

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

9 March 2017

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 assigned to the council.

3.2 Progress updates were previously provided to Cabinet Equalities Committee on 28 April 2016, 14 July 2016 and 10 November 2016. Those reports are referenced as background documents to this report.

4. Current situation / proposal

4.1 The council has continued to work towards compliance with the standards. Key progress/updates since November 2016 can be summarised as:

- Fortnightly Welsh Language Standards Implementation Board meetings continued to consider the interpretation of the standards, compliance issues/appeals and challenges. Since January 2017, these meetings have been held monthly;
- information continues to be filtered through the organisation via weekly emails and staff newsletters. Relevant pages on the BCBC intranet – including FAQs - have been updated;
- training for frontline staff in dealing with Welsh speaking customers on a daily basis continues to be provided by the University of South Wales;

- officers met with Menter Bro Ogwr to discuss opportunities for joint working to meet some of the objectives outlined in the Five Year Strategy. Proposals have been circulated to the council's Welsh Language Standards Implementation Board for consideration;
- seven complaints have been received since the standards were introduced in March 2016, the most recent one related to a new Welsh sign in the Rhiw car park where the word "ticketless" appeared in English and had not been correctly translated into Welsh. The Welsh Language Commissioner decided not to investigate this complaint as the sign had been corrected prior to the official opening of the car park. The Commissioner has also discontinued an investigation into a previous complaint regarding a supervised contact meeting where a social worker would not allow the meeting to be conducted in Welsh;
- still awaiting a final decision from the Welsh Language Commissioner on the ten March 2016 standards appealed (please see appendix 1) and the eight September 2016 standards appealed (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;
- agreed a new translation contract with Cardiff Council to support the National Procurement Service (NPS) framework;
- gained clarity on an additional resource that employees can use to support them with Welsh language translations called the 'Big Word' which has been promoted to employees;
- developing an IT solution that enables BCBC staff to record whether or not Welsh language translation services are offered/provided at meetings.

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 recurring cost of £313,000 and a one-off cost of £81,000 in 2016/17 has been identified to implement the majority of the Welsh Language Standards. These costs do 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. The March and September standards that 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 continue to be reviewed during 2016/17 and, if the costs are deemed to be significantly higher than budgeted, 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, 14 July 2016 and 10 November 2016.