

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITY COMMITTEE

5 FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR RESOURCES

WELSH LANGUAGE (WALES) MEASURE 2011 / WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

1. Purpose of Report

To update the Cabinet Equality Committee on developments with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 will replace Welsh Language Schemes with a set of enforceable national 'standards'. These national standards will impact upon the work of the whole council. They will be linked to the equalities agenda, and will form a key component of the council's Customer Care Programme.

3. Background

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure was introduced by Welsh Government in March 2010 to:

- modernise the existing legal framework from the 1993 Welsh Language Act to promote consistency in Welsh language service provision throughout Wales;
- bring a number of private sector organisations who provide services to the public under the scope of the new law;
- establish the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner with a stronger enforcement role than the Welsh Language Board which it replaced on 1 April 2013.

Additionally, the standards will link to the following council's corporate priorities:

- working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement
- working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent
- working together to make the best use of our resources

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1** On 21 October 2013, the First Minister announced a timetable for making the first set of standards relating to the Welsh language. Welsh Government drafted regulations for the standards in September 2014 and aims for these to be in force in 2015. Bridgend County Borough Council's Welsh Language Scheme would therefore come to a legal end at that point. The first set of proposed standards was published in early 2014 and the Welsh Language Commissioner used these as a basis for a 12 week standards investigation (which closed on 18 April 2014) to determine whether Welsh councils, national parks and Welsh ministers can comply

with the standards and, if so, which standards should apply. Annual monitoring reports will continue to be required in the interim period.

Between 27 January and 18 April 2014 the commissioner carried out three standards investigations in relation to the above organisations; these investigations form the basis of the standards reports. BCBC submitted its response by the deadline date. The commissioner has concluded that all activities within the service delivery, policy making, operational, promotion and record keeping standards should be made specifically applicable to the 26 organisations and that additional standards should be specified. The commissioner considered evidence submitted by all 26 organisations, 409 members of the public and the advisory panel.

The commissioner subsequently submitted a report on the standards investigation to Welsh Ministers in May 2014. The Welsh Government is now drafting and debating these regulations with new Standards expected to be in place in early 2015.

4.2 BCBC welcomes developments in legislation offering a more consistent level of service to Welsh speakers. The Commissioner has concluded that all activities within the following 5 “Themes” should apply to all 22 Welsh Local Authorities. The 5 themes are as follows:

- Service delivery (85 standards) covering:
 - correspondence;
 - telephone calls and call centres;
 - public notices;
 - websites;
 - corporate identity;
 - signage and
 - awarding grants.
- Policy making (9 standards) covering areas such as:
 - considering the Welsh Language within the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process and
 - paying due regard to the Welsh Language in decision making.
- Operational (25 standards) covering areas such as:
 - internal administration;
 - ICT and support materials;
 - Workforce planning and training;
 - Signage;
 - Audible announcements and
 - Recruitment.
- Promotion (5 standards) covering areas such as:
 - producing a promotion strategy outlining how BCBC will promote and facilitate the Welsh Language;
 - actively offer the use of Welsh to visitors to the authority and
 - assess current opportunities to use Welsh
- Record keeping (9 standards) covering areas such as:
 - staff Welsh Language skills;

- posts;
- training;
- record of actions for policy compliance and complaints.

In preparation for its response to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Consultation, BCBC attached a RAG status to each of the 133 proposed standards indicating that:

- 109 had a green RAG status (i.e. the council is already complying with these standards);
- 13 had an amber RAG status (i.e. the council could comply with these standards with further work) and
- 11 had a red RAG status (i.e. the council would not be able to comply with these standards).

The 11 standards with a red RAG status are:

- BCBC publications to be available in Welsh eg: cabinet papers, licences, bills, brochures, strategies etc.;
- Education and Training courses must be offered in Welsh;
- Courses must be offered in Welsh (aimed at persons aged 18 and over);
- Assessing the need to provide a training course in Welsh;
- Using Welsh in internal administration;
- Publish policies regarding conduct, health and wellbeing, pay, performance management, absence in Welsh;
- Provide all internet pages in Welsh – tourism will be an issue;
- Provide all intranet pages in Welsh;
- Intranet interface and menu choices to be provided in Welsh;
- Welsh language skills, workforce planning and training;
- Fund activities to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

As this is an information report, there are no proposed changes to the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

No equality impact assessment has been carried out in relation to this report as it is an information report. The Welsh Language Scheme 2012 - 2015 continues to support the authority's equality agenda and will do so until such time as the national standards become operational.

7. Financial Implications

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 may have financial implications for local government, but this will not be fully understood until the standards and accompanying codes of practice are produced.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet Equalities Committee receives and considers this report.

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Date: 12 December 2014

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Background documents: None