

MEETING:	LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
DATE:	APRIL 4 2014
TITLE:	WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S STANDARDS INVESTIGATION
AUTHOR:	EQUALITY AND LANGUAGE OFFICER
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	FOR INFORMATION / COMMITTEE'S COMMENTS

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. A copy of the Welsh Government's consultation document on the Proposed Standards Relating to the Welsh Language was presented to the Language Committee in January.
- 1.2. At the same meeting, it was mentioned that Welsh Local Authorities and National Parks would be required to respond to the Language Commissioner's Standards Investigation as part of the first cycle. The purpose of the investigation is to ascertain what Standards apply to which organisation and to ensure that the Standard's requirements are not unreasonable or disproportionate. The Investigation has been presented to as a Questionnaire, to be filled in by 18 April.
- 1.3. The Questionnaire contains 136 questions on what the Council does, how much of this is done through the medium of Welsh and whether or not we can foresee any problems complying with the new requirements.
- 1.4. In Gwynedd's case, we do not foresee many problems with compliance, as we already provide what is required- often to a greater extent than the Standards dictate.

2. SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR GWYNEDD

- 2.1. As noted at the previous Committee, the purpose of the Standards is to establish a set of consistent requirements for all the relevant organisations in Wales. The Council's current Language Scheme and internal culture mean that we already conform to these expectations; indeed, our emphasis on prioritising the Welsh language and promoting it goes beyond the Standards. The Language Committee is therefore asked to consider and comment upon what should be noted under the "further comments" section of the Questionnaire.

2.2. The following points are noted as preliminary considerations for discussion:

- The Council would appreciate confirmation that the Standards represent a basic requirement and of the Commissioner's support for any organisation wishing to work and develop beyond the Standards' core requirements.
- We will ask that the Commissioner considers the role of an organisation such as Gwynedd in relation to partnership, regional or any other joint provision arrangements. The Council's aim is to ensure that joint provision never leads to deterioration in language provision. Again, we would appreciate the encouragement to aim higher than the Standards and the support to continue to influence partners' provision.
- We note in the Questionnaire that we were unable to reach every Standard, due to other organisations' failures. The Language Committee will already be aware of examples of this; the effort to get Welsh Swimming Certificates and Cremation forms, for instance.
- Some of the Record Keeping Standards may prove to be problematic. Since Welsh is the default language when the public contact us, it would be impractical to count each contact made through the medium of Welsh. Since we aim for 100% compliance in relation to this, it is difficult to see how very detailed records could possibly add value.

3. THE COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO

3.1. Consider the comments noted above, adapting or adding to them as necessary.