

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

10 NOVEMBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

UPDATE REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE (WALES) MEASURE 2011 AND WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

1. Purpose of Report

To update Cabinet Equalities Committee on the implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 introduced Welsh language standards which impact upon the work of the whole council. The standards link to the equalities agenda, form a key component of the council's Customer Care Programme and link to the following corporate priorities:

- Priority 2: Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Priority 3: Smarter use of resources.

3. Background

3.1 The council received its final compliance notice on 30 September 2015 and has since been working to determine the implications involved in implementing the 171 standards by 30 September 2016.

3.2 Progress updates were previously provided to Cabinet Equalities Committee on 28 April 2016 and 14 July 2016 and those reports are referenced as background documents to this report.

4. Current situation / proposal

4.1 The council has continued to prepare for compliance with the standards. Key progress/updates since July 2016 can be summarised as:

- Welsh Language Standards Implementation Board meetings have continued every fortnight and have considered the interpretation of the standards, compliance issues/appeals and challenges;
- information continues to be filtered through the organisation via email messages and Bridgendors. Key messages are currently issued to staff on a weekly basis. We are also currently updating the WLS intranet pages and FAQs;
- training for frontline staff in dealing with Welsh speaking customers on a daily basis has been provided by the University of South Wales.

As at 30 September 2016, 425 frontline employees had received this training. Cwrs Mynediad training is also being provided with 44 employees attending;

- a five year strategy has been produced outlining how the council will promote the use of the Welsh Language in Bridgend County Borough and to its employees. The strategy also highlights how we aim to maintain the number of Welsh speakers in the area and within our workforce. We will shortly be meeting with Menter Bro Ogwr to discuss how they can help with some of the objectives in the strategy;
- Six complaints received to date and these are as follows:-
 1. Electoral services received an email in Welsh and responded in English. Complaint closed on the basis that service falls under the remit of the Returning Officer rather than the council;
 2. A mother complained that, at a supervised contact meeting between her and her son, the social worker would not allow them to speak Welsh as he was not a Welsh speaker and he needed to understand what was being said during the contact session. A corporate apology was issued and the mother also referred her complaint to the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Commissioner's Investigation has concluded, and we are awaiting her decision regarding any sanctions to be imposed;
 3. An action group complained to the Commissioner that the council does not offer all its swimming lessons in Welsh. The Commissioner suspended the investigation to allow the council to obtain counsel's opinion.
 4. A complaint has been received about stamped addressed envelopes used in Electoral services being in English only. No formal communication received from the Commissioner yet;
 5. Complaint about a Welsh language service received from a member of the public who called 643643 that they had to wait 10 minutes to access the Welsh Service whereas English was readily available. The complainant copied in the Welsh Language Commissioner and the council is awaiting receipt of a formal complaint from Commissioner.
 6. A complaint about the lack of Welsh language swimming lessons for Welsh medium school pupils. Pupils from Welsh medium schools in Bridgend who attend swimming delivered by Halo on behalf of the county and its schools are not given language choice and must have lessons through the medium of English. The complainant copied the Welsh Language Commissioner into the complaint and the council is awaiting receipt of a formal complaint from the Commissioner.
- updated the compliance document to reflect the requirements of the September 2016 standards;
- still awaiting a final decision from the Welsh Language Commissioner on the ten March 2016 standards appealed (please see appendix 1);
- appealed eight of the September 2016 Standards (please see appendix 2);
- continued to contact neighbouring councils to establish their interpretation of certain standards and also the Welsh Language Commissioner where clarification on points of law has been required;
- continuing to work with Cardiff Council with a view to agreeing a translation contract to support the NPS Welsh Language Translation Framework. Draft SLA expected in the next couple of weeks;

- gained clarity on an additional resource that employees can use to support them with Welsh language translations called the 'Big Word'. This will be promoted to employees over the next couple of weeks;
- published a suite of bilingual template signage for use across the council;
- held four staff briefing sessions in Human Resources and Organisational Development. This presentation has now been rolled out to directorates to use if they wish;
- reviewed the council's use of radio advertising and video publicity in light of the requirement for bilingual materials;
- writing to schools' Governing Bodies with advice regarding the consultation on the forthcoming Welsh Language Standards that will impact schools;
- written to all council employees asking for confirmation of language preference. As at 3 October 2016, 34% of returns (2,119) were outstanding;
- updated CMB on appeals, complaints and legal issues.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

There are no proposed changes to the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

This is an information report. As such, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

7. Financial Implications

A recurrent budget pressure of £313,000 and a one-off pressure of £81,000 for 2016/17 to meet the estimated costs of implementing the majority of the Welsh Language Standards have been identified. The pressure does not take into account the financial implications of a number of standards for which the council is appealing on the basis that they are unreasonable or disproportionate. Standards which are considered to be significant in terms of financial impact will be funded corporately and these are outlined in appendix 3. The cost of implementing the Welsh Language Standards will be reviewed during 2016/17 and, if the costs are deemed to be significantly higher than budget; a decision will be made corporately as to how this shortfall will be met.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet Equalities Committee receives and considers this report.

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Background documents: Update reports to Cabinet Equalities Committee on the Welsh Language Standards dated 28 April 2016 and 14 July 2016.