

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL PEN-Y-BONT AR OGWR
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

6 OCTOBER 2008

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – CORPORATE
DEVELOPMENT & PARTNERSHIPS**

**DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVISED WELSH
LANGUAGE SCHEME 2008-2011**

1. Purpose of report: -

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Cabinet Equalities Committee on progress with the Authority's revised Welsh Language Scheme (2008-2011) and its implementation.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority: -

- 2.1 The Welsh Language Scheme is a statutory scheme on a cross-cutting issue, and therefore impacts upon the work of the whole Authority. It is linked to the equalities agenda, and will be a key component in delivering on the Authority's Customer Care Programme.

3. Background:-

- 3.1 On 10 September 2008, the Authority approved the revised Welsh Language Scheme 2008-2011. The revised Scheme aims to address areas in need of development suggested by the Welsh Language Board, based on statutory guidance issued by them.
- 3.2 The Welsh Language Board has suggested that the authority must demonstrate improvement in the following key areas:
- The production of a bilingual website
 - Bilingual job advertising
 - Staff development (i.e. training to support availability of Welsh-speaking staff in key services)
 - Performance monitoring.

- 3.3 It should be noted that the new Customer Service Centre at the Civic Offices will be a key element in enabling Welsh-speaking customers to access services.
- 3.4 The content of the Scheme was developed in consultation with the Corporate Equalities Management Group and the Cabinet Committee on Equalities, and firmly support the Transforming Bridgend agenda, e.g. the development of the Customer Service Centre and the Customer Charter.

4. Current situation / proposal:-

- 4.1 Key milestones for delivery during the financial year 2008-09 are attached at Appendix 1. Progress against these milestones can be summarised as follows:

4.2 Advice & Guidance

Providing appropriate advice and guidance to staff and managers, so that they are aware of their role in implementing the Welsh Language Scheme, will be important in ensuring its successful delivery.

The Policy and Performance Management Unit has liaised with relevant colleagues from around the Authority, such as officers from the Customer Service Centre, Organisational Development, Finance and Communications in order to produce draft guidance. It is intended to be produced in a manner that will be accessible and easily understood. We are on course to complete this task, and circulate the guidance to staff, by the October deadline.

This guidance has the potential to be used as part of the induction for staff as they enter the Authority.

4.3 Website development

The Welsh Language Board states in its feedback on the Authority's Annual Monitoring report:

“Development of a bilingual website should be considered a priority as an increasing amount of local government services are provided online.”

A project team has been established to take forward the complete redesign of the BCBC website, including its translation. The team will be preparing detailed plans which will include the style of the site, its content, and timescales for translation. Arrangements are being made for the translation of corporate pages in the current year. Thus far, a small number of web pages have been produced in Welsh, including payments and transactional pages, and the Equality pages.

4.4 **Customer Service Centre**

Substantial progress has been made in providing a bilingual service through the new Customer Service Centre at Civic Offices, led by Bev Davies, Customer Service Manager.

Steps have been taken to ensure that the Centre will be able to respond appropriately to customers who prefer to communicate in Welsh, particularly in terms of its staffing complement.

Following a successful recruitment exercise, the Centre now has three full-time staff who are Welsh-speaking. Their recruitment of staff will be backed up by the provision of any necessary training, such as “Welsh in the Workplace” courses.

In addition, the Customer Service Centre includes self-service touch-screen kiosks, featuring bilingual options, and digital signage which will alternate between Welsh and English.

The Centre will also be using a Customer Records Management (CRM) system which will be able to record language preference. As departmental services are integrated into the Centre and the Single Telephone Number gains prominence then the percentage of contact that goes through the CRM will increase. This should ensure a more efficient and effective interface which will better facilitate language choice and recording of this.

The Customer Service Charter, to be launched during National Customer Service Week (6-10 October), has been printed in Welsh and English, along with a Customer Survey to obtain feedback.

On 25 September, the Centre hosted a visit by the local Fforwm Iaith/Welsh Language Forum, which was also attended by representatives of the Welsh Language Board. In its feedback on the Authority’s Annual Monitoring Report, the Board offered praise for the progress made in the Customer Service Centre:

“We would like to congratulate the authority on its recent success in recruiting bilingual staff to work in the new Customer Service Centre. Hopefully this will lead to a significantly improved service for those wishing to contact the authority in Welsh.”

“The availability of bilingual self service touch screens and language preference tracking through the new CRM are exciting developments for Welsh speaking service users in Bridgend.”

The Board suggested that:

“The sufficiency of this number of staff to be able to provide a Welsh service at all times should be closely monitored. In order to ensure that

this service is used the availability of a Welsh service should be promoted and marketed.”

4.5 Staffing & Training

A summary of staff skills has been produced through the Trent HR system. Statistical data on the numbers of Welsh speakers, readers and writers are available for the whole authority and for individual directorates*:

Welsh speakers	Male	Female	Total
Education, Leisure & Community Services	63	215	278
Environmental & Planning Services	13	6	19
Legal & Democratic Services	1	4	5
Office of the Chief Executive	2	0	2
Personal Services	8	37	45
Regeneration	2	7	9
Resources	6	10	16
BCBC total	92	272	364

Welsh readers	Male	Female	Total
Education, Leisure & Community Services	59	192	251
Environmental & Planning Services	13	7	20
Legal & Democratic Services	0	3	3
Office of the Chief Executive	1	0	1
Personal Services	6	31	37
Regeneration	2	6	8
Resources	1	8	9
BCBC total	81	240	321

Welsh writers	Male	Female	Total
Education, Leisure & Community Services	45	150	195
Environmental & Planning Services	7	4	11
Legal & Democratic Services	0	1	1
Office of the Chief Executive	1	0	1
Personal Services	4	27	31
Regeneration	2	6	8
Resources	0	7	7
BCBC total	58	189	247

*figures are for 31 March 2008, using the Directorate structure that was current at that time.

The Welsh Language Board noted in its feedback on the Authority's Annual Monitoring Report:

“It is pleasing that the TRENT HR System used by the authority is now able to capture data on the language skills of staff. The data provided here is useful, however the report does not consider the sufficiency of

the numbers of Welsh speaking staff in each directorate. We are therefore pleased that an audit of the Welsh language requirements of all posts will be undertaken allowing for an analysis of the sufficiency of staff's Welsh language skills in future.

This section of the report details the significant steps that will be taken to improve the authority's bilingual skills capacity. We look forward to monitoring the success of these steps using data provided in line with performance indicators on staffing within future reports."

The Authority has been participating in the work of the Welsh Language Board's Social Care Task and Finish Group to analyse staffing issues in a key frontline service – availability of Welsh-speaking staff in relation to the needs of the service, and identifying gaps in provision. We have supplied the Board with information on the Welsh language skills of staff in this service area. The Board has now linked this project to a Welsh Assembly Government "Welsh Language in Health and Social Services" Taskforce, and we are awaiting developments in this area.

Welsh language training issues are being dealt with by the Organisational Development section, and this has been factored into the budget for that section. Various courses are available through the University of Glamorgan's Welsh for Adults Centre, a number of which are held locally in Bridgend County Borough. It is particularly encouraging to note that a number of elected members indicated their desire to learn Welsh, following an invitation from the Deputy Leader. It is intended to offer courses to members and staff starting in January 2009.

4.6 Performance Measurement

The Council's new Welsh Language Scheme commits us to providing the following performance measurement information:

- The number and % of main reception, call centres or one stop shop posts that have been denoted as Welsh essential.
- 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.
- The number and % of staff who have received training in Welsh to a specific qualification level.
- The number and % of staff who have received language awareness training.
- The number and % of staff within the Council's services who are able to speak Welsh (excluding school staff).

This information can be collected as necessary through liaison with the Human Resources section and needs to be reported internally via appropriate internal mechanisms such as the Cabinet Equalities Committee and the Quarterly Business Reviews.

4.7 Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd

The County Borough's first Welsh-medium secondary school, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd, opened its doors to its first pupils in September 2008. Over the last year Bridgend County Borough Council has invested more than £1 million in a refurbishment programme designed to provide YGG Llangynwyd's new pupils with first-class facilities that will help the school meet their needs.

While some children from the area will continue to attend Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari in Rhondda Cynon Taf, around 130 Year Seven pupils aged 11 and 12 arrived at YGG Llangynwyd for the start of the autumn term this year. New pupils will be taken on incrementally with the first pupils to enter the school reaching sixth form level by 2013 and 2014. The school will ultimately cater for up to 850 pupils aged between 11 and 18.

The new school will be formally opened in January by the First Minister for Wales, Rhodri Morgan AM. The school will provide a boost to the local community, especially the growth in the number of Welsh speakers that will inevitably result.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules:-

- 5.1 This is a progress report and therefore does not affect the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules. The proposed 2008-11 Scheme will supersede the 1997 Scheme. In financial terms, although the Scheme contains new commitments, the aim will be to fund these from within current budgets, e.g. the extra cost of placing a bilingual job advertisement should be offset by the change from full advertisements to sign-posting.

6. Legal Implications :-

- 6.1 This is a progress report and therefore has no legal implications. The revised Scheme satisfies the requirement under the Welsh Language Act that the Authority produces a Welsh Language Scheme.

7. Financial Implications :-

- 7.1 This is a progress report and therefore has no financial implications.
- 7.2 Of the new commitments contained within the proposed revised Scheme, the most costly will be the translation of the Council's website and the implementation of bilingual job advertising.
- 7.3 As stated above, the aim will be to fund these commitments from within current budgets. The authority has undertaken a procurement exercise to agree a translation contract that represents good value-for-money. Based on the rates negotiated for these translation services, £5k can

be made available for translating the content of the website from within the current budget for Corporate Development and Partnerships. This will allow for 100,000 words to be translated and should address the content of web pages but not “supporting documents” such as strategies and plans. Progress towards achieving a bilingual website will need to be addressed incrementally.

- 7.4 Budgets for advertising vacancies and related subjects are still managed by Directorates. Sign-post advertising will deliver savings – this will create capacity for these budgets to meet the additional costs that will arise through publishing bilingually.

8. Recommendation: -

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Equalities Committee notes progress made in developing and implementing a revised Welsh Language Scheme.

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6 October 2008

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Background documents:-

Welsh Language Act 1993.

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