

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL PEN-Y-BONT AR OGWR**

**REPORT TO THE CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE**

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – STRATEGIC CHANGE**

**7<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Report on revision of the Welsh Language Scheme**

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Equalities Committee with an update on progress made in revising the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme. The report sets out proposals on the draft revised scheme for the committee to consider with a view to gaining the approval of the Welsh Language Board.

**2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan & other Corporate Priorities**

**2.1** The information set out in this report will help mitigate the risk of failure to meet the Authority's statutory duties in respect of equalities and the Welsh language that was identified in the Corporate Improvement Plan 2006/09.

**3. Background**

**3.1** In order to meet its statutory duty under the Welsh Language Act 1993 the Authority is required to produce a Welsh Language Scheme and revise the scheme in line with the statutory guidance provided by the Welsh Language Board. The Authority's existing scheme was approved in 1997. The revised scheme will be subject to approval by the Welsh Language Board.

**3.2** Following the submission of a draft revised Welsh Language Scheme the Welsh Language Board provided the Authority with comments and requested clarification on some key areas that must be addressed in any draft revised scheme. The Board has requested that the Authority submit an amended draft of its revised scheme by mid-February 2008. The key issues are set out below followed by recommendations for the Committee to consider.

**4. Current status and proposals**

**4.1 Bilingual Website**

**4.1.1** The Welsh Language Board have requested that the revised scheme include a commitment to make the Authority's website progressively bilingual from a specific date and that progress be reported within the Authority's annual Welsh Language Scheme monitoring report to the Board. Further the Board recommended that the Authority make use of their '*Bilingual Software Guidelines and Standards*' which will help with the development of the website in terms of architecture and content.

**4.1.2** It is proposed that the Council carry out a review of the current website content, including Directorate and service specific information, to identify and prioritise content to be produced bilingually. The review process will include identification of costs related to this improvement, but it is anticipated that these will be minimal in 2008-09 year. Taking into account the appointment process for the new post of Web Development Manager it is proposed that the target date for this work to commence should be July 2008. Progress will be reported in the Authority's annual monitoring report to the Welsh Language Board.

Further it is proposed to amend the relevant section of the draft revised scheme to reflect this commitment by including the following wording:

### **3.5 Other contact with the public**

*"The Council provides services to the public by using e-government systems. The Council recognises that information technology also plays a key part in services that are provided online.*

*With the exception of the Council's committee minutes, reports and agendas all material produced by the Council and available to the public on the Council's website or on the websites of Directorates or services will progressively be made available in Welsh and English or by offering a choice of language to users on the homepage, with all subsequent material being available in the user's preferred language.*

*The Council will work to ensure that the two languages are treated on an equal basis in relation to its e-government systems and will adopt the Welsh Language Board's "Bilingual Software Standards and Guidelines" in order the develop appropriate bilingual systems."*

## **4.2 Recruitment Advertising**

**4.2.1** The Welsh Language Board have requested that the revised scheme include targets for the Council to work towards bilingual recruitment advertising in line with current practice within the public sector in general in Wales. This will send an important signal to prospective Welsh speaking candidates that the Council supports bilingualism and also help to improve the Council's capacity to deliver services in Welsh. The Board understands that the Council is moving towards signpost advertising which will help to minimise the cost implications of bilingual advertising.

**4.2.2** It is proposed that the scheme include a clear statement that when the Council places recruitment advertisements it will aim to be do this bilingually within the lifetime of the revised scheme. This will enable the Council to plan and manage the budget implications of adopting a bilingual signposting approach to recruitment. In order to achieve this the Council will adopt a staged approach with timescales for achievement of each step set out below:

- i) That all posts for which Welsh language skills are deemed essential (in line with the Welsh Language Skills Strategy to be developed during the implementation of the scheme) are advertised bilingually (Target date to start: October 2008);
- ii) That all posts for which Welsh language skills are deemed essential or desirable (in line with the Welsh Language Skills Strategy to be developed during implementation of the scheme) are advertised bilingually (Target date to start: April 2009);

iii) That all recruitment advertisements will be done bilingually (Target date to start: March 2011).

**4.2.3** Further it is proposed to include in the scheme a commitment that the Council will introduce recruitment literature for applicants, such as application forms, job descriptions etc bilingually, as a means of promoting the Council's support for bilingualism and attracting more Welsh speakers to apply for posts within the Council. (Target date to start: October 2008).

**4.2.4** The budget implications of this approach will be quantified and presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet Equalities Committee.

### **4.3 Welsh Language Awareness and Skills Training**

**4.3.1** The Welsh Language Board have requested that the revised scheme include more detailed information on the provision of Welsh language training for staff aimed at increasing the Council's capacity to deliver services in Welsh. Furthermore, the Board suggested that the provision of language awareness and language skills training be prioritised to reflect the level of public contact involved and/or the significance of language choice of service users to the way a service should be delivered (i.e. adult social care, family support or youth work). It has been agreed that a pilot Welsh language skills audit be carried out within an agreed service area and that the corporate Welsh language skills strategy be developed thereafter.

**4.3.2** It is proposed that following completion of the pilot a full audit be rolled out across the Authority. (Target to start: April 2008).

**4.3.3** It is proposed that the Council develop a Welsh Language Skills Strategy based on the outcomes of the skills audit. The strategy will include a breakdown of budget implications. The strategy will target service areas where there is a high level of public contact and/or where the language choice of service users is a significant factor in the way a service should be delivered (e.g. adult social care, family support or youth work). Posts that provide administrative and other support will also need to be considered. (Target to start: June 2008).

**4.3.4** Further it is proposed that the relevant section of the draft revised scheme on staffing matters be amended to reflect this commitment and include wording that recognizes that there will be county-wide needs, particularly as the public contact may be by telephone, correspondence or in meetings, and that the demand for services in Welsh will be likely to increase as the Council extends the services available and encourages more of the public to deal with it in Welsh.

### **4.5 Monitoring and risk assessment**

**4.5.1** The Welsh Language Board have requested that the revised scheme reflect the wording set out in the Board's Advice note "*Welsh Language Scheme Revision - Advice for Local Authorities*" (2005), prepared by the Board in accordance with Section 3 of the Welsh Language Act. This will commit the Authority to producing an annual report to the Board on a set format on the key issues that will help to identify service improvements and opportunities for further development.

**4.5.2** It is proposed that the relevant section of the draft revised scheme be amended to reflect the standard wording set out set out in the Board's Advice note in the following way:

*"This is the reporting procedure for compliance with the Scheme during the next three years:*

*The Council's annual Monitoring Report to the Board will seek to achieve the following aims:-*

- (i) To assess whether the Council is making progress inline with the Scheme in performing against the set timetable*
- (ii) To measure the availability of frontline services through the medium of Welsh, including data on*
  - The number and % of main reception, call centres or one stop shop posts that have been denoted as Welsh essential (WLI2).*
  - The number of complaints received in relation to the operation of the language scheme and the % dealt with in accordance with the Council's corporate complaints standards (WLI6)*
- (iii) To measure whether the management / administration of the Scheme is adequate by undertaking within the lifetime of the scheme the following:*
  - a service specific focus report through an appropriate third party organisation;*
  - producing a risk assessment report on an agreed theme in co-operation with the Board.*
- (iv) To measure the adequacy of its language skills by comparing need and resource, including*
  - The number and % of staff who have received training in Welsh to a specific qualification level (WLI4)*
  - The number and % of staff who have received language awareness training (WLI4)*
  - The number and % of staff within the Council's services who are able to speak Welsh (excluding school staff):*
    - According to service area*
    - According to post grade*
    - According to workplace*
- (v) Include within the monitoring report a section on mainstreaming the Welsh language, including examples of mainstreaming action taken, including:*
  - Steps taken to promote access to the Council's services through the medium of Welsh either corporately or by service areas*
  - Steps taken to promote the use of Welsh Language in the community*
  - Increase in the number and % of Welsh speakers in the community*
- (vi) Analysis of the Council's performance according to the priority/target areas set out in the scheme;*

*The Council will summarise its findings in the form of a brief narrative (with evidence) to be submitted to the Board and will identify any fundamental weaknesses/risks, and*

*draw up an action plan of corrective measures, together with a timetable. The Council will also draw attention to progress, good practice and compliance levels. Where there are weaknesses, an action/development plan shall be agreed with the Board.”*

## **5. Effect on Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

- 5.1** The report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but is required to effectively implement the Authority’s statutory duties in relation to the Welsh Language Act.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1** The proposal contained within this report will help to ensure the effective implementation of duties under the Welsh Language Act. .

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1** The proposal contained within this report will ensure the efficient use of corporate resources and budgets and help to mitigate any potential legal claims.

## **8. Recommendation**

It is recommended:

- That the proposals set out above be adopted as the basis for further discussion with the Welsh Language Board with a view to achieving approval of the Authority’s revised Welsh Language Scheme.

**Tony Garthwaite**  
**Executive Director – Resources**  
**31<sup>st</sup> January 2008**

**Contact officer: Linda Smith**  
**Equalities Co-ordinator**

**Email: Linda.Smith@bridgend.gov.uk**  
**Telephone: 01656 643332**

### **Background papers:**

Welsh Language Act 1993

Welsh Language Scheme Revision – Advice for Local Authorities (2005)

Welsh Language Board Bilingual Software Standards and Guidelines (2006)