Language Champions Plan to the Welsh Language Board.**
- (c) To agree to accept a progress report in a year or so regarding the work of Language Champions in Gwynedd Leisure Centres**

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.35am.