

Meeting	Language Committee
Date	22 October 2024
Title	Welsh Language Promotion Plan – Finance Department
Purpose	Present information about the contribution of Finance Department to promote and further the Welsh language
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1. What policies and plans are in place within your department to contribute to the objectives of the language strategy? Identify the priority area (early years, learning, work and service, community or research and technology)

Projects in the Council's plan

Gwynedd Council Digital Plan 2023/2028

The scheme covers 29 projects to support Gwynedd Council to become a DIGITAL COUNCIL, where technology is used wisely for more economic and effective service delivery, and where the customer is increasingly central in everything we do.

The principles of equality and well-being run throughout the Plan, including the Welsh language and the sustainability element of the Five Ways of Working, with the commitment to include the Welsh language in a Digital Suitability Assessment regime for the installation of any digital development within the Council. The suitability assessment will bring on digital standards published by the Welsh Language Commissioner, implementing them for any internal development or solution procurement by third party companies.

Other projects and schemes

Day-to-day use

We are proud that the whole department provides its services through the Welsh language and we believe that the ability to work day-to-day through the medium of Welsh has been a great help in attracting and appointing new staff. We have evidence that this culture has built the confidence of many of our new staff and strengthened their use of the language.

Audit Wales

Officer from the department hold meetings in Welsh only with Audit Wales staff. We believe this has given Audit Wales the impetus to strengthen their Welsh language arrangements and we believe this has been an opportunity for Audit Wales staff to develop their Welsh as well and make greater use of it.

Training

Gwynedd Council's Finance Department is one of those rare employers offering professional training in finance and information technology through Welsh. We offer Welsh placements for Apprentices and Trainees in the Accounting Service and in the Digital Services.

2. What more needs attention in the next year to raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure opportunities for people to use Welsh?

We believe that the services we provide to the public in the financial areas (e.g. taxation, benefits) are fully bilingual, including the literature and forms we provide. However, we are aware that things are changing very rapidly in the benefits area in relation to collaborating with bodies from outside the Council and we will continue to be vigilant to ensure that the standards are upheld.

In terms of digital matters, it is seen in part 1 above that this is an ever-evolving area and in setting up new systems as needed we will act to ensure compliance with our expectations.

3. Has the development of technology impaired your ability to provide opportunities to use Welsh? If applicable please provide an example. How do you ensure that the development of technology does not affect your ability to provide opportunities to use the Welsh language?

The Digital Plan sets out the need to include Welsh in any digital provision, but the digital market is not always supportive of providing bilingual systems. An example of this was seen in Council Tax's self-service provision for the public, where the provision did not greet everything bilingually. Despite these hurdles, we discovered a solution and commissioned work through another 3rd party company that intercepts system details in English, translates it from ready-made translations and presents it to the user in Welsh. This type of technology can be widely used, and the lack of a ready-made solution from a company should not prevent us from introducing bilingual delivery.

There are exceptions to this, for example, Microsoft's long-awaited full product for artificial intelligence (Copilot) does not include Welsh as a supported language, and as a result, opportunities for diverting tasks such as preparing minutes through this medium are being lost for meetings held in Welsh.

4. How do you keep a record of the people who use your service through the medium of Welsh? Can you share relevant data?

The majority of services offered by the Department relate to supporting other Council departments and supporting them to provide services to the rest of the Council.

However, the department is able to influence the services we offer and support the Welsh language through the Council.

Digital Services

All corporately delivered laptops are provided with the operating system set up in Welsh. Further statistics will be collected to check the number who choose to continue with the Welsh setting or proceed to change it to English.

The laptops provided by the Digital Learning Service are provided with the operating platform in Welsh, but no installation has been provided for measuring if the setting is changed. Developmental work is underway with the HWB team in Welsh Government to enable a means of reporting into the future.

Pensions Administration

We have introduced a new self-service system for the pension fund in April this year. The Gwynedd Pension Fund was the first fund in Wales to upgrade to the new site and we had to help the company develop the Welsh version of the site. This was quite a lot of work, but this site will now be used across Wales as the other funds upgrade.

The Powys Pension Fund is also using the web site now. We are continuing to develop the system and additional elements will be introduced to the site in the coming months, with the remaining Welsh funds moving over the next few years.

5. What are your staff's language skills?

The latest Language Designations report was provided in September 2024, using data as at 2nd September. The report notes that 218 Finance Department staff have completed a language self-assessment, making up 99.5% of the workforce – this is the highest percentage of any department. Only 1 member of staff hadn't submitted a self-assessment on that day and we've followed up on that immediately.

Of the 218 who have submitted a self-assessment, 99.1%, which is 216 reached their job language designation. In other words, only two members of staff have concluded that they do not meet their job designation but we maintain support for these officers to support them to improve their language skills.

Over the past year two members of staff have undertaken language training. A degree apprentice undertook an Improving Working Welsh Writing course at Nant Gwrtheyrn to further develop her language skills.

A Programmer/Analyst at the Digital Service has also been taking weekly Welsh lessons at Foundation level. He plans to keep going with the lessons.

6. Please provide examples of any obstacles, complaints and commendations associated with the provision and promotion of Welsh-medium services.

Payroll Service

There was a case at the Payroll Unit in October 2023 where a complaint was received from a member of the public as she had received an SSP1 Employer Form in monolingual English and when she enquired about a Welsh form, it was noted that a Welsh form was not available; that was information was incorrect. SSP1 is not a Cyngor Gwynedd form, but an HM Revenue and Customs one. However, a Welsh version of this form was available.

Following this, the processes at the Payroll Unit were reviewed to ensure that all officers knew that this form was available in Welsh as well as English. A Welsh and English form is now sent in cases of this nature, in accordance with the Council's Language Policy.

Furthermore, following this incident the service carried out a review of all forms from external bodies it sent out to employees and former employees, to ensure that Welsh as well as English versions were distributed.

Pensions Service

The Service has generally received very good feedback about the new self-service site (see Part 4 above). Here's one comment from the feedback we've received from the Welsh part:

'Very easy to log in and in Welsh - excellent.'

The department's report to the Language Committee in 2023:

[Welsh Language Promotion Plan Finance Department.pdf \(llyw.cymru\)](#)