

MEETING:	LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
DATE:	12 October 2017
TITLE:	White Paper Consultation - Striking the Right Balance
AUTHOR:	Mair Rowlands
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	To submit the draft response of the Language Unit to the Government's consultation on its White Paper: Striking the Right Balance: proposals for a Welsh Language Bill

1. Background:

- 1.1 This is a Government consultation to consider changes to the Welsh Language Measure, and the way in which the Standards are set and implemented.
- 1.2 The consultation period will end 31 October 2017.
- 1.3 A request for evidence was made earlier in 2017, which asked for the experiences of local authorities following the first year of implementing the Language Standards. The Language Unit sent a response expressing our concerns and frustrations with the current system. A copy of our response can be seen as appendix 1 and a summary of all the responses received by the Government are included in appendix 2.
- 1.4 The request for evidence identified common themes, and a number of bodies drew attention to problems with the current complaints procedure and the administrative and bureaucratic workload associated with the Standards.
- 1.5 This White Paper is an attempt to deal with some of the problems and concerns that were expressed and it proposes changes to the Welsh Language Bill.
- 1.6 The overview document has been included as an Appendix. The full document can be seen

We have split the overview document, and we will provide a summary of the findings, and our observations in this report. The full consultation document can be seen by clicking on this link:

<https://ymgyngoriadau.llyw.cymru/ymgyngoriadau/bil-y-gymraeg-papur-gwyn>

2. Summary of the aim of the document and our response:

- 2.1 Seek to move away from the bureaucratic and heavy system towards a procedure that promotes and facilitates and encourages change by developing goodwill rather than enforcement.
- 2.2 Greater emphasis on Language Planning.
- 2.3 Transfer the responsibility for "imposing" standards from the Commissioner (or the existing body) to the Government itself.
- 2.4 Require bodies to deal with complaints themselves directly before they are referred to the Commissioner. The Commissioner would only investigate serious cases.
- 2.5 We welcome this change of attitude, and wish to see the standards system simplified, but we also have concerns that any change will complicate the picture. There is also a need to ensure the Government's accountability and that it does not shy away from its responsibilities by moving its existing functions to another body.
- 2.6 In particular, we welcome the change to the complaints procedure, which will enable us to deal with matters directly rather than the current hidden and complex procedure. Nevertheless, we have concerns whether it will be possible to maintain a balance between the new promotional functions and the need to investigate and advise on the standards.

3. Next Steps:

Any observations by the Welsh Language Committee will be incorporated in the response and will be sent to the Government by 31 October, in accordance with the timetable.

4. Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the draft response and to propose any observations or additions.