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| Meeting of: | SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 |
| Date of Meeting: | 11 April 2024 |
| Report Title: | WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (2022-2032) |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT |
| Responsible Officer: | GAIL BIGGS INTERIM GROUP MANAGER LEARNER SUPPORT |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | THERE IS NO EFFECT UPON THE POLICY FRAMEWORK OR PROCEDURE RULES. |
| Executive Summary: | THIS REPORT PROVIDES THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 WITH AN UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP) 2022-2032. THE REPORT PROVIDES BACKGROUND INFORMATION, OUTLINING THE STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROGRESS TO DATE. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE WESP WAS REPORTED TO WELSH GOVERNMENT IN JULY 2023. |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (SOSC1) on the implementation and the progress of Bridgend County Borough Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032.

2. Background

- 2.1 Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 ('the 2013 Act') requires a local authority to prepare a 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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 Minister's approval.
- 2.5 The purpose of these regulations is to improve opportunities for local authorities to plan Welsh-medium education provision 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 the introduction of a new curriculum for Wales.
- 2.6 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, amendments were made to the 2019 Regulations, which 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.
- 2.7 The first ten-year plan commenced on 1 September 2022 and expires on 31 August 2032. Each further plan will commence on 1 September in the year during which the previous ten-year plan will come to an end (that is, 1 September 2032 to 31 August 2042). The Plan 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 plan.

To support Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers' strategy, Welsh Government has set Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) a target to increase the percentage of learners taught through the medium of Welsh from approximately 8% to between 14% and 18% by 2032 (based on pupil level annual school census (PLASC) data of Year 1 learners 2019-2020)

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 BCBC's WESP (2022-2032) was submitted to Welsh Government by the stipulated deadline of 31 January 2022 (see Appendix 1).
- 2.11 Following the submission of the WESP, Welsh Government requested that the local authority submit a five-year WESP. The WESP five-year plan was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 on 1 December 2022.
- 2.12 BCBC's five-year WESP was submitted to Welsh Government by the stipulated deadline of 16 December 2022 (see Appendix 2).
- 2.13 The WESP Annual Review Report for 2022-2023 was submitted to Welsh Government by the stipulated deadline of 31 July 2023 (see Appendix 3).
- 2.14 The WESP (2022-2032) was presented to Cabinet on 19 September 2023 for review. (see Appendix 4)
- 2.15 Bridgend's Local Government Education Services (LGES) were 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.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The WESP is a BCBC Corporate Priority and features within the Education and Family Support Directorate Strategic Plan. The Corporate Director (Education and Family Support) provides regular updates in respect of the WESP's progress to the Corporate Management Board.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 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).
- 3.6 The first meeting of BCBC's WEF under the ten-year WESP was held on 24 November 2022. The WEF 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.
- 3.7 The WEF has established 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.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 Sub-group workshops were held in order for members to contribute to the five-year WESP in the autumn term 2022.
- 3.10 Each sub-group has an annual sub-group development plan which focuses the work of the group to meet the targets set within the WESP. Sub-groups continue to meet on a termly basis where the annual sub-group development plan is monitored, updated, and rated using red, amber, yellow, or green (RAYG) following the directorate self-evaluation process.
- 3.11 The WESP Co-ordinator reports to Cabinet on progress in the termly Welsh in Education Forum (WEF).

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 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. 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. 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.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 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.

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).

5.2 The report also aligns with the Corporate Well-being objectives by:

- expanding Welsh-medium education opportunities;
- modernising our school buildings; and
- supporting and encouraging lifelong learning.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this information report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising from this report.

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 until 31 March 2025. There is no identified finance for the WESP Co-ordinator beyond this period of time.

8.3 The Education and Family Support Directorate continue to seek alternative funding mechanisms to continue with the co-ordinator post past 31 March 2025.

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

8.5 Welsh Government awarded the local authority grant funding (September 2022 to March 2025) of £252,395 to support late immersion provision.

9. Recommendation(s)

9.1 It is recommended that SOSOC1:

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

Background documents

Appendix 1 WESP 2023-2032

Appendix 2 Five-year WESP

Appendix 3 Annual Review Report Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2023

Appendix 4 Cabinet report (19 September 2023)