

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to the Cabinet

Date of meeting: 14 February 2017
Cabinet Member: Councillor Gareth Thomas
Contact Officer: Arwyn Thomas
Contact Tel No: 01286 679 467
Item: Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020

1 DESICION SOUGHT

The Cabinet is asked to approve the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2017-2020, before it is presented to the Welsh Government for approval.

2 REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

In compliance with Welsh Government guidelines, the plan requires approval by the Cabinet and be signed by the person with statutory responsibility for education within the authority.

3 INTRODUCTION

Wales Schools Standards and Organization Act (2013) was introduced in Wales on 4 March 2013. The Act places a statutory duty on LEA's to prepare and introduce a **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan** for the Welsh Government.

Following the first three year planning cycle of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP's) we now move forward into the next planning phase spanning 2017-2020.

See attached a draft copy of the Plan for 2017-20 – Annex 1.

4 REASON AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION

The WESP's have established a sound basis for the planning of Welsh-medium education across Wales as well as bilingual and Welsh language education. The completion of the previous planning cycle has provided an opportunity to reflect on what works well and matters that require development.

This Plan will continue to focus on the five outcomes of the Welsh-medium

Education Strategy 2010 and outlines how the Authority will achieve Welsh Government objectives and targets outlined in the Strategy. The Authority will have to review progress against these targets.

The five outcomes are as follows:

- more seven-year-old children being taught through the medium of Welsh as a percentage of the Year 2 cohort;
- more learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary school to secondary school;
- more learners studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh;
- more learners aged 16-19 studying Welsh and subjects through the medium of Welsh; and
- more learners with improved skills in Welsh.

The Plan also addresses standards of attainment in Welsh and Welsh Second Language, Welsh-medium provision for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) and Workforce planning and continuing professional development (CPD).

The Strategy is interpreted in the context of Gwynedd Council Language Policy and thus achieve the outcomes. The Authority will ensure that the main elements are reflected and receive due focus in the Strategic Plan.

6 NEXT STEPS & TIME-TABLE

Subject to the Cabinet's approval, and following the Welsh Government's approval, the Authority will be required to commence implementing the WESP from 1 April 2017.

7 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

A public consultation was held on the draft plan, for an eight week period, between 24 October and 16 December 2016. In compliance with The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing Demand for Welsh Medium Education (Wales) Regulations, the following were consulted:

- The Welsh Language Commissioner
- The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- Mudiad Meithrin
- Schools in the County / Councils
- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales
- Parents for Welsh Medium Education (RhAG)
- Schools Association For Welsh Education (CYDAG)
- Hunaniaith
- Neighbouring Authorities
- Council Services

A summary of the comments received, and the principal messages are noted below:

- It is appreciated that Gwynedd Council is aware of its important role in promoting use of Welsh, with regard to the Welsh Government's aims and targets.
- It is a positive sign that Gwynedd Language Charter has now been adopted nationally.
- Appropriate objectives for every outcome .
- More challenging targets required in some sections.
- There are concerns regarding progression to the secondary sector.
- Need to further strengthen the Plan in some sections through expanding on some statements and include statements on adequacy of existing activities for 2017-2020.

The comments and responses received (total of 9) were considered when modifying the Plan.

Statutory Officers Comments

Chief Executive:

The submitted Plan is of paramount importance. It is particularly important at this time for several reasons. In the first instance, the Welsh Education Scrutiny Enquiry and a recent report to the Scrutiny Committee indicate that although the county is in a very good position in comparison with other counties, there is an urgent need to take early and firm measures, for instance, to increase the numbers taught through the medium of Welsh on arrival in the secondary sector. Secondly, there is a need to understand and implement Gwynedd's role in achieving the Government's target of a million Welsh speakers. Lastly, the Council's focus needs not only to be on the ability to speak Welsh but also on everyday use of the language by our young people.

Chief Finance Officer:

Confirmation was received by the author of the Strategic Plan that the Education Department and the schools are expected to fulfil the plan within their current resources. In addition to the schools daily resources, an element of the Education Improvement Grant is used to fund 13 Catchment-area Language Co-ordinators, and their work will have a core role in ensuring the outcomes.

Monitoring Officer:

As mentioned in the report, preparation of the Strategy is now a statutory requirement that is subject to specific steps. It is a requirement that consultation with specific beneficiaries is a part of the process. This has been appropriately reported upon in the report.