

Report of the Leadership Team and Legal Services on the implementation of the Language Policy and contribution towards the realisation of the Welsh Language Strategy 2023 – 2033

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Department	Leadership Team and Legal Services
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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)

e.g.

Name

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Early years and learning):

This area is specifically addressed in the Welsh Language in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and specific measures have been formulated to monitor progress.

Brief summary

It is ensured that every Early Years setting sets a strong foundation for Welsh, ensuring that every child is given a Language, Literacy and Communication skills assessment in Welsh on entry and at the end of part-time nursery education, and at the end of the Foundation Phase.

The Leadership Team and Legal Services collaborate with Council departments to contribute to specific policies, strategic plans, projects and work streams that contribute to the objectives of the language strategy.

Below are examples of how the Department contributes to the objectives of the language strategy:

Relevant strategic policies and plans:

- **Promoting the Welsh language** - The Chief Executive has a responsibility for ensuring that our ambition in promoting the use of the Welsh language is pursued across all of the Council's Departments. It is a role that requires him and the Corporate Directors to support departments at times and at other times it requires challenging in a constructive manner.
- **More Than Just Words** - The Statutory Director of Social Services has specific responsibilities in relation to promoting the use of the Welsh language. All County Councils and Health Boards in Wales are expected to appoint a senior leader as the Welsh Language champion as part of the More Than Just Words work programme. That role is held by the Statutory Director in Gwynedd.
 - The Statutory Director has been appointed as a member of the Welsh Government's More Than Just Words Advisory Board for a period of 4 years.
 - The Director is also the chair of the regional More Than Just Words forum from April 2025 onwards.

- Members of the Business Unit (Leadership Team) represent the Council and care services in regional More than Just Words forums, and drive the programme of work within the Council.
- **Proactive Offer** - As part of the work of the More Than Just Words programme it is required, according to the *Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014*, for the champion to ensure the use of the "Proactive Offer", which is to provide a service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it, on all occasions.
 - Social Services developed 3 short videos this year explaining the principles of the Proactive Offer to promote its use.
 - The Adult Care and Support Packages Review Form has been modified and questions have been added to allow us to get a picture of how the workforce implements the proactive offer.
- **Public Services Board** - The Chief Executive is a member of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and has had the opportunity to promote and support a scheme that looks at promoting the use of the Welsh language in the "front doors" of other public organisations in Gwynedd. This is currently one of the Board's main projects and there is an opportunity to ensure that other organisations benefit from Gwynedd's experience and success in this area.
 - The work has now been completed and everything that has been produced is available on the Board's website.
 - The Leadership Team is responsible for the administration of all meetings of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board. These are held through the medium of Welsh (the only one in North Wales). We provide a simultaneous translation service for non-Welsh speaking members.
 - There has recently been a PSB Special Meeting where 5 statutory PSB members co-signed the Active Travel Charter, along with another PSB member (3rd sector). The meeting was held entirely through the medium of Welsh, simultaneous translation was provided and presentations were bilingual.
- **Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)** - The Council has a leading role in several regional partnerships and the Legal Services have played a central role in establishing the governance arrangements of these partnerships, e.g. the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC).
 - There are several dynamics in place regarding ensuring that the arrangements of these bodies operate bilingually; however, the input from the Legal Services means that the arrangements, including the governance documentation etc., are prepared and delivered in both Welsh and English on an equal basis.
 - A Growth Deal transfer agreement to the CJC was recently completed with 11 regional parties, a bilingual document.
 - Gwynedd's ability to deliver technical and specialist issues in Welsh and English means that we are able to provide assurance and confidence in achieving these objectives. This is a principle that is clearly established within our partnership work and is rapidly developing into the norm.

Projects in the Council's plan

The work of the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors provides ongoing challenge and support to Council departments responsible for projects within the Council's Plan. This includes a review of progress being made against those projects as part of discussions at the Departmental Performance Challenge and Support meetings. The language is specifically addressed in the Council's main schemes including the Gwynedd Language Strategy, Digital Transformation Plan, Ffordd Gwynedd Plan, Climate and Nature Plan etc.

- **A Welsh Gwynedd** - 'A Welsh Gwynedd' is a work stream of the Council's Plan. All projects under the Gwynedd Language Strategy 2023 – 2033 contribute to the work. The work of the Gwynedd Language Strategy is divided into 5 action areas, and the Council shows how the objectives of our strategy contribute to the 3 main areas of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy.
- **Digital Plan** - The Council's Digital Transformation Board is chaired by the Corporate Director, and this Board has responsibility for the development and implementation of the new corporate Digital Plan. The Welsh language is at the heart of this Plan, and this will be reflected in the Digital Suitability Assessment which will be a mandatory step before any of the Council's departments procure a digital system or service.
- **Workforce Planning and Talent Development** – The Department's work feeds into the 'Workforce Planning and Talent Development' work stream which is one of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan work streams. The project focuses on attracting and retaining staff in the long term, by ensuring that there is an adequate supply of staff available to meet service needs, and in particular therefore Welsh-speaking staff.

Other projects and schemes by the Leadership Team and Legal Services

- **Language Forum** - The Corporate Director, together with the Council Leader and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Welsh language, serve on the county Language Forum established by the Language Unit. The Forum meets formally on a quarterly basis. This development, together with the establishment of the new *Menter Iaith* (Language Initiative), will certainly give a further boost to the promotion of the Welsh language in Gwynedd.
- **Project 15** - The Corporate Director is also a member of the Project Group which promotes "Project 15" which is an attempt to increase the material available on social media through the medium of Welsh. Funds have been earmarked to support this work which is being led by officers from the Language Unit.
- **Steering Group** - The Corporate Director, together with the Senior Language and Scrutiny Officer, is a member of a Steering Group established by the Welsh Language Commissioner to develop policy models to increase the use of the Welsh language within public bodies in Wales. The Council's membership of the Group is a consultative one in order to share good practice.
- **Coroner Service** - While the performance of a Coroner Service is a matter in the hands of the function holder, several aspects relate itself to the role of the Legal Service. As the Coroner and Assistant Coroners are appointed by Gwynedd, we have a significant influence on the requirements for these posts. This means that we have been able to ensure that those who are appointed have the ability to carry out their duties through the medium of Welsh and English. This has been recognised by the Ministry of Justice and the Chief Coroner who has an overview of the arrangements.
- **Electoral Services** - The Electoral Services Officer is a member of the Welsh Language Advisory Group of the Wales Electoral Coordination Board. The Group includes representation from local authorities, the Electoral Commission and the Welsh and Westminster Governments.
 - The aim of the Group is to ensure that Welsh and English are treated equally in terms of electoral legislation and guidance. It also shares good practice in issues relating to the Welsh language across authorities and ensures that training through the medium of Welsh is available to polling station staff.
 - The Officer is also the Vice-Chair of the Wales Branch of the Association of Electoral Administrators, which provides support, training and guidance to officers across the UK. The Association is currently developing training through the medium of Welsh for polling station staff.

- For several years, the Electoral Unit has been putting pressure on the supplier of our electoral control system to adapt the system to enable the production of bilingual election notices. Previously, we had to prepare the notices ourselves to ensure that they were bilingual. The system is now able to generate notices bilingually and we worked with the company to assist them in creating the Welsh versions of the documents.
- We have also worked with the company to produce bilingual letters to send to constituents to inform them of recent changes in the electoral system e.g. the procedure for requesting postal votes.
- When we create our own election documents we send it to the AEA so that a Welsh version is available to everyone through the resource library on their website. Huw Elfed Roberts, Electoral Services Officer, is a member of the Welsh Language Advisory Group which is a sub-group established by the Electoral Coordination Board.

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

(e.g. education, resources, families, promoting service use through Welsh)

Over the next year, ongoing work will take place within the Department to raise the status of the Welsh language and ensure opportunities for people to use Welsh.

- **Housing Allocation Policy** – the Leadership Team is in the process of supporting the Housing and Property Department with the Housing Letting Policy in the hope of strengthening the linguistic element in line with the requirement of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities.
- **New Social Care System** – The Leadership Team is supporting the move to a new system that will replace WCCIS – this will attempt to ensure that the new system makes it much easier to record the language of the individuals we serve.
- **Social Services** - It was agreed to sew the Welsh language or Learners logo onto the uniform of the Council's care workforce. This will be implemented in spring 2025.
- **Public Services Board** – The Language Sub-Group is a key part of the work of the Public Services Board and is extremely active. The projects and resources that have already been developed are now available on the website - [Well-being in Gwynedd and Anglesey | Community Projects](#).
 - As part of the work of the Sub-Group, work is currently being carried out on 'myth busting' – we are confident that it will be possible to upload it to the Board's website and that it will be available to any organisation for use, whether public or private.
 - We will be working with members of the PSB, but also on a wider level – partners such as Careers Wales; *Arfor/Mentera*/Welsh Language Initiatives and *Darogan Talent* (Wales' Graduate Hub) Programme/Officers etc.
 - PSB members are very keen to continue to support new speakers, recruit and retain Welsh language staff and see the new resource we will be developing as something useful to share and use within the organisations – co-sharing. With the Recruitment resource (2nd project), we collaborated with Efa, the Welsh Language Commissioner as they were one of the stakeholders and contributed to the work.
 - Collaborating with the Future Generations Commissioner; Other Public Service Boards and Welsh Government to share and promote projects that have already been completed.

- **Proactive Offer** - An initial Assessment Form for adults will be modified and language questions will also be addressed as part of this to allow us to get a picture of how the workforce is implementing the proactive offer

3. Has the development of technology interfered with 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?

Over the past year, the Leadership Team and Legal Services have seen an increase in the development of technology and the Welsh language. These examples are referred to below:

- **Artificial Intelligence** – Many services across Council departments have seen a significant increase in the use of Artificial Intelligence or AI over the past year. We anticipate that this will become one of the Council's top priorities over the coming year and the Department's work will be key to ensuring that we as a Council are ahead of the curve with the development of this technology and take advantage of the opportunities it offers while at the same time ensuring advice on the risks and appropriate use.
- **Phone System** - Corporate Director supporting the Information Technology (IT) service with a move to a new phone system that will connect with Microsoft Teams provision and improve the quality of the information we identify from the system. The service has broken new ground by collaborating with global company CISCO / Webex to ensure that the provision is available for the first time in Welsh. It is hoped that a number of other organisations will be able to take advantage of this provision in the future.
- **Social Services System** - A Statutory Director and the Business Unit have been supporting the initiation of the decommissioning of our social services system/database (WCCIS), and the commissioning of a new system from the private market. All counties in North Wales (and most counties in Wales) have commissioned the same system across Adult and Children's services, and the Service is leading on ensuring that the system meets our linguistic needs in Gwynedd, but this will have an impact on the rest of the counties in Wales that will also use the system.
- Continue to promote technology options in care that are available in Welsh, and collaborate with companies developing new technology in the field to try and ensure that the latest technology is available in Welsh.
- The latest technology is being developed in English, and the AI 'voice recognition' technology, for example, is not currently effective in Welsh. The WLGA and the Government are trying to drive this agenda forward and the department is trying to highlight that not enough pressure is being put on companies to develop the Welsh element, and there is a risk that the technology is being developed and that we are unable to keep up.
- **Legal** - There is room to reflect on the service and language resources within the Legal Service such as technical documents that we have created. This can be a resource to be shared externally under appropriate conditions if resources allow. Similarly, there are additional opportunities to use case management technology to its full potential and to support provision through the Welsh language.

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

e.g.

Early years

1. *The reach data of WESP in terms of the number of childcare placements and the number of children receiving Welsh-medium education.*
2. *Number of Ti a Fi groups, Parent and Child groups that are supported/maintained.*
3. *Number of activities specifically targeted towards young families/parents and infants by Council services.*
4. *Number of family activities arranged by the language initiative.*
5. *Number of campaigns to share resources and information.*

Learning

1. WESP monitoring statistics
2. Number of Council staff receiving training to improve skills
3. Number of apprenticeships being offered by the Council
4. Number of training/accreditation opportunities being offered by the youth service.

Work and service

1. Number of businesses receiving financial support through the Arfor scheme
2. Number of staff supported to learn Welsh or develop skills
3. Number of staff participating in buddy/champion schemes

The community

1. Number of activities held by Council services and the *menter iaith* for different groups
2. Number of community enterprises supported by means of Regeneration and Economy schemes

Research and technology

1. Number of research projects undertaken by the Council, or commissioned by the Council

Any other relevant data

Not relevant to the nature of the service (i.e. supporting other departments within the Council).

5. What are the language skills of your staff?

The Department has increased in numbers this year following the transfer of the Business Unit from the Adults Department on 1 April 2024.

95.6% of staff in the Leadership Team and Legal Services have completed a language self-assessment (108 members of staff).

There are 7 members of staff who have not submitted a language self-assessment at this time. 2 of those have received a language assessment from a line manager, meaning that 5 have no language assessment at all.

Of the 108 who have completed a self-assessment, 5 did not meet the language needs of the post.

Staff were transferred into the Council on last year's TUPE arrangement, including some of the members who did not meet language needs but there are efforts to learn the language through lessons and efforts as part of the *Cyfeillion Cymraeg* Scheme to support their development.

Over the last year, 1 person within the Department has undertaken a Language Improvement course with Learning Welsh North West through the *Cymraeg Gwaith* scheme.

Further observations:

Legal - There are a total of 22.25 FTE Jobs employees – 25 individuals in the Legal Services. All of the employed staff are able to fulfil all the requirements of the posts through the medium of Welsh. There are currently 3 non-Welsh speaking locums (equivalent to 1.5 posts) supporting either the work of the Legal Team or mainly regional legal work.

Social Services -

Social Services have been working to ensure accurate information on the linguistic ability of the workforce. That information is now available for 90% of the social services workforce. This is a significant improvement from a year and a half ago where the figure was around 65%.

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

BARRIERS

- **English-only Correspondence** - The nature of the positions of the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors means that they regularly participate in multi-agency meetings, at a regional and national level. It is unfortunate that some organisations, including the Welsh Government, continue to hold such meetings through the medium of English far too often. The Department also sees a number of documents, e.g. grants arriving that are English-only. It is vitally important therefore, as representatives of Cyngor Gwynedd, that we insist on the right to contribute through the Welsh language at every opportunity.
- **Relationship with the Health Board** – We must collaborate with external organisations that do not operate internally mainly through the medium of Welsh. E.g., the Statutory Director (Social Services) works closely with the Health Board and makes every effort to ensure that meetings are held in Welsh. There is a tendency by the Health Board to switch to English if anyone at the meeting fails to understand Welsh, rather than securing an interpreter in advance. The vast majority of meetings are now held in Welsh. Recent work has been done to try to co-locate where it is possible to strengthen working relationships (e.g. between Social Workers and Community Nurses) but there is a natural challenge if a proportion of their staff are non-Welsh speakers and the office language becomes English. Attention will be given to ensure that this does not happen as the work progresses.
- The Chief Executive and Corporate Directors take advantage of their influence as Welsh speakers to encourage the use of Welsh at meetings and workshops, contributing in Welsh on all occasions and ensuring that Welsh language provision is available at all times.
- **Legal Services** –
 - From time to time, the Legal Services commission the use of locum workers and external lawyers to meet requirements for specific capacity or expertise. It must be recognised that it is a challenge to ensure such provision through the medium of Welsh. However, on all occasions where this is possible we will prioritise the use of individuals who are able to work through the medium of Welsh.
 - The other aspect is the need to employ high-level specialist lawyers who have the ability to provide a service through the medium of Welsh. Where possible, we

instruct solicitors and barristers who have the language skills. On some occasions, it is possible to secure a service at the highest level to give advice or opinions through the medium of Welsh. However, on issues that either require a wider team, specific expertise or the size of a project, securing the provision through the medium of Welsh is difficult, if not impractical. The ability to deliver through the medium of Welsh is set out in national framework agreements but, this is not a general provision across the companies. This is widely reflected even within companies that have their roots in Wales. It should be noted that the ability to offer a service through the Welsh language is a factor that is reflected more and more in local companies and it is certainly developing. This allows the Council to instruct and receive legal advice through the medium of Welsh.

- It can be considered in the medium term to move to a position where all the services provided to Gwynedd and regionally can be delivered through the medium of Welsh. It is an employment situation specifically in the legal field that has improved in terms of attracting and retaining staff in a sustainable manner. We are building on this and are confident that development can continue. This includes taking advantage of *Cynllun Yfory* to develop staff in-house either through professional trainees or apprenticeships. There are specific and specialist requirements around our regional work that set short-term requirements that must be met and require a special type of expertise. However, the Legal Service has also strived to reduce the externalisation of work. Generally, they succeeded in doing so. When recruitment was needed, we have been successful in attracting lawyers who are fluent in Welsh. We continue to move in this direction across all aspects of the work. As we are about to establish a long-term SLA with the CJC this will create an opportunity to recruit on a more stable basis.
- It is important to recognise that the Gwynedd Legal Service is almost unique among the 22 Authorities, having a team where all officers could provide a complete service through the medium of Welsh. This continues and the matters identified have not changed the culture or nature of the Service.

The Department continues to support the Council's efforts to promote language courses in the workplace – e.g. the 'Using' *Cymraeg Gwaith* course at Nant Gwrtheyrn (April-June 2025). They are special opportunities that are fully funded.

Officers within the department have been involved in the *Cyfeillion Cymraeg* Scheme and have seen great benefit from both sides of being part of these opportunities.

As a Leadership Team, we will continue to promote and take advantage of every opportunity that arises to ensure that the Welsh language is given a prominent place, not only in the work of the Council but also at a community level within the County, regionally and nationally.

The department's report to the Language Committee in 2024: [Leadership Team and Legal Services.pdf](#)