

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

19 JULY 2010

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

**WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2009-10 –
RESPONSE FROM THE WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD**

1. Purpose of Report.

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of feedback received from the Welsh Language Board regarding the Council's Annual Monitoring Report on the Welsh Language Scheme.

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

The Welsh Language Scheme is a statutory scheme and a cross-cutting issue that impacts upon the work of the whole Council. It is linked to the equalities agenda, and is a key component in the Council's Customer Care Programme.

3. Background.

The Council is required to report to the Welsh Language Board on an annual basis, outlining progress made on implementing its Welsh Language Scheme. It is also expected to note how improvements will be made over the coming year. The Welsh Language Board provides the Council with feedback to help us deliver on our Scheme and make further improvements.

4. Current situation / proposal.

The Council's Annual Monitoring Report for 2009-10 was submitted to the Welsh Language Board after being approved by the Cabinet Equalities Committee in April 2010.

The Council received written feedback from the Welsh Language Board in May 2010. The Board expressed their appreciation that the Council has worked positively with them over the last year, and expressed praise for positive developments and examples of good practice.

The Board also expressed some concerns, and made recommendations for improvements.

The following points summarise the response from the Board:

- Translation of the Council's website is underway, with instructions issued to staff accordingly.

- The Council's efforts in training and developing the language skills of its staff are commendable. The numbers that have attended training sessions in 2009/10 are extremely encouraging.
- The Council has submitted an application to the Board for grant funding under the Bilingual Workplaces initiative. Under the Council's proposal, work will be undertaken with Menter Bro Ogrwr to provide language coaching and confidence boosting for staff. (The Council is currently awaiting the outcome of the application.)
- The Council has provided bespoke training for staff who provide Welsh language services.
- Officers from the Youth Service, Children and Young People's Partnership and Active Young People's Department met with the Welsh Language Board and highlighted how they are developing services for Welsh-speaking young people and including young Welsh speakers in the work of the Youth Council.
- Significant progress has been made in mainstreaming the Welsh language, e.g. through the Equality Impact Assessment process, with guidance and training made available for staff.
- The Board was pleased with the Council's participation in its review of complaints procedures.

Areas for improvement

- The Board queried whether a date has been set for the publication of revised guidance on how to conduct public consultations. A date for this action is yet to be determined.
- The Board requested more detailed information regarding the translation of the Council's website. The Council was able to respond positively to this request, and report that the number of translated pages on the Council's website has increased from 190 to at least 820 over the last year. The Council is also able to provide detailed information regarding which sections of the website have been translated and the plans for the remaining work.
- The Board requested clarification on the date for implementing bilingual advertising of all jobs. This matter is currently being considered by the Human Resources service, in consultation with Heads of Service.
- The Board reiterated that its statutory guidance "Recruitment and the Welsh Language" should be considered when drafting a Language Skills Strategy, and requested a copy of this Strategy in draft form once available. The Strategy is currently being drafted and will be shared with the Board to receive their advice prior to being finalised.
- It was recommended that the Council should target its training at those members of staff that have the most contact with the public, thus ensuring that training has the biggest possible impact. A Training Needs Analysis was conducted in March and April 2010, which has provided relevant information to identify which teams are providing front-line services to Welsh speakers, and also which teams contain Welsh-speaking staff.
- The Board requested clarification on whether general awareness training is provided for staff. It can be confirmed that this is included in the corporate induction for new members of staff.
- Where the Council experiences difficulties in recruiting staff for Welsh essential posts, the Board recommended that the Council should consider advertising in specialist publications and websites. This issue will be followed up with Human Resources.

- The Board felt that a robust and more definite commitment to developing youth provision for young Welsh speakers is required. This feedback will be referred to the Youth Service and Children and Young People's Partnership for them to consider.
- Targets need to be set for achieving the Council's commitment to mainstreaming the Welsh language in the procurement process. The Board will be publishing guidance on this issue in October 2010, and consideration will then be given on how we best respond to the guidance.

The Board has also informed the Council of its intention to conduct "desktop" verification exercises on the following aspects of Councils' Welsh Language Schemes, during June 2010:

- Bilingual websites;
- Bilingual job advertising;
- Availability of forms in Welsh.

The results of these specific exercises will be made available to the Council to help facilitate improvement.

As indicated earlier, the Board's response was generally positive and it is envisaged that one of their officers will be visiting the Council to discuss progress. It is intended that the arrangements for this visit will be agreed with the Deputy Leader and further feedback will be provided to the Committee.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

This report is for information and does not contain any proposed changes to the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Legal Implications.

The Authority is required by statute to have a Welsh Language Scheme.

7. Financial Implications.

Of the commitments contained within the Welsh Language Scheme, the most costly are the translation of the Council's website and the implementation of bilingual job advertising.

The aim is 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 has been 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.

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.

It is recommended the Cabinet Equalities Committee notes the feedback received by the Welsh Language Board.

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12 April 2010

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Background documents

Welsh Language Act (1993)

Bridgend County Borough Council Welsh Language Scheme, 1997

Bridgend County Borough Council Welsh Language Scheme, 2008-2011

Bridgend County Borough Council Welsh Language Scheme Annual Monitoring Report
2009-10

“Recruitment and the Welsh Language: Guidance under Section 3 of the Welsh Language Act 1993”, Welsh Language Board (2009)