
LANGUAGE COMMITTEE, 23.04.15

Present: Councillor Gweno Glyn (Chair).

Councillors: Craig ab Iago, Tom Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Siân Gwenllian, Charles Wyn Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Hefin Williams.

Also in attendance: Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language) and Mair Rowlands (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People).

Officers: Debbie Williams Jones (Democratic Services (and Language) Manager), Ian Jones (Senior Development Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apology: Councillor Elwyn Edwards.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 29 January, 2015 as a true record.

3. SERVICE PRESENTATION

A presentation was given by the Senior Development Manager on the use of the Welsh language at Gwynedd leisure centres. Details were given on the workforce, marketing, advertising, the use of social media and the Council's new website, the future, managerial models and key challenges.

A discussion was held on the following questions / observations by members:-

- The need to make it clear to leisure centre staff that any posters etc. placed on the community advertisement boards must be bilingual, or Welsh only.
- The fact that software did not allow the Council's information stream on Twitter to appear in Welsh first.
- The need to find out how many of the 296 service staff speak Welsh fluently and the Senior Development Manager agreed that this was a matter that should be investigated.
- The use of the Welsh language at leisure centre cafés.
- The language requirements when applying for jobs at the leisure centres.
- The need to ensure that sports groups and clubs which hire the leisure centres also produce letters to parents, information leaflets etc. bilingually. It was suggested that the centres could be contacted to enquire what types of groups hired the facilities and what their policies were and to offer support via Hunaniaith. The Senior Development Manager agreed to discuss the matter further with the Democratic Services (and Language) Manager.

- The use of difficult terminology. It was noted that they did not wish to see people not using the Welsh language because they did not know the terminology and that speaking Welsh, and using some English terms, was better than not speaking Welsh at all. On the contrary, it was stressed that it was important that staff learned the terminology in Welsh and by doing so they would set an example to others.

4. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER – THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Submitted – the verbal report of the Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language, detailing the recent developments within the field, which included meetings with Council representatives on the Board of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd and the Chief Executive of CCG, an event with *Menter Iaith Bangor* and the enthusiasm surrounding the Language Charter and the progress on Strategic Plan projects.

The following matters were discussed:-

(A) Implementation of Language Policies

It was noted:-

- That the fact that the Cabinet Member had had a meeting with the Chief Executive of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd to discuss the decision by the Board of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd not to include the Welsh language as an essential skill for two of its senior posts was welcomed, but that the Council also needed to look at itself, as it had appointed two non-Welsh-speaking independent members on the Standards Committee recently.
- That the matter of the appointments to the Standards Committee had been submitted to the full Council as a 'fait accompli'.
- That the matter with CCG had not been resolved and that Council representatives on various bodies needed to be reminded of the importance of adhering to the language policy.

RESOLVED to send a message to the Monitoring Officer stating that this committee is dissatisfied with the appointments to the Standards Committee and the way in which the matter was submitted to the full Council and to ask for a report to the next meeting on the process and the requirements involved with appointing independent members to the committee.

(B) Secondary Schools' Welsh Language Charter

In response to an enquiry, the Democracy Services (and Language) Manager gave a brief summary on the progress of the project to date.

RESOLVED to ask the Democracy Services (and Language) Manager to give a presentation to the committee at its next meeting on the research undertaken by Trywydd regarding the informal use of the Welsh language in the county's secondary schools, including an outline of the work programme and timetable.

(C) Welsh-medium Education Scrutiny Investigation

Frustration was expressed that the Welsh-medium Education Scrutiny Investigation was taking so long and the Democracy Services (and Language) Manager gave an outline of the steps to date and future action and explained the reasons for the

slippage. It was noted that it was important that members of this committee had an opportunity to submit observations on the investigation's recommendations. It was noted that this was an investigation commissioned by the Services Scrutiny Committee, and that it would be possible to submit the final report of the Welsh-medium Education Scrutiny Investigation to the Language Committee in October, after it would be submitted to the Services Scrutiny Committee in September.

(CH) Social Housing Allocations (a matter discussed at the meeting of 26 June, 2014)

Reference was made to the response of the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty to the Housing Service's letter noting the members' observations and concerns (which was distributed just in advance of the meeting) and a question was raised as to whether it would be possible to investigate how the Housing Options Team allocated houses and whether it would be possible to work within the act in order to create guidelines which were stronger in terms of the local condition.

(D) The Council's new website

In response to an enquiry, the Cabinet Member confirmed that no one using the Council's new website should be referred automatically to the English version; however, should any member have evidence of this, he would be very willing to look into the matter.

(DD) Correspondence

The importance of placing the Welsh language first on all correspondence was stressed.

(E) Use of the Welsh Language at Meetings

The importance of directing members and officers to speak Welsh at meetings was stressed. It was noted that the Language Investigation was looking into this particular matter.

5. UPDATE ON THE LANGUAGE STANDARDS

Submitted – the report of the Democracy Services (and Language) Manager providing an update on the timetable and the next steps of imposing the Language Standards requirements on organisations.

During the discussion, it was noted:-

- That there was no additional funding accompanying the requirement to comply with the standards but the Welsh Government had attempted to estimate the cost of imposing standards on bodies.
- That the standards did not pose a challenge for Gwynedd Council, with the exception of the challenge of completing significant additional recording, and putting systems in place. The work itself happened naturally in this Council and this had been conveyed to the Commissioner.
- That this Council's compliance with its own standards was much higher than that prescribed by the new standards and it must be ensured that this Council adhered to those higher standards.
- That Welsh Government considered that community sustainability included safeguarding the interests of the Welsh language in communities in which there

were high percentages of Welsh-speakers; however, not enough use was made of this to promote the Welsh language in Gwynedd.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

6. LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS

- (A) Submitted – the report of the Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery on a complaint regarding a weakness in the Welsh-language provision by Cyd-Cymru to which the Council referred residents to try to save home energy costs.

It was further noted that another complaint had been received regarding an English-only form which had been received from one of the Council's departments. It was noted that the service's response was awaited and that the complaint would appear in the report to the next meeting.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

- (B) Submitted – the report of the Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery updating the members on the complaints about the implementation of the Language Scheme of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd.

It was further noted that the Chief Executive of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd would meet with Hunaniaith on 1 May to discuss the Welsh language and opportunities to collaborate and that it would be possible for a delegation of this meeting to meet with CCG also.

During the discussion, it was noted:-

- That a promise was made when the Council's housing stock was transferred to Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd that the company would adhere to this Council's Language Policy.
- That it could be suggested to the company that the persons appointed to the two posts in question could be supported to learn the Welsh language.
- That the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Commissioner's rights in the voluntary sector were too weak.
- That CCG's Language Policy was not the problem, rather the deviation from it and the fact that this opened the door for other voluntary sector bodies to do the same.
- That no one represented this Council on the Board of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd, rather, they had been appointed by the Council to be on the Board by virtue of the fact that they were councillors.
- That there was a duty on those councillors to reflect this Council's policies and viewpoints at meetings of outside bodies.

RESOLVED to await the Commissioner's report on her recent involvement with Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd before considering what further steps to take.

7. PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN DEPOSIT PLAN

The Democracy Services (and Language) Manager referred to the statement on the agenda by Cylch yr Iaith regarding the Deposit Plan and she explained that legal advice

had been received noting that agreeing to the response to all the observations on the Deposit Plan had been delegated specifically to the Joint Planning Policy Committee by this Council and the Isle of Anglesey County Council. Only the Joint-Committee had the right to respond in the statutory process on these observations. This was part of a statutory process regarding producing the Plan and there were contractual and legal obligations involved with this procedure. Consequently, the Language Committee had no option but to operate within its remit which had been set in the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED

- (a) To accept the statement by Cylch yr Iaith regarding the Deposit Plan for information only.**
- (b) To submit the Council's response to the language observations on the Deposit Plan to this committee for information in due course.**

8. LANGUAGE INVESTIGATION - THE USE OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE AT EXTERNAL MEETINGS

Submitted – the report of the Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery updating the members on the work of the investigation.

During the discussions, reference was made to the fact that some community councils provided and paid for the services of a translator at their meetings whilst others expected non-Welsh-speakers to bring their own translators. It was noted that candidates for seats on community councils should be aware of the language policy of the Council in question.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 12.15pm