
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE: 20 APRIL 2026

PRESENT:

Councillors: Menna Baines (Chair)
Meryl Roberts (Vice-chair)

Anne Lloyd Jones, Jina Gwyrfai, Gwilym Jones, Elfed Williams, Rhys Tudur, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Alan Jones Evans and Cai Larsen.

Officers: Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager), Nia Lewis (Language Adviser) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Item 5: Sioned Eirian Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department).
Item 6: Iwan Gwilym Evans (Head of Legal Service).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Gwynfor Owen, Hefin Underwood, Wendy Cleaver and Beca Brown. Apologies were also received from Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser) and Llio Mai Dafydd (Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 09 February 2026 as a true record.

5. REPORT OF THE ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY AND CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE REALISATION OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY 2023-2033

The report was presented by the Head of Economy and Community Department. She referred briefly to the following main points:

It was reported that all the Department's policies and strategic plans contributed to the objectives of the Language Strategy, such as the Gwynedd Economic Development Strategy which was currently being developed. Specific attention was drawn to other policies such as the Area Regeneration Framework, the Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan, the World Heritage Site Management Plan: The Welsh Slate Landscape as well as the Gwynedd Culture Plan which were currently in draft form.

Members were reminded that the Department was leading on a number of projects that were part of the Council's Plan and it was emphasised that consideration of the Welsh language was central to them all. It was highlighted that those projects were:

- A Prosperous Gwynedd
 - Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy
 - Regenerating communities and town centres
 - Creating the best possible conditions in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and to support the people of Gwynedd into work.
- A Caring Gwynedd
 - Supporting People's Well-being

It was confirmed that language assessments were carried out when the department operated major schemes and procedures, recognising that there was room for improvement to assess the extent to which they were successful in doing so with smaller projects. It was emphasised that this was a regular discussion within the Department's management team to ensure that more language assessments were carried out on smaller projects in the future.

Due to the diverse and broad nature of the Department, it was explained that all managers within the Department had submitted an update on how their services are operating to contribute towards the objectives of the language strategy. Some specific areas were highlighted such as the Gwynedd Library Service and Neuadd Dwyfor which played a key role in supporting people to learn Welsh, access Welsh resources and knowledge whilst also learning about culture, heritage and offering activities. Similarly, it was explained that the 'LleCHI Lle Ni' project: Our World Heritage Site, Our Pride, Our Future promoted the Welsh language in the community while also focusing on four strong principles to promote the Welsh language.

This was expanded upon by referring to the Tourism, Marketing and Events Service which had been publishing articles that promoted the special qualities of our area, the Welsh language and local culture, as part of the Diwylliesiant project. Similarly, it was confirmed that the budget for the ARFOR programme had now come to an end but the Department was working to distribute and promote packages created during the programme period to ensure that young people continued to receive encouragement to return to the region to work whilst also promoting the use of Welsh.

It was explained that the Department's services had highlighted opportunities to raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure that it was used. A specific example of this was shared by referring to the Maritime Service's plans to: Encourage and support staff to speak and correspond in Welsh; providing training opportunities for staff to improve language learning while also ensuring that successes were celebrated; and improving the bilingual content of the County's harbours and beaches.

It was highlighted that challenges had been highlighted within the Economic Development Service as the ARFOR programme had come to an end. It was explained that a total of £500,000 had been shared between the 4 Counties that were part of the programme's region to ensure the continuity of the programme's activities until the 2026 Senedd election, noting that there was no assurance of the programme's continuation thereafter. However, it was emphasised that the Department was seeking to incorporate the objectives of the ARFOR programme into other projects such as Llwyddo'n Lleol to ensure that work continued to encourage young people and those who can speak Welsh, to return to Gwynedd to live and work.

Pride was expressed that some officers within the Department felt comfortable using technology, and software such as 'ChatGPT' to develop their confidence in Welsh. It was emphasised that the Department was aware of the risks that existed in the use of such technology, but it was noted that it may be a valuable tool for the linguistic development of staff.

The members were reminded that Gwynedd's libraries were part of a national network and that they shared resources with other Counties. Reference was made to the 'Borrowbox' system which allowed users to borrow resources digitally, acknowledging that the Department had received comments on some of the terms used for that software, and the need to maximise the Welsh language. It was confirmed that the Department was working with the company to ensure that their use of the Welsh language was correct and that any errors were corrected to ensure that the Welsh language received equal attention.

It was confirmed that the Department regularly collected information on linguistic use and the numbers of people who used a service through the medium of Welsh in order to monitor performance.

There was pride that 90.6% of the Department's staff had completed a Language Assessment and that 94.8% of those individuals met the language designation of their posts. It was stressed that arrangements were in place to encourage and support workers who were not currently meeting the requirements. It was explained that the majority of staff members who had not completed the language assessment were seasonal members of staff, such as Beach Wardens, and it was explained that the term of employment had ended before valuable language development could be offered to them. It was noted that this shortcoming was a challenge for the Department and that considerations were in place to find a solution.

During the discussion, the following observations were made: -

In response to an enquiry on how the Department supported non-Welsh speaking businesses and individuals applying for grants to boost and promote the language, the Head of Department confirmed that assurance and commitment to carry out this was a specific condition of the contract before they received the grant payment. It was confirmed that the Department monitored all approved grant applications to ensure that there was a follow-up in terms of commitments to promote the Welsh language. It was noted that this could only be done for the operational period of the grants, explaining that the Department was very dependent on grants as the core budget was small. It was clarified that there were no grants currently in place but that the new Local Growth Fund was awaited in the coming months, adding that promoting the language would also be a specific condition for the applicants of that grant. It was pointed out that the Department also promoted the language in different ways, such as by supporting organisers of live events with the aim of influencing the language of the event and promoting the Welsh language.

Pride was expressed that the officers of the Monitoring Service made every effort to encourage the staff of the service to learn and develop their Welsh skills. This encouragement was felt to be effective as staff developed confidence to use the language consistently and in committees. The Department was thanked for supporting the workforce to develop their language skills.

In response to a request for additional information regarding the challenges faced by the Department in ensuring that seasonal staff met the language designation of their posts, the Head of Department explained that this was being further considered by officers. The situation was detailed and explained that the Department employed approximately 30 seasonal beach wardens to protect and assist the public. It was noted that these roles were carried out outdoors and those staff did not have access to technological equipment to be able to carry out language training. It was emphasised that a change to the Department's

arrangements meant that a language assessment was carried out before staff formally took up their role. It was also mentioned that there had been difficulties in the past with the recruitment of beach wardens as the staff applying were usually young or unable to drive. Reference was also made to a common challenge where there was no interest in specific areas, as it was not local to where the candidates lived, explaining that the staff wardens were likely to apply for jobs on their local beaches. It was confirmed that this challenge of providing training and supporting staff to learn and use Welsh was not unique to the Maritime Service, noting that similar challenges could also arise within the Museums Service. It was emphasised that the Department's aim for any seasonal staff was to ensure that there was adequate time for staff to respond to enquiries about their language ability as well as to attend language training.

In response to an enquiry on the work the Department was doing to bring Welsh names for locations and areas back into use, the Head of Department explained that they were working with Eryri National Park on a place names project. It was elaborated that they had received a grant from The National Lottery to ensure that the project was actively used and promoted effectively.

In response to an enquiry on the work the Department was doing within agriculture to support the rural community and promote the language, the Head of Department confirmed that the agriculture sector was a key part of the Council's Economic Strategy. It was also noted that the farming unions were leading members of the development forum. It was recognised that ARFOR had also been supporting rural communities and supporting businesses wishing to diversify.

In response to concern that the Welsh language did not receive equal attention within the towns of the County, the Head of Department confirmed that support had been provided through the ARFOR scheme to assist with this, and Members were reminded that that scheme had now ended. It was confirmed that there were no grants available at the moment but the support that Mentrau Iaith could offer to develop the visibility of the Welsh language and to assist businesses with bilingual signage was highlighted.

In response to considerations that the Maritime Service's data confirmed low levels of Welsh language correspondence, the Head of the Department emphasised that this reflected the language of the users of those services. It was confirmed that Welsh language information and forms were available in both languages and all procedures were in place to ensure that users of all services within the department were aware that the information or form they were looking for was available in Welsh.

In response to an enquiry on the Department's use of Microsoft, Cysill and ChatGPT services to assist with writing in Welsh, the Head of the Department emphasised that these software packages were only used in informal situations to increase the workforce's confidence with the Welsh language. It was confirmed that they were not used for the preparation of documentation or formal reports. Examples of where the software was being used were shared such as if a member was alone and needed to check information quickly to deal with queries. It was mentioned that informal use of this type was a great help to the staff and assisted the Department in the delivery of services. It was confirmed that the Department was aware of the risks of using artificial intelligence, noting that the situation was being continuously monitored, with the aim of developing clear guidance on this issue. It was hoped that a guide would be developed more widely for the Council for clarity on the future use of such software.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

RESOLVED

To accept the report, noting the observations received during the discussion.

6. REPORT OF THE LEGAL SERVICES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY AND CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE REALISATION OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY 2023-2033

The report was presented by the Head of Legal Services. He referred briefly to the following main points:

It was reported that the Legal Services were responsible for propriety (including the Monitoring Officer role, legal services, Elections and Electoral Registration Team as well as Coroner's Support.) Regional work that the Service had been undertaking in recent years was highlighted, by providing support to GwE, the Growth Deal and the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC).

It was recognised that legal requirements for the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee had increased significantly, and to cope with that work the CJC had formed an independent legal team, with Cyngor Gwynedd's Legal Services having now withdrawn from the partnership. It was stressed that Democracy and Finance Services continued to support the CJC. There was pride that there was a presence in the process of developing CJC procedures and systems as it was formed, which was essential to ensure bilingualism and that the Welsh language received equal attention, as good practice had been demonstrated and implemented.

It was explained that the Electoral Team promoted the Welsh language and insisted that bilingualism was ensured on all occasions. Examples of the importance of bilingualism were shared such as on documentation, training, and when election results were announced verbally. Pride was expressed that the Electoral Team was successfully promoting the language and that the work was being carried out to ensure that the Electoral Commission's bilingual systems were now standard. It was emphasised that there was room for improvement, highlighting that the Electoral Team emphasised that the English only provision of documentation or training was not acceptable.

Thanks were given to the Coroner, who worked at a national level and also promoted the Welsh language through her work. It was explained that the Gwynedd and Anglesey Coroners' Service had not been incorporated into a regional body across North Wales due to the linguistic emphasis placed by the Coroner in this area, noting that this reflected the importance of the language to the Service. Pride was expressed that this work was able to influence other Coroners' areas by ensuring that documentation was available for use in both Welsh and English.

Pride was expressed that the Legal Services were now able to carry out all elements of their duties bilingually, such as the most technical aspects of the work, the provision of contracts and transcripts of court proceedings for work in Gwynedd and regionally across north Wales. Members were reminded that this was not possible in recent years because locum solicitors had been appointed to assist with regional work, where the need for specific expertise dominated the need to ensure that those individuals were proficient in Welsh. It was acknowledged that the Legal Service had experienced recruitment challenges in recent years but emphasised that recruitment needs had now eased and that the Service was able to attract experienced and Welsh language skills staff when any staff turnover arose, taking pride in the highly enthusiastic and hard-working workforce.

The linguistic challenges facing the service were similar to other Council Departments. It was confirmed that there were some challenges beyond the control of the service and the Council, whilst work was being done to influence other places linguistically, as had already been noted. It was recognised that some linguistic challenges arose from the need to work jointly with external, national and specialist companies, where it was still not possible to ensure that

relevant expertise was available through the medium of Welsh. However, it was emphasised that this joint working was done in Welsh, if the service was available. It was pointed out that this joint working with experts was only one aspect of the service's work, and pride was taken that most of the work was being carried out in Welsh or bilingually.

It was confirmed that the Service was taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the Council, such as Cynllun Yfory and Apprentices, to develop qualified and experienced staff through the medium of Welsh. It was explained that two apprentices were currently employed with the Service, in a role within the Electoral Team and in a para legal role and that ongoing consideration was being given to identify new opportunities.

During the discussion, the following observations were made: -

In response to an enquiry, the Head of the Legal Service explained that information had not been presented to the committee on what needed to be addressed during the next year to raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure opportunities for Welsh speakers, within this report as there were no specific examples of practical activity that could be identified within the Service at this time.

In response to an enquiry, the Head of the Legal Service explained that he would welcome an expansion of the opportunities for apprentices and work experience for law students. It was reiterated that two apprentices were already working within the Service and the Service would endeavour to take advantage of these opportunities in the future, as required. However, it was explained that the main challenge within the area of short-term work experiences was to ensure access to the services' electronic systems for an adequate period of time, when work experience individuals were only in the office for a limited period. It was confirmed that individuals had been on work experience in the past, and that work was being done to find a way to be able to offer this in the future.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

RESOLVED

To accept the report, noting the observations received during the discussion.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.10am.

CHAIR