

MEETING	Language Committee
DATE	25 January 2022
TITLE	Welsh Language Promotion Plan - Corporate Support
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	To inform Members of the efforts of the Corporate Support Department to promote the use of the Welsh language.
AUTHOR	Geraint Owen, Head of Corporate Support Department
ACTION	To accept the report and offer observations

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report is presented to provide information to the Language Committee on the Corporate Support Department's contribution to promoting the Welsh language within and outside the Council.
- 1.2 Implementing the Council's Language Policy forms a core part of the day-to-day work of the Department's services with the Welsh language being the only language of communication for all the Department's internal activities and also in a large proportion of our work with other departments, the public as well as external organisations and agencies.
- 1.3 The Department leads on the corporate priority within the Council Plan involving "Promoting the Use of the Welsh language within the Council" with the Language Learning and Development Officer within the Learning and Organisational Development Service driving our efforts to that end. As members of the Language Committee, you will be aware of the progress of that work and the positive impact it is having on the use of the language within the Departments.
- 1.4 Within the Corporate Support Department, it is confirmed that the linguistic requirements of every post have been reviewed as part of this Plan and that 92% of staff have completed a self-assessment of their ability to meet those requirements (this percentage would have been higher if it was not for higher than usual staff turnover within two Services in autumn). Of the staff who have completed a self-assessment, 99% of them reach or exceed the linguistic requirements to fulfil the duties within their posts.
- 1.5 The Department's involvement with the Plan itself has ended by now as it is accepted that the Department has designated the listening and speaking, reading and understanding and written requirements for every post and that an assessment of the needs of any member of staff against those requirements forms a continuous part of personal performance and appraisal. Nevertheless, many of the Department's staff are eager to improve their written Welsh skills and take advantage of the opportunities to do so within the Council's provision.

1.6 The Language Unit (which includes Hunaniaith) is located within the Democracy and Language Service in the Department and officers within the Unit are pivotal in driving the objectives of the Welsh Language Promotion Plan. The Corporate Support Department leads on 9 of the corporate priorities in the current Council Plan and three of those priorities specifically involve the objectives within the Welsh Language Plan i.e.

- Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's services
- The Welsh Language in Public Services
- Native Welsh Place Names

2. RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S QUESTIONS

A matter that the members wish to discuss:	Question
<p><u>Boosting and promoting</u></p> <p>How do we go beyond the bilingual provision to increase the opportunities for people to use the Welsh language in the community, to contribute to the national target of creating a Million speakers, and to the Well-being goal of ensuring that the people of Gwynedd are "Able to live in a natural Welsh community"?</p>	<p>1. Can you highlight any projects within your department that contribute to one of the Council's language strategy priorities, namely the Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd?</p> <p>i) It is continual work to Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's Services, and we are aware that there is a need to continue to maintain our staff's language skills.</p> <p>The work of gathering self-assessments on linguistic ability from staff, to a large degree, is now self-sufficient. This is because we have put systems and arrangements in place, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the questionnaire is available to complete via the Self-service system • a message is sent to staff who are appointed via the central system • the questionnaire is a part of the process of inducting care staff. <p>Whilst the main focus to date has been on gathering the self-assessments, the feeling now is that more attention should be given to the follow-up step, namely responding to needs and extending the provision. During 2022/23, this will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responding to the needs of staff who do not fully meet all language designations for their posts • responding to the needs of other members of staff who have noted that they would like to receive language training • marketing the opportunities that are available more regularly • extending the internal provision of language training. <p>The work of gathering self-assessment will also continue, but will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing with the current campaign with staff in the Highways and Municipal department • continuing to work with care homes • developing the work of collaborating with community care staff.

ii) The Welsh Language and Public Services is a project which tries to address the inconsistency in the provision of bilingual services by public bodies in Gwynedd which means that it is not always possible for residents to use the Welsh language naturally when communicating with public bodies.

Public organisations in Gwynedd and Anglesey suspect that fewer people choose Welsh-medium services compared to the number of Welsh-speakers in both counties. By working with our partners who are a part of the Public Services Board's Welsh Language Sub-group, we have commissioned a study of traditional receptions. During 2022/23, we will:

- consider how we can encourage more people to engage with us in Welsh, and to be comfortable to do so, based on the conclusions of the study in the first place
- act on plans based on those considerations.

iii) As you know, the work involving Native Welsh Place Names has been established as a new improvement priority in the latest review of the Council Plan in order to;

- reconcile the way the Council operates when recognising Welsh names
- ensure that the Welsh versions of place names are given priority with external partners
- seek to take proactive steps to protect and prevent more changes to native names

A project officer was appointed to act on drawing up a work programme and to deliver the key milestones. The milestones are a combination of matters within the Council's control (principles the Council can pass) and matters that need further attention by collaborating with others. The new officer has commenced in post since the beginning of September.

Initially, the work has been focusing on the field of house names and on establishing a list of standard names for the Council. Several definite steps have already been taken, specifically collaborating with the Planning and Building Control Services. The computer system has been adapted which will lead to an automated standard request for a Welsh name for a new property, change our ways of gathering data about requests to change house names as well as improve the sharing of information between the two Services.

As a result of discussions with Council officers, a gap has been identified between the public perception of changing house names from Welsh to English, and the data gathered by the Council to change house names. Work is in the pipeline to map changes at a local level in order to measure to actual size of the problem. To coincide with all of this, new clauses have been drafted for the Language Policy, which shows the Council's commitment to using and recognising Welsh names.

	<p>iv) In recent years, despite the recognition given to the special linguistic situation of Gwynedd and the background of establishing Hunaniaith as a strategic unit within Gwynedd Council, the main income source - a Grant Scheme to Promote and Facilitate the Use of Welsh 2019-21, Welsh Government - has mainly focused on funding activity that promotes and supports social use of Welsh in accordance with Theme 2 of the national language strategy, Cymraeg 2050, 'Increasing the Use of Welsh'. The emphasis of that grant scheme is on operating at grass roots level to promote and facilitate an increase in the social use made of the Welsh language.</p> <p>This community focus is reinforced by Hunaniaith's current work programme and the operational priorities noted under the current grant conditions, namely:</p> <p>influence the language of the family strengthen the link between the school and the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer activities to a wide range of residents, including the 18-24 age group • develop an understanding of the linguistic practices of the residents of Gwynedd <p>However, with the co-operation of the Chair of the Hunaniaith Strategic Group and at the request of the Cabinet, officers from the Department have been considering how the role of Hunaniaith in the community and its ability to attract additional grant funding could be strengthened in future. This resulted in a decision by the Council's Cabinet, at its meeting on 30 November, 2021, to invest £203,880 in order to employ a chief officer to lead the further development of Hunaniaith for a 4-year period specifically to focus on attracting new grants and raising an income, improve community contact, attract more community members to the Strategic Group and work towards being an independent entity.</p>
<p><u>Externalisation of work and awarding third party contracts</u></p> <p>How do we ensure that the quality of the bilingual service is maintained when externalising work and awarding contracts?</p>	<p>2. <i>If the department awards work externally on contract, can you refer to any good practice, either when imposing conditions or when monitoring in order to ensure compliance with the linguistic conditions? Monitor to ensure compliance with linguistic conditions?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are very few contracts that the Department sets in relation to the services for which it is responsible but the specialist guidance on procurement matters is offered corporately by our Procurement Service which advises the Category Management Units located within the Environment, Adults, Health and Well-being and Highways and Municipal Departments. Those Units are directly responsible for inviting, setting and monitoring contracts with the relevant services across the Council.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee will already have received details regarding how the Welsh language is given a prominent place within the contracts set by the Council, from the reports submitted by the departments where the category management units are located, but I do wish to draw attention to a pilot scheme that we are currently undertaking in relation to introducing "social value" as an additional criterion when considering setting contracts in the future. • We are trialling this new methodology to assess tenders based on social value, alongside the historical criteria of price and quality, with three contracts that currently need to be renewed. The procurement process for setting the Adults Service's Direct Payments contract has already been completed and the additional benefits that stemmed from using the new methodology has included commitments from the company that won to provide jobs for local people, work experience, training, supporting local charities and developing the Welsh language skills of its workforce. • Trialling the new methodology is continuing, with the second pilot tender completed in the field of building maintenance. The response from the market has not been as good as the first pilot and this has highlighted the need to undertake further work to encourage and support the market. As the final part of the trialling the methodology, we will be undertaking one other pilot in relation to the contract to provide machinery for Highways and Municipal work with a view to then reaching a final conclusion regarding introducing the new methodology to the Council's fixed procurement arrangements.
<p><u>Operating bilingually</u></p> <p>How do we manage to act on the requirements of the Language Policy and Welsh Language Standards?</p>	<p>3. Are there any obstructions that prevent you as a department to offer a full service in Welsh?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Support Service, which provides administrative services for departments, in the field of employment and finance mainly, is responsible for co-ordinating arrangements for the criminal record checks of those staff who work in the fields of children and adults. The new on-line system by the Criminal Records Office to undertake this work is currently only available in English but, recently, following pressure by this Council and the Language Commissioner, work is underway to ensure that the provision will be available in Welsh within the coming months. The Council has also asked the company to ensure that the new system can recognise the language choice of users in future.

- There is a lack of good quality bilingual training provision for our **Apprenticeships**, particularly for higher apprenticeships. You will be aware that the local Scheme within the Council is extremely successful, providing work experience opportunities through the medium of Welsh. As part of the Scheme, officers within the Learning and Organisational Development Service have persuaded and encouraged training providers to offer most of their relevant provision through the medium of Welsh. To this end, we have introduced the "Statement of Ambition for the Welsh Language" for Gwynedd Council apprenticeships which outlines linguistic expectations for the apprentice, the Council and the training provider. Every training provider and the 30 apprentices to date have signed up to the statements and committed to the expectations.
- The Language Advisor has been working with the Equality Advisor over the course of the past year in developing a new template to **assess the impact of equality** within the Council. The assessment now includes consideration of the Language requirements and officers within this Department have managed to ensure that the language element is included in the impact assessment template across the region (which would not have happened if it was not for the input of Gwynedd officers).
- It is not currently possible for an individual to **register births** bilingually if the child is born in England. The Customer Contact and Registration Service here in Gwynedd is working with Carmarthenshire Council and the General Register Office for England and Wales to rectify this whilst also pressing for the right to administrate the registration in Welsh only in the future.
- Since March 2020, the lockdown has posed many challenges. One of those, for this Council and other local authorities, was the ability to conduct our democratic arrangements. We are now very familiar with virtual meetings and, within this Council, have been able to take for granted that the **translation provision** is available as part of those arrangements. The Zoom platform is used to fulfil that requirement currently, despite the fact that the Council's preferred platform, for its internal meetings, is Microsoft Teams. It is not possible to provide the Translation Service effectively via Teams at present; however, Microsoft has promised to address this, again following pressure placed during 2020 on the company by this Council and many other organisations. Having said that, it is important to note here that Gwynedd Council has been at the forefront of providing simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on Zoom and has trained and guided staff in other public

	<p>organisations to be able to provide the same service. To this end, I would like to congratulate the Translation Team Leader and members of the Unit for their work in promoting and ensuring that Welsh-medium services did not deteriorate in light of the circumstances we faced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Health, Safety and Well-being Service officers provide training for managers which leads to a formal qualification from the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). All managers across the Council are expected to gain this qualification. Despite the officers holding the training sessions through the medium of Welsh since starting to present the training internally in the Council, the official (substantial) materials had to be provided in English. Following a series of requests (and several refusals) to translate the material, the documents are now available following the agreement of the IOSH Termagant Board to allow this.
<p><u>Developing new opportunities</u></p>	<p>4. Do you have ideas about new ways we can promote the Welsh language in the county's communities - either in your own services or by collaborating with others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the biggest challenges which has become apparent over the past two years is in relation to recruit and appoint to key posts across the Council. The Human Resources Service and the Learning and Organisational Development Service lead on the corporate improvement priority involving "Workforce Planning" and despite the successes to report already in the context of this work, the challenge of ensuring service continuity, in the preferred language of our taxpayers, is a real one. The ability to work virtually (often from home) has the potential to give local individuals much more choice of employment which, previously, may have emphasised the ability to live close to their place of work. On the contrary, there is also an opportunity to attract individuals to work for the Council who may not have considered this prior to the pandemic. To this end, we will aim to build on the strong foundations we already have through the apprenticeship scheme, the Managers and Specialists of Tomorrow scheme as well as the internal developing potential programme while strengthening our links and the collaboration between us and employment services within the Council and more widely in order to establish the Council firmly as an employer of choice. • Examples have been provided in the report of what we have developed and influenced in the context of the services through the medium of Welsh, often with the co-operation of other

	<p>organisations. The recent investment to seek to extend the work of Hunaniaith within our communities and try to attract more community contribution to that work will be crucial while the efforts of the Sub-group within the Public Services Board to persuade more Welsh-speakers to use the Welsh language with the public organisations will be extremely important.</p>
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