

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT TO CABINET EQUALITY COMMITTEE**

**17 JULY 2014**

**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 aims to have drafted regulations for the standards in September 2014 and for these to be in force by November 2014. 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.

As a result, the commissioner has decided to give advice to Welsh ministers based on the emerging themes and respondents' views on the proposed standards and submitted a report on the standards investigation to Welsh Ministers in May 2014. The Welsh Government will draft regulations in September 2014 which are expected to be in place by November 2014.

**4.2** BCBC welcomes developments in legislation offering a more consistent level of service to Welsh speakers. The conclusions of the standards investigation are that:

- Regulations providing for service delivery standards should be specifically applicable to all county councils and county borough councils in Wales;
- Regulations providing for policy making standards should be specifically applicable to all county councils and county borough councils in Wales;
- Regulations providing for operational standards should be specifically applicable to all county councils and county borough councils in Wales;
- Regulations providing for record keeping standards should be specifically applicable to all county councils and county borough councils in Wales;
- Regulations providing for promotional standards should be specifically applicable to all county councils and county borough councils in Wales.

It is hoped that the commissioner will introduce parameters within which councils will operate such as developing a Welsh intranet page instead of a fully bilingual intranet site.

## **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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Corporate Director Resources  
30 June 2014**

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**Background documents: None**