

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1

1 DECEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 on the implementation and the progress of Bridgend County Borough Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 - **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 - **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 ('the 2013 Act') requires a local authority to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and outlines that a plan must contain:
- a. A local authority's proposals on how it will carry out its education functions to:
 - i. improve the planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh (Welsh-medium education) in its area; and
 - ii. improve the standards of Welsh-medium education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area.

- b. The local authority's targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in its area and for improving the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area.
 - c. Report on the progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous WESP or previous revised WESP.
- 3.2 Cabinet first approved Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC's) WESP in March 2014 and it was subsequently approved by Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in June 2014. BCBC's WESP has been reviewed and updated annually prior to seeking approval from Welsh Government.
- 3.3 Following the rapid review commissioned by Welsh Government, the timescales for publication of the WESP documents have been reviewed, as reported in the Cabinet report dated 5 September 2017.
- 3.4 The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing the Demand (Wales) Regulations 2013 ('the 2013 regulations'), were the first regulations made under the section 87 powers. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019 ('the 2019 Regulations') replace those regulations and make provision for a local authority to prepare a ten-year WESP, the first to have effect from 1 September 2022, subject to the Welsh Ministers' approval.
- 3.5 The purpose of these regulations is to improve opportunities for local authorities to plan Welsh-medium education provision in order to support the current and future expectation for growth in Welsh-medium education. Improving the planning of Welsh-medium education will also support Welsh Government's long-term national ambition for the Welsh language as set out in Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh speakers strategy, your strategy for promoting the Welsh language in accordance with the Promotion Standards under the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 and also the introduction of a new curriculum for Wales.
- 3.6 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales Regulations 2019) were amended. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 ('the 2020 Regulations') came into force on 1 December 2020 and made changes to the start date of the next WESP cycle being moved from 1 September 2021 to a year later (to September 2022). The plan was required to be submitted to Welsh Government for approval by 31 January 2022.
- 3.7 The first ten-year WESP commenced on 1 September 2022 and will expire on 31 August 2032. Each further WESP will commence on 1 September in the year during which the previous ten-year WESP will come to an end (that is, 1 September 2032 to 31 August 2042). The WESP must include a target outlining the expected increase in the number of Year 1 learners taught through the medium of Welsh in the local authority area during the lifespan of the WESP.
- 3.8 On 14 September 2021, Cabinet gave permission to consult upon the draft WESP. A consultation exercise with stakeholders on the draft WESP was undertaken between 27 September and 19 December 2021.

- 3.9 The outcome of the consultation process for the draft WESP (2023-2032) was reported to Cabinet on 18 January 2022. Cabinet gave approval for the WESP to be submitted to Welsh Government.
- 3.10 Bridgend County Borough Council WESP (2022-2032) was submitted to Welsh Government by the stipulated deadline of 31 January 2022 (see Appendix 1).
- 3.11 Bridgend's Local Government Education Services (LGES) was inspected by Estyn in March 2019. Recommendation 4 of the Estyn report refers to the need to strengthen the role of the Welsh in Education Forum (WEF) to ensure timely progress in delivering the priorities identified in the WESP.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The WESP is a BCBC Corporate Priority and features within the Education and Family Support Directorate Business Plan. The Corporate Director (Education and Family Support) provides regular updates in respect of the WESP's progress to the Corporate Management Board.
- 4.2 The WESP aligns with local and national priorities. BCBC's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2021-2026 and the WESP outline how they will raise the profile of the Welsh language and culture. The WESP is referred to within this strategy and the lead for the strategy within BCBC is a member of WEF.
- 4.3 The Welsh Government's Welsh Language Act 1993 and the WESP share the principle, so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, that the Welsh and English languages should be treated equally in the conduct of public business. The Head of Welsh in Welsh Government's Education Planning Branch is a member of Bridgend's WEF.
- 4.4 Central South Consortium's Welsh-medium Education Policy aligns with BCBC's WESP in the drive for learners to become increasingly bilingual and for the workforce to be upskilled with their Welsh language skills. The Strategic Lead for Welsh at Central South Consortium is a member of Bridgend's WEF.
- 4.5 BCBC's WEF membership and its terms of reference have been agreed. Each member of the WEF is appointed on a biennial basis (that is, in the first instance, for the period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024). Members may be re-appointed at the end of their term of office. The WEF's terms of reference will be reviewed on a biennial (that is, every two years) basis (see Appendix 2).
- 4.6 The first meeting of BCBC's WEF under the ten-year WESP was held on 24 November 2022. The WEF will meet three times a year, once each school term. Arrangement of sub-group meetings can more flexible. However, where possible, meetings should align with the termly WEF.
- 4.7 The WEF has agreed to establish several sub-groups to support the delivery of the WESP. All sub-groups will be reviewed and agreed at the meeting of the WEF in autumn term 2022. Any sub-group established through the WEF will be supported by its own, individual terms of reference. Each sub-group will meet at least a fortnight before the WEF and all minutes will be circulated with the WEF agenda in advance of the WEF.

4.8 During autumn term 2022, five sub-groups have been established, chairs appointed and terms of reference adopted. The sub-groups are as follows:

- Outcome 1 - More Nursery children/three-year-olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh.
- Outcome 2 - More Reception class children/five-year-olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh.
- Outcomes 3,4 and 5 - More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another, More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh, More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school.
- Outcomes 6 and 7 - An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.
- Promotion, marketing and celebration.

4.9 Each sub-group has had its initial meeting and workshops have been held in order for members to contribute to the five-year WESP. The five-year WESP is due to be submitted to Welsh Government by 16 December 2022.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report.

6.2 As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions.

6.3 This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The report contributes to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- a prosperous Wales;

- a resilient Wales;
- a Wales of cohesive communities; and
- a globally responsive Wales.

7.2 **Long term** Supports the statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places and support the Welsh language.

Prevention The Council has a statutory duty to promote the Welsh language. The plan will ensure that children and young people will be able to follow a Welsh-medium education.

Integration The plan supports the promotion of Welsh education in the communities in which the children and young people live.

Collaboration The local authority will continue to work in collaboration to ensure that it achieves its vision as set out in the WESP (2022-2032).

Involvement Key stakeholders are involved in implementing and monitoring the progress of the WESP (2022-2032).

8. Financial implications

8.1 The local authority is expected to work with Central South Consortium (its regional school improvement partner) to demonstrate how the Education Improvement Grant administered by Central South Consortium will support the implementation of the WESP.

8.2 The secondment for the WESP Co-ordinator began on 1 September 2022 for a period of 18 months until 31 March 2024 and is funded by an established earmarked reserve. Currently, there is no identified finance for the WESP Co-ordinator beyond this period.

8.3 The Education and Family Support Directorate will need to seek alternative funding mechanisms to continue with the co-ordinator post past 31 March 2024.

8.4 With the exception of staff time from existing budgets, there is no other financial impact.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that SOSC1:

- notes the progress made; and
- provides any feedback as necessary.

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Background documents:

None

Attachments

Appendix 1 Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (2022-2032)

Appendix 2 Welsh in Education Forum terms of reference