

MEETING:	LANGUAGE COMITTEE
DATE:	09 July 2019
TITLE:	Cabinet Member Report
AUTHOR:	Councillor Nia Jeffreys
PURPOSE OF REPORT	Give members an update on the main developments in respect of the Welsh language

1. Meeting with the new Welsh Language Commissioner

A productive meeting was had with the new Welsh Language Commissioner, Aled Roberts, on the 20th of May, where we discussed a number of issues of interest, from changes to the complaints procedure to the kind of areas the Commissioner has a specific interest in.

It was reported that the Commissioner is having discussions with Welsh Government in order to develop an understanding and clarity about who is responsible for what and who does what in respect of promoting and facilitating the Welsh language. This has come about as a result of changes over the last few years, as the Welsh Language Division of the Welsh Government launch their own projects and campaigns, and as the Commissioner's office has been doing less promotion work.

An interesting discussion was also had about language use and the factors that stop people from using the language in different circumstances. This is obviously an area of interest for the new Commissioner, and an area where we should consider doing more research in. This is especially true in understanding people's language choices while using technology.

One of the commissioner's officers also attended a meeting of the Welsh Language Sub-Group of the Public Services Board recently, to discuss ideas about how that group's work could compliment the work done by the Commissioner.

2. The Projects of the Council Plan

Businesses using the Welsh Language

As part of the Arfor scheme, a project has been agreed between the 4 counties (Gwynedd, Mon, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire) that will aim to create an on-line campaign and hub to promote the use of the Welsh language amongst businesses.

Welsh in the Workplace

Up to the end of June, the language specifications project had reached 874 individuals in 34 front line services, including Customer Care and Registration, Recycling, Maritime and Country Parks and Youth Justice.

The work is concentrating mainly on ensuring that Council staff members can offer the public a bilingual service. If there is a gap between the linguistic needs of the job and the ability of the individual, then training and development opportunities will be offered in order to close the gap.

Another part of the work is enabling first language Welsh speakers or fluent learners to be able to use the language with confidence in their day to day working life. To enable this, the Welsh Language Learning and Development officers have created a tip of the month, which is put up on the staff intranet and offers simple suggestions on how to improve or maintain their linguistic skills. These include a variety of tips, from advice on grammar to how best to use Welsh digital resources.

There has been a positive response to the tip of the month, with several staff members saying that they like them and that they have helped them in their work.

There has been a positive response from outside the Council as well, as the officers have been including the tip as a banner on the bottom of their emails. Mared Grug, from the Nant Gwrtheyrn centre for learners and Hywel Hughes, Head of Welsh Services and Communication and Staff Engagement Manager at HM Court and Tribunals Service, have both complimented the Tip and Nant Gwrtheyrn now include a Tip of the Month as an e-mail banner themselves, which means the tips are reaching learners and organisations across Wales.

3. Other developments

An exciting project has begun in Bangor, led by a partnership that includes Menter Iaith Bangor and Learn Welsh North West and Canolfan Bedwyr in Bangor University.

The partnership came together recently and submitted a successful tender for a project by the National Centre for Learning Welsh to carry out a project that will target 30 reluctant Welsh speakers in the city of Bangor.

The aim is to bring a group of people, including parents of school age children, volunteers at Penrhyn Castel and Pontio, and employees of third sector, public and private bodies in Bangor, together to take part in activities that will help them regain their confidence to speak Welsh. The hope is that the partners will learn something from this project that will enable and help target other reluctant or unconfident speakers in other areas.

I would like to congratulate the partnership on the tender and wish them good luck with the project.