

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES

17 SEPTEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR RESOURCES

WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS – DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. Purpose of Report

To update the Cabinet Committee – Equalities with information regarding the progress being made with the development of the Council's draft Welsh Language Standards Implementation Plan.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaces Welsh Language Schemes with a set of enforceable national 'standards which will impact upon the work of the whole council. A number of these standards relate to the development of a corporate implementation plan/strategy.

3. Background

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 modernises the legal framework regarding the use of the Welsh language in the delivery of public services and makes provision for the specification of standards of conduct in relation to the Welsh Language.

The standards 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 Following Welsh Government's Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations coming into force on 31 March 2015, a final set of Welsh Language Standards has been introduced. The Welsh Language Commissioner conducted a consultation exercise on the Draft Compliance Notice issued to Bridgend County Borough Council. The council responded to the consultation on 3 August 2015.

4.2 A draft Welsh Language Standards Implementation Plan has been populated with some example data and information relevant to the Resources Directorate. The approach to the development of the Implementation Plan was to:

- adopt a "SMART" approach to outlining each of the standards,
- describing the impact of each of the standards on individual service units;
- describe the work required to comply with the standard and the resources required to do so and

- the lead officer responsible for overseeing standards compliance within each service area.

4.3 The Implementation Plan will be used by each Directorate to track its progress with compliance and to monitor performance. A corporate Welsh Language Standards Implementation Plan will then be produced and published bilingually on an annual basis. The annual plan will document how the council is complying with each of the standards and this will form the basis of an Annual Report which the council is required to produce for the Welsh Language Commissioner.

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

Whilst no Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken of the development of the Council's Welsh Language Standards Implementation Plan, the development of the plan will ensure that the council complies with the Welsh Language Standards.

7. Financial Implications

Whilst it is difficult to cost full compliance with all of the proposed standards, a conservative estimate of the cost to implement all those standards is in the order of £300,000 as one off expenditure and £900,000 per annum recurring spend. Any additional cost pressures will need to be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. This is currently a minimum requirement. Bridgend County Borough Council is required to make significant budget reductions over the next 5 years, which is already impacting on the council's ability to deliver essential, frontline services. It is important to note however, that future non-compliance with one or more standards brings with it an organisational risk to the council in that any formal complaints that are upheld and which reach the final stage of the investigatory process may potentially bring a financial penalty of up to £5,000 per standard breach. The requirement to comply with the standards will remain. Although this is the final sanction to be imposed, the greater the ability of the council to meet these statutory obligations now will mitigate against future financial penalty.

8. Recommendation

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

Sarah Kingsbury
Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
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Contact Officer:

Paul Williams
Equality and Engagement Officer
Wing 3
Ravens Court
Brewery Lane
Bridgend CF31 4AP
Email: Paul.williams2@bridgend.gov.uk

Telephone: (01656) 643606

Background documents: None