

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

22 MARCH 2018

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

This report updates the Cabinet Equalities Committee (CEC) 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 and subsequent Welsh Language Standards impact upon the work of the whole council. The standards link to the equalities agenda, form a key component of the council's Transformation Programme and Customer Charter, and link to the following corporate priorities:

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

3. Background

Since the council received its compliance notice in 2015, progress towards implementing the 171 assigned standards has continued.

Updates have been provided at every CEC since 28 April 2016. Those reports are referenced as background documents to this report.

4. Current situation / proposal

Key progress/updates since November 2017 CEC can be summarised as:

- a) At the last CEC, it was confirmed that an internal audit of the remaining 11 standards was taking place in order for us to propose new compliance dates to the Welsh Language Commissioner's office. This audit was completed in February and we confirmed to the commissioner's office that we were now compliant with two of the outstanding 11 standards in relation to training. An internal meeting took place on 6 March to discuss the council's position on the remaining nine standards. A meeting/discussion will now be arranged with the commissioner's office.
- b) A meeting took place with the commissioner's office on 5 December to discuss the council's performance against the standards, successful practices, risks and challenges. This is part of their ongoing review process of local authorities across Wales. As part of this they also carried out a

mystery shopper exercise between April 2016 and March 2017 which also included standards that we weren't required to comply with at the time. Some observations from the standards that we were complying with at the time were:

Telephone calls

- 3 of 3 calls were answered with a Welsh language greeting
- A Welsh-language service needed to be requested during 0 of the 3 calls
- 2 of the 3 calls were dealt with entirely in Welsh, with the receptionist and possibly another officer providing a response.

Website

45 of the 45 pages viewed were available in Welsh. One of the 45 pages either did not correspond or contained errors. The commissioner's office fed back that they considered our website to be an example of good practice in terms of compliance for other local authorities.

Other

The exercise highlighted some issues with correspondence sent to the authority and that we might need to review where we include 'Welsh essential/desirable' narrative in our job packs as findings did not match our internal practices/reports. Additionally our progress towards compliance with the social media standards was noted.

- c) Staff continue to receive regular updates and reminders via email as well as being able to access a suite of Welsh language training.
- d) On 12 January 2018, the commissioner's office contacted us and the other 26 organisations who received their compliance notices in September 2015 regarding their draft code of practice to accompany the Welsh Language Standards. The purpose of the code of practice is to provide organisations with the commissioner's interpretation of each standard with practical examples. The consultation on this code of practice is open until 6 April 2018. The council's Communications, Marketing and Engagement Manager attended a consultation event on the draft code of practice on 7 February 2018 and fed back initial observations. Key people across the organisation are currently inputting into developing a formal response, as when passed by ministers in the summer, the council could also be held account to the content within this code of practice alongside the detail contained within our compliance notice. It is important to respond to this consultation as there are differences in how the council has interpreted some standards (which are now business as usual) compared to how the commissioner's office has interpreted them.
- e) No formal complaints have been received since the update report in July 2017. Work is still ongoing in relation to the investigation into availability of swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh. An action plan has been prepared and is currently with the Welsh Commissioner's office for their comments.

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 budget of £313,000 and a one-off budget of £81,000 were established in the 2016-17 budget through the Medium Term Financial Strategy to implement those Welsh Language Standards that were agreed to be funded corporately. These budgets did not take into account the financial implications of the standards that the council appealed. To date not much of this funding has been allocated out, as the full financial implications of meeting all standards is not known. The one-off budget has been retained until a clearer picture emerges. The cost of implementing the Welsh Language Standards will continue to be reviewed during 2017-18 and into 2018-19 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

That the Cabinet Equalities Committee receives and considers this report.

Andrew Jolley

Corporate Director - Operational and Partnership Services

Date: 22 March 2018

9. Contact officer

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Background papers:

- 28 April 2016 Update report on implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) measure 2011 and Welsh Language standards ;
- 14 July 2016 Welsh Language standards annual report 2015/16 ;
- 14 July 2016 Update report on implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) measure 2011 and Welsh Language standards ;
- 10 November 2016 Update report on implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) measure 2011 and Welsh Language standards ;

- 9 March 2017 Update report on implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) measure 2011 and Welsh Language standards ;
- 13 July 2017 Welsh Language standards annual report 2016/17 ;
- 13 July 2017 Update report on implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) measure 2011 and Welsh Language standards ;
- 23 November 2017 Update report on implementation of the Welsh Language (Wales) measure 2011 and Welsh Language standards.