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## LANGUAGE COMMITTEE, 12.10.17

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**Present:** Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Chair)  
Councillor Cai Larsen (Vice-chair)

**Councillors:** Alan Jones Evans, Aled Evans, Judith Humphreys, Charles W. Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Eric M. Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, John Pughe Roberts, Eirwyn Williams and Elfed Williams.

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Mair Rowlands (Cabinet Member - Welsh Language)

**Corporate Support:** Janet Roberts (Senior Manager, Corporate Support), Gwenllian Williams (Welsh Language Services Manager) and Ann Roberts (Member Support Officer).

### 1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Elwyn Edwards.

### 2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

### 3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were received.

### 4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 4 July 2017 as a true record.

### 5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER - THE WELSH LANGUAGE

Submitted – the verbal report of the Cabinet Member - Welsh Language, detailing recent developments in the field, including the following:

- An event in Llandudno, White Paper Consultation - Striking the Right Balance: Proposals for the Welsh Language Bill. It was noted that Alun Davies, the Minister with responsibility for the Welsh language, was in attendance. It was reported that the consultation's emphasis was on the Government's preference to abolish the role of the Welsh Language Commissioner and to establish a Welsh Language Commission.
- The work of forming a new Gwynedd Language Strategy was ongoing. The intention was to consult on the draft Strategy during November/December.
- Extending the language charter to secondary schools through the medium of the Secondary Sector Language Strategy.
- Supplementary Planning Guidance - work was ongoing on the guidelines.

**RESOLVED to note the content of the report.**

## 6. **RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S WHITE PAPER CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE: PROPOSALS FOR THE WELSH LANGUAGE BILL.**

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for the Welsh Language, which presented the Language Unit's draft response to the Government's consultation on its White Paper: Striking the Right Balance: Proposals for the Welsh Language Bill. It was explained that the Government's consultation was to consider changes to the Welsh Language Measure and the way the Standards were set and implemented, with the aim of simplifying the process.

It was noted that the process had been a system of heavy bureaucracy and this change towards a system that would promote and facilitate, and encourage change by nurturing good will rather than enforcement was welcomed.

The matters on the paper's objective were submitted in the summary, as well as the response by The Welsh Language Services Manager. It was noted that there were gaps in the information submitted in the Government's paper, and that there was a need to understand more before being able to give a definite judgement on a few matters. It was reported that there was representation in an open consultation event with the Welsh Government's Minister who is responsible for the Welsh language, and that there would be another meeting on 13 October specifically for officers.

The members were guided through the overview document, from Part 1 to Part 5.

It was noted that the emphasis when discussing the strategic fields that the Government are responsible for was part 1 in the field of Education, and that there was not enough definitive attention on other fields such as planning and the economy and tourism, or on other fields where there was a potential to influence the use of language.

The different options were discussed and considered, whilst outlining the possible options for a new structure and where the various functions and responsibilities would sit.

Concern was expressed for the option that was favoured by the Government of establishing a Commissioner, and for the lack of clear information in the paper on different aspects.

The need for the new body to have as much independence as possible was emphasised, and that there was a need to emphasise the need to collaborate rather than work separately in the Council's response to the White Paper.

The importance of rooting individuals' rights in the Measure was discussed, although the Government had said that this was impossible. The need for people to have assurance that their linguistic needs were respected was discussed, and the argument that this could only be achieved by imposing a legal right.

**RESOLVED to accept 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.**

## 7. **THE LANGUAGE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME**

Submitted - the report of the Welsh Language Services Manager, and the members were reminded of the confirmation from the Senior Solicitor - Corporate of the Language Committee's remit at the previous meeting.

A member asked how the Language Committee could supervise the implementation of the language policy and compliance with the Language Standards if the Committee did not scrutinise this. A robust work programme must be ensured.

**RESOLVED to accept the report and the Work Programme.**

## **8. GRIEVANCES AND INVESTIGATIONS**

Submitted - the report of the Welsh Language Services Manager.

It was noted that a long and burdensome investigation into the possible failure to comply when providing swimming lessons had come to an end by the Language Commissioner. It was reported that the Commissioner had judged that the Council had failed to comply with Standard 81, and that the Language Unit was considering how to respond to the Commissioner's request to take action. The examples of possible implementation methods that could be used to promote and advertise Welsh medium swimming lessons were noted, and the need to be very careful when wording adverts was discussed.

In response to a member's observation that some members of staff could speak Welsh but spoke English with each other, it was reported that the Council provided support for staff to strengthen their Welsh language skills. It was reported that the Council had been working with the Leisure staff to improve the situation and it was agreed that linguistic habits that had long been established would take time to change. It was noted that an officer from the Leisure Department was responsible for observing swimming lessons and that much background work had taken place to support Leisure staff.

It was explained that both grievances that had been received since the previous meeting involved the Council's recruiting policy and the need to have Welsh language skills to apply for posts. It was noted that the grievances did not go into detail on which posts the individuals had applied for.

**RESOLVED to note the content of the report.**

## **9. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

Submitted – an oral update by the Welsh Language Services Manager on the work on the Supplementary Planning Guidance. The members were reminded that they had been invited to a joint informal briefing session with the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 22 September, where there had been an opportunity to discuss the guidance with the Welsh Language Services and planning officers. It was reported that the work of drawing up the Supplementary Guidance was in the pipeline, and the Members were reminded of the intention to submit a draft report to the Communities Scrutiny Committee at the beginning of November. It was noted that the Language Committee and its Members would be included in the process of contributing towards, and scrutinising, the guidance at the request of the Communities Scrutiny Committee, and jointly with equivalent committees at Anglesey County Council.

**RESOLVED to note the content of the oral report.**

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 11:55am.