
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE: 25 JUNE 2024

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Meryl Roberts, Peter Thomas, Menna Baines, Anne Lloyd Jones, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Cai Larsen, Llio Elenid Owen, Jina Gwyrfai, Alan Jones Evans, Elfed Williams and Rhys Tudur.

Officers: Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Services Manager), Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser), Llio Mai Dafydd and Bet Huws (Welsh Language Learning and Development Officers) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Menna Trenholme (Cabinet Member for Corporate Support).

Item 7: Alun Gwilym Williams (Senior Business Manager, Adults, Health and Well-being Department) and Aled Gibbard (Assistant Head of Resources, Children and Supporting Families Department)

Item 9: Meirion Macintyre Huws (Welsh Language Promotion Project Officer)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved to elect Councillor Menna Baines as chair of the Welsh Language Committee for the year 2024/25.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved to elect Councillor Meryl Roberts as Vice-chair of the Welsh Language Committee for the year 2024/25.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Gwynfor Owen and Nia Haf Lewis (Language Consultant).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

5. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee which took place on 23 April 2024, as a true record.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION PLAN - SOCIAL SERVICES

The report was submitted by the Senior Business Manager and the Assistant Head of Resources. Attention was drawn briefly to the following main points, noting that the Report scoped the work of the Children and Supporting Families Department, as well as the Adults, Health and Well-being Department.

It was explained that the Report scoped the work of both departments for the first time because the Public Services Corporate Director led on a 'More than words' project within the Care field.

The development of the Care Academy to try and cope with recruitment challenges that the Care field had recently faced was reported on. Details were given on the recruitment struggles impacting Local Authorities across the country, with specific challenges in some fields and geographical areas. It was emphasised that the aim of the Academy was to help individuals to develop themselves and highlight clear career pathways within the care field. It was explained that they hoped to meet these targets by offering support and training to ensure that individuals qualify to become carers through the medium of Welsh whether for the positions of Occupational Therapists, Home Manager or any other aspect of the field of care. Pride was expressed on the development of this plan because Welsh language training was not currently available on all aspects of the field, such as apprenticeships. It was explained that the academy currently existed virtually but it was hoped to have a specific location in the future.

It was acknowledged that both departments had faced recruitment challenges, noting that the problem intensified when attempting to appoint more specialist posts who had the necessary language skills. Attention was drawn to the fact that there was a specific challenge in the nursing home and residential care field as it was not possible to recruit quickly enough to meet the demand for the services. It was emphasised that departments ensured that they continued to offer training and support for all workers who needed help with the Welsh language and noted that filling vacant posts and resolving the recruitment challenges was a priority for them. Assurance was given that care providers received the Council's support to ensure that workers had specific time within working hours to nurture their Welsh language skills. However, it was acknowledged that this procedure depended on those providers acting as required.

It was elaborated that the Children and Supporting Families Department had had some success with recruitment campaigns recently, but it was acknowledged that challenges were still seen in the Meirionnydd area. It was noted that another challenge was to ensure Welsh language residential placements for children who wished this as all the residential placements were currently owned by the private sector. It was emphasised that the Council had plans to develop internal residential placements. It was acknowledged that the department had followed the Council's recruitment processes and considered applicants with lower language skills if the post was advertised for the third time. If someone with lower language skills was offered the job, it was ensured that a Welsh training programme was implemented at the beginning of the individual's employment. Both departments had emphasised that they had been making an effort to use agency staff as little as possible.

Assurance was given that the departments were proactive in resolving these recruitment challenges, detailing a number of projects that had been underway to attract social workers such as the Care Academy, trainee scheme, awareness raising, social media, a purposeful section for the care sector on the jobs website, promoting the benefits of working for the council and also to encourage young people to consider social care as a rewarding career.

Members were reminded of the 'AskSARA' company service which provided support to adults after users completed a self-assessment of the support that they needed. It was noted that this service was one that was being used by a number of Local Authorities nationally. It was

elaborated that the system had historically been available in Welsh but that this element of the self-assessment had been very defective. It was confirmed that the Adults services had been collaborating with the company to develop a correct Welsh language element to this service and ensure that it was accessible to all users whilst reducing the likelihood of difficulties arising. It was noted that this work ensured that more people received access to support through the medium of Welsh and they were proud that the department had taken a leading role on this work which was used by AskSARA users across Wales.

It was reported that a Flying Start provision had been developed, noting that there were now 22 childcare providers through the medium of Welsh or bilingual within the scheme, as well as an app development for scheme users. It was emphasised that every provider offered care through the medium of Welsh with the option to offer bilingual care in English when appropriate. This was reiterated by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, confirming that both departments offered Welsh language services proactively by providing services in English following applications.

It was mentioned that the Children and Supporting Families Department had collaborated with CWLWM to provide Welsh language support to nurseries, cylchoedd meithrin, childminders and after school clubs. Attention was drawn to grants available for new childminders who were non-Welsh speaking, to enable them to buy the equivalent of £100 of Welsh language resources for their provision. In response to an enquiry, it was confirmed that there would be further information on the number of individuals who had taken advantage of this grant and on the materials, as well as the number of Welsh language Flying Start care providers with the members following the meeting.

Pride was expressed that the AiDi app had now received consideration for regional and national adoption. Members were reminded that this Welsh app was an innovative app for unpaid young carers as it was an effective method of sharing information and allowed them to contact the school when needed. It was emphasised that the feedback for this app had been very supportive. It was reiterated that an additional app was desired to be developed to support individuals with autism. There was a desire for this bilingual app to be developed by the end of March 2025 after receiving recent grant money.

It was explained that approximately 1,600 staff had been employed across the social services. It was noted that 73.4% of them had completed a language assessment, with 85.5% of those meeting the language requirements of their posts. It was acknowledged that the departments recognised that there was a pattern to these results as a larger proportion of office workers completed the self-assessment compared to front-line staff. It was confirmed that it was a priority for the departments to encourage managers to implement the self-assessment with front-line workers over the coming months to ensure more complete data collection of the linguistic levels of department staff offering Welsh language skills support to any member of staff who wished to receive it, or who needed to attend training as a result of the self-assessment.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

RESOLVED

To accept the report and note the observations received.

8. CYNGOR GWYNEDD ANNUAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

The report was presented by the Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser, and she briefly drew attention to the following main points:

It was reported that the report provided factual information required to be published by the Council in accordance with the requirements of the Language Standards under Section 44 of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011.

It was noted that the Standards set out some specific requirements for annual reporting, emphasising the expectation to confirm:

- Number of complaints received during the year
- Number of staff who possessed Welsh language skills at the end of the year
- Number of staff who attended training courses offered by the Council through the medium of Welsh during the year
- Number of new posts and vacant posts advertised by the Council, where Welsh language skills were noted as an essential skill for the role.

A summary of the report was provided, confirming that 98.9% of Council staff had some degree of Welsh language skills. In response to an enquiry, the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer confirmed that the minimum job designation level in Welsh stated that it was a requirement for individuals to be able to greet and answer simple questions verbally, confirming that this was what this figure reflected. It was also noted that 92% of Council staff reached the language designation of their post.

They went on to confirm that 850 job advertisements had been published during the year, with Welsh language skills being essential to the role.

Attention was drawn to the fact that 22 staff members had completed access training, which was the initial language level training. It was noted that six individuals went on to complete foundation training as well as six individuals who completed the intermediate level. It was emphasised that this was not an indication that individuals did not continue with their training, but instead, it reflected the fact that job designations varied and not everyone who attended access training was required to continue to the higher levels. However, it was noted that they were welcomed to do so if they had an interest in improving their linguistic skills. In the same manner, pride was expressed that the number of individuals who had shown interest in receiving language refresher training was on the rise.

Reference was made to additional information seen in the report on developments during the year to improve compliance with the Language Standards, including:

- Specific steps to promote the new Language Policy adopted in 2022.
- Information on the new Language Strategy published at the end of 2023 which set out the Council's vision of increasing the use of the Welsh language across the county.
- Information about the work of the More Than Words in-house forum.
- Bilingual Workforce Recruitment Project.

It was explained that there was no reference to Menter Iaith Gwynedd in the report as they worked with Gwynedd communities instead of detailing on the use and compliance of the Language Standards.

Thanks was expressed for the report.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the report and note the observations received.**
- **Recommend that the Cabinet Member publishes the report before the 30 June 2024 deadline.**

9. CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLACE NAMES PROJECT

The report was presented by the Welsh Language Promotion Project Officer and attention was briefly drawn to the following main points:

Members were reminded that the project was established in 2021 following increasing concerns over a number of years that Welsh names were being lost. It was noted that one of the project's main developments was the Cyngor Gwynedd Place Name Map. It was explained that it noted local names of places within the county, such as fields, roads, buildings, areas and rivers which were used verbally but had not been recorded in official maps. Details were given that the map continued to be populated with new names following workshops in 15 primary schools and 1 secondary school. Individuals with correct information about Welsh local names in their area were encouraged to contact the Officer to populate the map in even more detail.

Attention was drawn to several projects underway to raise awareness of the importance of local names and the historical, linguistic and cultural richness that they included. It was elaborated that the Officer published 'Yr Enw a'r Hanes' articles internally to Council staff to note the history of a place name within the County. Pride was expressed that this was the page that received the most visitors of all the Intranet pages.

It was reported that the project had been very active during the week of the 2023 National Eisteddfod in Boduan. It was noted that the Officer was a member of a national discussion panel accompanied by Jeremy Miles MS (Minister for the Welsh Language) and Dr Dylan Foster Evans (Welsh Place-Name Society) to continue discussions on legal arrangements and policies in this field. Reference was also made to a discussion held on local names in the Babell Lân at the Eisteddfod. Pride was expressed that this discussion held by the Officer had been broadcasted on S4C as part of the Eisteddfod's programme of the best of the festival (Goreuon yr Ŵyl). It was added that the Officer had been discussing the matter on BBC Radio Cymru by having a four-month contract to discuss local accents and names.

Reference was made to an application that came before the project to try to ensure that Welsh-only names were put on street signs. It was emphasised that the Officer had been investigating the process of renovating all signs, confirming that this would be too costly to implement. However, it was confirmed that the project had adopted an alternative project. Details were given that one of the main aims of this project was to install new signs for locations and areas, such as Twthill (Caernarfon), Lôn Rocar (Llandygai) and Lôn Groes (Pistyll), where there were no existing signs. It was considered that this would make the Welsh language more visible in the county.

Additional projects were mentioned which focused on installing signs such as:

- Erection of signs marking the old Welsh names of some of the streets in Caernarfon (in association with Caernarfon Civic Society)
- Welsh only signs erected in Trefor due to a number of missing signs
- Installation of signs when arriving at former districts/communities on 'A' roads in the County following public interest in seeing 'Llŷn' and 'Eifionydd' signs for the National Eisteddfod.

It was explained that, historically, Town Councils did not have the right to put up monolingual Welsh signs welcoming visitors there. Pride was expressed that, as a result of discussions with the Language Commissioner and the Welsh Government, the officer had succeeded in obtaining the right to allow Welsh-only signs for this use.

Reference was made to the Enwau Gwynedd app currently in development which will be made available to Council staff via the intranet. This would enable staff to assist by correcting

any spelling or error in place names. It was explained that the aim was to reconcile the name that the Council used in correspondence.

It was explained that Council Departments worked closely with the Officer on several projects. An example was shared that he advised Building Control on matters relating to street and properties names as well as schools and estates when they received requests to change place names from Welsh to English. Reference was made to the 'Enwi eiddo - Ymarfer Da' booklet developed by the Officer to encourage people to keep the Welsh names of their properties. It was elaborated that the Officer sent a letter out to individuals who wished to change the name of their house from a Welsh name to English in an effort to convince them of a Welsh name that they could use instead. However, it was acknowledged that the Council did not have the power to stop these changes if the owners wished to proceed. Furthermore, it was noted that Welsh names were used on 94% of all new houses built since 2020 but it was confirmed that requests to change house names from Welsh to English remained a challenge.

It was elaborated that the Officer collaborated with the Departments on matters regarding street names, be that misspellings, misuse or other requests. It was explained that this was interesting work as there were 172 different systems used across the Council by different services and the street name data needed to be reconciled to ensure that the systems used the same addresses in the future as the teams' software was updated. It was noted that the 'Local Land and Property Gazetteer' could be used if a street name needed to be confirmed, further using the Welsh name in any attempt to modify the official use for the area.

It was confirmed that the Officer continued to collaborate with external bodies and organisations on a number of different aspects. It was noted that he was a member of the Welsh Place Names Forum, where representatives from the Welsh Language Commissioner's office, the Welsh Government, Eryri National Park and some from other local authorities met to protect local names. It was noted that the Officer consistently encouraged legislative change within these meetings. It was elaborated that the Officer was also working with mapping Wales in the hope of developing Welsh digital maps as the foundation for Cyngor Gwynedd's maps but it was acknowledged that a number of challenges with licences derived from this.

It was reported that the project had been operational since 2021 and was funded until April 2025. Consideration was given to ask the Language Initiative whether they would be eager to adopt the work if the campaign to get an extension for the project was unsuccessful.

Thanks was given for the report.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the report and note the observations received.**
- **Recommend and support the Cabinet Member to try and find resources to extend the period of the project to ensure the development and continuity of the service.**

The meeting commenced at 10:00am and concluded at 11:40am.

CHAIR