
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE: 30 JUNE 2025

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Alan Jones Evans, Beth Lawton, Jina Gwyrfai, Elfed Williams, Anne Lloyd-Jones, Gwilym Jones, Hefin Underwood, Gwynfor Owen, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Menna Baines, Meryl Roberts, Olaf Cai Larsen and Llio Elenid Owen (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and for the Welsh language).

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Item 7: Sian Iolen Pritchard (Senior Executive Officer, Children and Supporting Families Department), Aled Gibbard (Interim Head of Resources - Children Department), Nia Wyn Evans (Workforce Support Team Leader, Corporate Leadership Team) and Sian Edith Jones (Assistant Head of Adult Services, Adults, Health & Well-being Department)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Menna Baines as Chair of the Committee for the year 2025-26.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Meryl Roberts as Vice-Chair of the Committee for the year 2025-26.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Beca Brown and Rhys Tudur.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

5. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 29 April 2025 as a true record.

7. REPORT BY THE ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING DEPARTMENT AND THE CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES DEPARTMENT ON THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY AND CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS REALISING THE WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY 2023-2033

The report was presented by the Senior Executive Officer, Children and Supporting Families Department, Interim Head of Resources - Children Department, Workforce Support Team Leader, Corporate Leadership Team and the Assistant Head of Adult Services, Adults, Health and Well-being Department. She referred briefly to the following main points:

It was reported that the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department promoted the Welsh language in all aspects of their work.

Attention was drawn to the 'More than Just Words' scheme, a Strategic Framework published in 2016 for Welsh Language Services in the areas of Health, Social Services and Social Care. It was emphasised that this framework was central to the work of the Departments to ensure that an active offer of Welsh language care was implemented in practice within the services.

Pride was expressed in the development of the 'Niwro' app, an innovative resource for supporting neuro-diverse individuals through the medium of Welsh. It was noted that the use of this app raised the status of the Welsh language in an area where it had not been properly considered in the past.

Reference was made to the development of the Small Group Homes scheme for looked after children, a scheme that allowed looked after children to remain within their Welsh speaking communities and continue to feel a sense of belonging to the local language and culture.

It was noted that schemes within the Early Years service to extend play opportunities and offer activities through the medium of Welsh contributed to creating a natural environment where children could use the language effortlessly. It was further noted that plans to develop the workforce's language skills was also essential to ensure accessible and bilingual services.

An example of the cross-departmental collaborative 'Croesi'r Bont' project was shared. This project confirmed that there was seamless communication in Welsh between services. This allowed the user to be at the centre of the processes.

Members were reminded that the Adults, Health and Well-being Department had a strong focus on projects linked to the 'A Caring Gwynedd' project within the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan. These included the modernisation of care homes, community resources and accommodation for the residents of Gwynedd. It was emphasised that the use of technology for identifying local needs was essential to the work, confirming that there was close collaboration with the Health Service to promote adult health.

It was noted that the Adults, Health and Well-being Department was continually striving to change the culture in order to secure services for the future. It was also noted that training schemes were being held to ensure that the workforce was qualified to address the future needs of Gwynedd's residents. It was also explained that a sustainable care system was in place to promote the well-being of adults, and it was confirmed that maintaining this system was a priority for the department.

It was reported that there was ongoing work to ensure that fit-for-purpose technology was operational within the field of care, and that it could be used in Welsh. An example of the 'Percy' questionnaire, which measured the quality of care from the perspective of the recipient, was shared. It was emphasised that this questionnaire had been co-designed by individuals who had experience of being looked after. It was pleasing that a Welsh version of the questionnaire was available.

It was elaborated that the Department had been working on 'AskSara' software, a software for virtual occupational therapy for adults, children and families. This was a system that allowed users to self-assess their needs. The fact that this software was now available in Welsh for everyone in Wales was praised. It was pointed out that the service used this software under the name 'Helpu'n Hun'.

An update was provided regarding the service's work on new Telecare equipment, which was on track to be rolled out in December 2025. Assurance was given that this technology would be available in Welsh, as officers were collaborating with the company to translate the technological code in order to effectively support services through the medium of Welsh.

It was explained that the service's recording system would transition from WCCIS to Mosaic within the next year. It was emphasised that all public services were working together on this. Cyngor Gwynedd was working to ensure that this new system was available in Welsh and bilingually.

It was recognised that some of the current challenges included recruiting employees with Welsh language skills as well as ensuring that Welsh language technology was available to employees and users. It was explained that recruiting professionals in this field was challenging, and it was acknowledged that there were specific challenges in some areas of the county. An example was shared of the difficulty that had been for some months in recruiting occupational therapists who possessed Welsh skills. It was explained that this had forced the department to recruit individuals through agencies, although noting that they did not possess language skills. Reference was made to the Care Academy and hope was expressed that it would attract Welsh speakers to pursue a career within the field of care in the future. However, the Departments were continuously striving to ensure that the Welsh language was an integral part of provision in the field of social care in Gwynedd, and were undertaking innovative projects to ensure new developments.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

In response to an enquiry about difficulties in securing work-related learning opportunities such as apprenticeships, the Assistant Head of Adult Services, Adults, Health and Well-being Department confirmed that there were a number of schemes in place to support unqualified employees to develop their skills and experience in order to gain qualifications in the field. It was noted that three apprentices had already qualified with a further two individuals having recently embarked on the apprenticeship journey. It was explained that there were 12 opportunities for apprentices annually, depending on the Departmental budgets: eight apprentices appointed through the Care Academy as well as two training opportunities in the areas of occupational therapy and social work. It was emphasised that these individuals received courses through the medium of Welsh. It was noted that only 30 candidates had participated in the Care Academy recruitment process last year, with a number of the unsuccessful candidates taking on shadow roles within specific areas in order to gain confidence and experience for the future. It was explained that North Wales Carers encouraged individuals to qualify in the field by providing advice and financial support.

A request was made for details about the areas experiencing the greatest recruitment challenges. In response, the Assistant Head of Adult Services, Adults, Health and Well-being Department confirmed that South Meirionnydd was the area facing the main challenges. Assurance was given that the Department continued to advertise jobs in this area, although agencies had to be commissioned eventually to assist with filling roles in order to ensure that the residents of Gwynedd received the required services. It was recognised that the priority of these agencies was that qualified individuals were appointed to the posts, meaning that they did not necessarily possess Welsh language skills. Similarly, the Interim Head of Resources - Children Department confirmed that there were recruitment challenges in the South Meirionnydd area within the Children and Supporting Families Department. It was explained

that the department had been working with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor in Dolgellau which had led to considerable interest within the field of care in the area and that some positions had subsequently been filled. Both departments ensured that any individual who was recruited when there were challenges within certain areas of the county worked within those areas to ensure continuity of service, and service through the medium of Welsh whenever possible.

In response to clarity on the percentage of Departments' officers who had completed the language self-assessment, the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer confirmed that it had been completed by 93.6% of staff within the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and 88.8% of staff in the Children and Supporting Families Department. It was explained that the majority of staff had completed it independently, with a proportion of employees completing the self-assessment with their manager as they did not have access to the questionnaire independently due to the frontline nature of their job.

Attention was drawn to the fact that 81% of staff in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department met the language designation of their jobs, and a question was asked regarding what support was being provided to ensure that the Department committed to the Council's Language Policy by providing support to the other 19% of the workforce who did not meet the language designation of their posts. In response, the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer confirmed that the Council was working with Cymraeg Gwaith in order to address this challenge such as running training sessions through the medium of Welsh for the Department's employees. However, it was noted that this could be difficult to establish due to the variable nature of the department staff's work shifts, and that the nature of any training needed to be flexible. It was further noted that online and self-study resources were also being considered. Similarly, it was noted that Social Care Wales also offered online training with taster sessions available to care workers. It was emphasised that the Council's buddy scheme was extremely important within the field of care; this scheme matched an individual who wished to practice their Welsh skills with another employee who was willing to help. This was key to raising the confidence of Welsh learners, offering them the opportunity to practice their skills in the workplace.

It was a matter of pride that 50% of individuals who used Childcare Offer Wales' national telephone lines using the option to communicate in English, decided to switch to Welsh after realising that the worker who answered the call spoke Welsh. It was noted that there was a need to raise public awareness regarding the availability of these telephone services through the medium of Welsh, so that they chose this option at the beginning of the call; it was highlighted that these calls were made by parents. The Senior Executive Officer, Children and Supporting Families Department, further noted that the Childcare Offer Wales was undertaking further work on this as part of the Welsh Government's campaign to secure one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The Workforce Support Team Leader, Corporate Leadership Team, noted that a series of short videos were available to staff and councillors, developed by the More Than Just Words campaign. It was explained that these encouraged everyone to begin conversations in Welsh, and an example was shared in the meeting. It was highlighted that this could be useful for Councillors when communicating with residents in their constituency, emphasising that it was also useful for all Council employees.

Reference was made to immersion education within nursery years in Gwynedd, with particular pride noted in the effectiveness of the Croesi'r Bont service within Mudiad Meithrin. It was positive that 17 nursery settings in Gwynedd succeeded in providing nursery education through the medium of Welsh, noting a slippage in two settings that offered bilingual provision. Concern was noted that only 41% of children aged 3 years old and older had chosen Welsh as their chosen language for education in 2023/24. Further information was requested to clarify this situation, and the Interim Head of Resources - Children Department

confirmed that he would contact Members with further information.

Details were provided on the arrangements for looked after children, and whether officers were confident that they received care through the medium of Welsh within their settings, and whether Welsh medium education was offered for any child placed out of the county. In response, the Interim Head of Resources - Children Department confirmed that in all cases the main priority was to ensure that children were placed in a setting that suited their needs. It was noted that this meant that there were no Welsh medium carers available, although the department was helping to recruit more foster carers that spoke Welsh in order to ensure that the linguistic needs of looked after children were met. It was confirmed that the majority of looked after children in the county received care through the medium of Welsh, although it was challenging to secure this for anyone in an out-of-county placement, with an even worse situation in residential placements to secure Welsh-medium care. It was added that discussions were taking place with the Education Department to ensure that Welsh resources were available for looked after children, and it was confirmed that this was possible in the majority of subjects.

Thanks 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:

A reminder was provided that under the requirements of the Language Standards, it was mandatory for the Council to produce and publish an annual report, in accordance with Section 44 of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011. It was further explained that the annual report had to share information such as Standards 151, 152, 154, 158, 164 and 170.

It was reported that 99.1% of Council staff had some degree of Welsh language skills, with 90% of all the Council's staff reaching the language designation of their post.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

In response to a request for further detail on the data regarding the workforce's language skills, the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer confirmed that any staff members with language skills, whether it was the ability to communicate a few words or a sentence in Welsh or who reached a proficiency level in their Welsh skills were included.

In response to the enquiry regarding how language designations for posts were determined, the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer confirmed that they were determined by the line manager. It was added that the manager would consider factors such as contact with the public, working as part of a team and the need to communicate in writing, before determining the appropriate language designation for the post. It was also noted that the line manager noted whether or not staff members reached the language designation of their post. Members were reminded that the language self-assessment also provided an opportunity for staff members to share their own views regarding their linguistic skills.

Attention was drawn to the fact that regular observations from Council Departments noted that confidence affected the staff's results in relation to the language self-assessment. In

response to a question on whether officers are anxious or lacking in confidence in their ability, the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer emphasised that staff members were lacking confidence in their skills. This was particularly true for aspects relating to formal or professional Welsh language skills. It was confirmed that arrangements were in place for the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer to contact the relevant line manager in cases where a member of staff was close to meeting the language designation of the post, but that the self-assessment indicated that they were lacking in confidence, noting that in the majority of cases, the manager noted that the staff member met the language designation. It was stressed that support was available to anyone who needed it in order to reach the language designation of their post. It was added that the work being carried out in conjunction with the Public Services Board to dispel myths about language skills needs was helping to increase the confidence levels of Council staff.

It was pointed out that the report stated that 97% of all Gwynedd housing lettings placed within the Allocation Policy went to individuals with a link to Gwynedd. An enquiry was made regarding the definition of this allocation, but as no suitable officer was present it was not possible to address this matter.

It was noted that a number of Council training sessions were being held through the medium of English and a question was asked regarding the steps being taken with the aim of reducing these numbers in the future. In response, the Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser explained that she was not happy that there were so many English language training sessions and that work was underway to liaise with the Departments to ascertain why English-medium training continued to be held, and what support could be offered to them in order to adapt those sessions to Welsh. It was explained that 447 Welsh-medium training sessions, 254 English-medium sessions and 123 bilingual sessions had been held during 2024/25.

In response to an enquiry about what could be done to increase managers' awareness of the Welsh language standards, the Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser confirmed that resources were available on the Council's internal pages as well as regular updates through management team meetings.

Attention was drawn to the Language Forum, and a question was asked on whether the Council was working with Young Farmers' Organisation in order to share information within the Young People Sub-Group. In response, the Language Adviser confirmed that the Eryri and Meirionnydd Young Farmers' Organisations received correspondence about the Sub-Group, although to date no representative had been present. However, assurance was given that they would continue to receive the latest relevant information. Members emphasised that they wished for this relationship with the organisation to continue to improve in future.

Thanks was expressed for the report.

RESOLVED

- 1. To accept the report, noting the observations received during the discussion.**
- 2. To recommend that the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language publish the report by 30 June 2025.**

The Meeting commenced at 10:00am and ended at 11:20am.

CHAIR