

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES
Date of Meeting:	17 JULY 2024
Report Title:	ANNUAL WELSH STANDARDS REVIEW
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, HOUSING AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	ZOE EDWARDS CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND EQUALITIES MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules
Executive Summary:	The report outlines how the council has complied with the Welsh Language Standards to comply during the 2023/2024 period and also documents any progress and new compliance developments.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet Committee Equalities of the content and approach taken with the council's Welsh Language Standards Annual Report for 2023/2024.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Welsh Language Standards give Welsh speakers improved, enforceable, rights in relation to the Welsh language. The council received its final compliance notice on 30 September 2015, which outlined 171 standards requiring compliance.
- 2.2 Standards 158, 164 and 170 require the council to produce and publish an annual report, in Welsh, by 30 June each year.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The council's Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023/2024 covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and will be published on the website by 30th July 2024.
The report is attached as Appendix one (Welsh) and Appendix two (English).
- 3.2 The report outlines how the council has complied with the standards under a duty to comply during the period and also documents any progress and new compliance developments.
- 3.3 As part of the annual report, there is a duty to report specifically on the following information:

- the number of complaints received by the council during the period;
- the number of employees who disclosed Welsh language skills as at 31 March 2024;
- the number of employees attending training courses offered in Welsh during the period;
- the number of new and vacant posts advertised during the period categorised as posts where either:
 - Welsh language skills were essential;
 - Welsh language skills were desirable;
 - Welsh language skills need to be learnt;
 - Welsh language skills are not required.
- In addition to the information specified in section 3.2, updates on Equality Impact Assessments, customer contact and promotional activities have also been included.

3.4 The standards that relate to publishing an annual report do not require that the report be approved by the council or the Welsh Language Commissioner prior to publication as was previously required under the Welsh Language Scheme.

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 well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

Long-term – Ensuring that the council is able to deliver bilingual services now and in the future.

Prevention – Improving services and upskilling staff will ensure that everyone regardless of language choice has equal access to services and thus preventing complaints and Welsh Language Commissioner Investigations.

Integration - By providing bilingual services to the public we make everyone feel equal and valued.

Collaboration - Partnership working assists the council in meeting its duties under the Welsh Language Standards. Working in collaboration with partners is further evidenced in the Five-Year Welsh Language Strategy.

Involvement - Publication of the report ensures that the public and stakeholders can review the work that has been undertaken.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The Welsh Language Standards give Welsh speakers improved, enforceable rights in relation to the Welsh language. There is a commitment to engage effectively with local communities to help protect and sustain the environment over the long term and in line with our climate change ambitions.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 Where there is a safeguarding concern, all communication will be managed under Bridgend County Borough Council's Safeguarding Policy. This will safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The development of a strategy will be met from within existing resources.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That Cabinet Committee Equalities notes this report and the progress made during 2023/2024 in meeting its Welsh Language duties.

Background documents – None