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# LANGUAGE COMMITTEE: MONDAY, 27 JUNE 2023

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## PRESENT:

### Councillors:

Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Alan Jones Evans, Jina Gwyrfai, Olaf Cai Larsen, Gwynfor Owen, Llio Elenid Owen, Sasha Williams, Elfed Williams, Richard Glyn Roberts, Meryl Roberts and Gruffydd Williams

**Officers:** Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser), Gwenllian Mair Williams (Language Adviser), Llio Mai Dafydd and Bet Huws (Welsh Language Learning and Development Officers) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

## ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Menna Trenholme (Cabinet Member for Corporate Support).

- Item 7: Alun Gwilym Williams (Senior Business Manager, Adults, Health and Well-being Department)  
Item 8: Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)  
Item 9: Nia Wyn Vaughan (Senior Research and Analytics Officer)

## 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved to elect Councillor Elfed Wyn ab Elwyn as chair of the Welsh Language Committee for the year 2023/24.

## 2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved to elect Councillor Llio Elenid Owen as Vice-chair of the Welsh Language Committee for the year 2023/24.

## 3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Eirwyn Williams and Menna Baines.

## 4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

## 5. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were received.

## 6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 25 April 2023 as a true record.

## **7. LANGUAGE POLICY AND WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION ACTIVITIES - REPORT OF THE ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING DEPARTMENT.**

The report was presented by the Senior Business Manager, Adults, Health and Well-being Department and briefly drew attention to the following main points:

It was explained that technological systems were being updated to correspond to the needs of the County's residents. An example was shared of updated Telecare technology, linking individuals with call centres to receive support by pushing a button on a specific bracelet or pendant. It was noted that over 1500 people currently used this equipment in Gwynedd.

It was detailed that this service had been provided through the medium of English in the past, but the Department was eager to offer this provision in Welsh and in Gwynedd's local dialect. It was explained that the department was trying to secure this development by upgrading all the equipment to becoming digital by 2025, and to commission companies to assist with the development of the linguistic requirements.

It was reported that the 'More than just Words' group had been established for a year, and was chaired by Cyngor Gwynedd's Statutory Director of Social Services. It was explained that the group set performance measures for the Department in order to receive confirmation that they reached their linguistic targets.

It was explained that searches were being carried out on the care service's digital system (WCCIS) to ascertain how many individuals wished to receive care through the medium of Welsh and how many social workers in the department were able to offer the service in Welsh. This would indicate whether the Department was meeting the requirements of residents who needed care. It was confirmed that the vast majority of social workers succeeded in providing the service in Welsh.

Members were reminded that services were offered to individuals in Welsh, and that staff provided the active offer. It was noted that patients needed to request care through the medium of English if they wished to do so. It was confirmed that the Department would remind the workers of this arrangement.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. In response to the question, it was explained that the Department was collaborating with a number of external agencies and bodies and that all efforts were being made to ensure that the Welsh language was a priority for all the partners in addition to the provision of care to individuals in the language in which they were most comfortable.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

### **RESOLVED**

**To accept the report and note the observations received.**

## **8. LANGUAGE POLICY AND WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION ACTIVITIES - CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES DEPARTMENT**

The report was presented by the Head of the Children and Supporting Families Department, and briefly drew attention to the following main points:

- It was confirmed that the Early Years Service collaborated with members of CWLWM (5 lead childcare organisations in Wales) to promote the Welsh language across care settings in Gwynedd.
- It was explained that "Cynllun Croesi'r Bont" run by Mudiad Meithrin was ongoing, with its purpose being Welsh language immersion within nursery groups and classes.
- It was noted that the Early Years Service offered grants of £100 to new private childminders who were non-Welsh speakers to assist with buying Welsh language resources.
- It was explained that the department provided support for parents to learn Welsh through Mudiad Meithrin's online 'clwb cwtsh' sessions, and the 'Friends' courses through the medium of Welsh with the support of the Family Support Team, the Trobwynt Team and the Youth Service.
- It was ensured that linguistic needs were a factor in determining matters such as the contents of the care packages and the support for vulnerable children, care settings and fostering/adoption. It was explained that some children under the Department's care were moved to an out-of-county area due to safeguarding needs, but it was confirmed that the Social Worker would continue to address the child's language needs through visits and resources.
- It was reported that there were 55 Nursery Education providers in Gwynedd that received Early Years Teacher support from the Department. They provided Welsh language nursery education for 10 hours a week for 3-year-old children in order to immerse them in the language and introduce them to the language as the language of education.
- There was a Network of Youth Service Support Workers providing informal learning opportunities and accreditations for young people through the medium of Welsh. This was a means of bridging school activities with social activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, with all elements of the award now available in Welsh via a new app.
- It was confirmed that all the 'Effective Child Protection' programme materials had been developed in Welsh and English for regional and national use.
- It was noted that a group of foster carers from Gwynedd had created a video as part of the national Foster Wales fostering campaign. It was noted that the video was presented in Welsh with English subtitles and was frequently shared on social media to attract people to consider fostering.
- The Department has led on the establishing an Activities and Play Framework for children, young people and families across the Council's departments. 24 activity providers had been approved on the framework and were able to provide Welsh-medium play opportunities.
- It was a source of pride that over 50 local organisations had come together recently to offer well-being activities for young people as part of the Gwynedd Young People Well-being Week.
- The Department had been collaborating with the Council's Well-being Team to develop the 'Ai Di' App as a convenient way for young carers to keep in touch with their school, and to use it in the community to receive discounts on activities and services. It was explained that this app had recently received national praise as it met the needs of young carers.
- An update was provided, confirming that 69% of the department's staff had completed the language self-assessment. A number of the staff who had not completed the self-assessment were either casual workers or staff with no access to a computer.
- It was confirmed that 93.8% of the department's staff met the language designations of their post. It was explained that 21 members of staff did not meet the language designation of their job, and that three of those staff were currently attending language training.

- It was acknowledged that the difficulties in recruiting qualified social workers was a cause of concern for the Department. It was confirmed that the department had developed a Workforce Plan to reduce the likelihood of having to recruit social workers who were non-Welsh speakers or use non-Welsh speaking agency workers. It was noted that this Workforce Plan had already received the approval of the Cabinet and the Care Scrutiny Committee.
- It was noted that collaboration through the medium of Welsh with partners was a challenge that faced the Department. This included national, regional and local meetings as a number of the partners did not offer translation provision at virtual meetings. It was emphasised that the Department held the majority of its meetings bilingually and the Council's Translation Unit was thanked for collaborating so effectively with the Department.
- It was explained that young people who received a custodial sentence had been added to the Department's risk register. This was due to the fact that the Department had no control over the sentence location and these individuals could lose all ties with their families, language and culture during this period. A relevant example was shared, and it was confirmed that the department continued to provide support through the medium of Welsh throughout the period of the sentence, with the assistance of the Youth Justice Service and Social Workers.
- It was highlighted that finding suitable care settings for children was challenging and it was noted that the department had received a complaint from one young person as the staff responsible for their care were non-Welsh speakers. It was emphasised that the Department made every effort to place individuals in suitable care settings with regard to all aspects.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following matters were raised:

- It was explained that Flying Start areas had been restricted to specific locations in the past as they were funded by the Welsh Government. By now, the need for the service had been demonstrated in other areas within Gwynedd and the scheme had been extended. It was confirmed that there were plans to further extend the scheme in the future as it provided children and parents with important support and childcare provision for 12.5 hours per week for two-year-old children.
- The news that the Department's recruitment situation had improved recently was welcomed as there were currently no vacant posts in the Department. The Department has worked on a number of projects and has worked on a number of methods of attracting such as collaborating with Bangor University and providing work placements for nine MA pupils. It was explained that seven of those pupils had succeeded in gaining a job at the end of their work experience and all of them were Welsh speakers.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

## **RESOLVED**

**To accept the report and note the observations received.**

## **9. CYNGOR GWYNEDD ANNUAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS**

The report was presented by the Language Adviser, and she briefly drew attention to the following main points:

It was explained that there was a statutory requirement to publish an annual report on its compliance with the language standards in accordance with Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. It was noted that this report had to be published by 30 May 2023.

It was confirmed that the following figures had been included within the report:

- 99.4% of Council staff had some degree of Welsh language skills.
- 93% of staff reached the Foundation level or higher, and so could speak Welsh.
- 833 job adverts had been published over the year where Welsh language skills were essential.
- A new Welsh Language Policy had been approved and published, with supplementary policies.
- Specific steps to strengthen and improve compliance regarding consultation on policy decisions.
- A review of IT systems had begun, to ensure that they complied with the Policy in respect of using Welsh place names and the Standards in relation to replying to correspondence in Welsh or bilingually.

Attention was drawn to some of the challenges that the Language and Scrutiny Unit would be addressing during the year in order to improve the bilingual provision and the Welsh active offer. It was noted that these challenges included:

- Raising staff awareness about the exact requirements of the language standards. It was considered that the Council should share this information with staff in creative ways in order to confirm that everyone was aware of the requirements.
- There had been a small reduction over recent years in the number of staff who chose to complete courses through the medium of Welsh. It was emphasised that the unit intended to hold discussions with the Learning and Development Team to consider how they could assist.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following matters were raised:

- It was confirmed that the Council had not advertised any posts that did not note the necessary linguistic skills to deliver the post. It was explained that the language designation requirements varied from post to post, in accordance with the roles delivered within those posts.
- It was explained that individuals on the Welsh Foundation level were confident in speaking the language and were able to communicate effectively. Some posts sought individuals with Higher level skills, although this varied between roles. Members were reminded that the Council had an effective procedure to support workers to learn Welsh and these arrangements had been used to develop the language skills of any staff members who required support.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

## **RESOLVED**

- **To accept the report and note the observations received.**
- **Recommend the Cabinet Member to publish the report by the deadline (30 June 2023).**

## **10. FINDINGS OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE GWYNEDD LANGUAGE STRATEGY 2023.**

The Language Adviser presented the report. She referred briefly to the following main points:

Members were reminded that the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language Measure) (Wales) 2011, placed a requirement upon the Council to produce a five-year strategy noting how the Council intended to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language within the county. It was noted that the Council should explain how these actions would contribute to the national Welsh 2050 objective to increase the number of Welsh speakers.

It was explained that the period of the existing promotion strategy would end in October 2023. It was noted that the review period had commenced since the beginning of 2023 and that discussion sessions had been held with Cabinet members, Language Committee members and members of the Gwynedd Language Forum, in order to gain their input, prior to a consultation period on the draft strategy between 17 April and 21 May 2023.

It was reported that 159 electronic responses and one letter had been received by the service. There was a good cross-section from all parts of the County, with the majority of respondents being individuals between 35 and 74 years old. It was confirmed that there were only three responses from people under the age of 34, and it was emphasised that the service carefully considered how they would gather the views of this group within the community in the future.

It was explained that 72.3% of the respondents agreed with the intention to focus on increasing opportunities for people to use the Welsh language. This was a common theme in a number of responses in order to enable people to increase confidence when speaking Welsh.

It was confirmed that consideration would be given to making changes or adaptations to the final strategy in order to respond to some of the comments in the consultation. Members were informed that the final draft would be shared with internal departments in order to identify work streams that would address the objectives and produce an initial work programme.

It was hoped to submit the final draft of the strategy to the Cabinet in October 2023.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion, the following matter was raised:

- The number of responses to the consultation were low, probably as the Council had a number of other consultations underway at the same time. It was agreed that there was a need to consider new methods of sharing information, to ensure that the feedback received was a fair reflection of the views of the public, although it was acknowledged that there were currently challenges in relation to holding consultations – such as the challenge of using social media and the challenge of receiving responses from a range of different ages.
- It was confirmed that the service had not yet researched the future impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the Welsh language. It was emphasised that this technology had developed quickly and that research would be undertaken during the lifespan of this strategy.
- It was emphasised that the Council had a duty to consider all the responses to the consultation. It was agreed that only a minority of the responses were negative, but it was noted that officers had to be aware of these observations when proceeding to produce a final draft.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

**RESOLVED**

**To accept the report, and the information presented in Appendix 1, and to note the observations received.**

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.15am.

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**CHAIR**