

WELSH LANGUAGE STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Welsh Language Steering Committee held in Conference Room 1A, County Hall, Ruthin on Tuesday, 12 November 2019 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ellie Chard, Ann Davies, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Arwel Roberts, Graham Timms (Chair), Joe Welch and Emrys Wynne (Vice-Chair)

ALSO PRESENT

The Team Leader – Communications and Campaign Management (GW), Welsh Language Officer (MC), The Economic and Business Development Team Manager (MH), Corporate Director: Communities (NS) Welsh Commissioner (AR), Welsh Commissioner's Officer (DJ) and Committee Administrator (HB)

Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies (Cefn Meiriadog), Councillor Bobby Feeley, Councillor Alan James and Councillor Rhys Thomas

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies received.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no urgent matters.

4 MINUTES

The minutes were of the Welsh Language Steering Group meeting held 09 July 2019 were submitted.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 09 July 2019 be received and approves as a correct record.

5 WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER FEEDBACK

The Team Leader for Communications and Campaign Management (TLCCM) explained that they would create an annual report that reviewed emails, complaints, phone calls, website etc. The latest results were very positive.

He advised that there was a small issues regarding emails, whereby several Welsh emails were sent into the county and only one was responded to in Welsh.

Documents, books, policies etc. were all bilingual, though they needed to ensure services consider the level of Welsh for each role.

Members agreed that it may be beneficial for the Welsh Language Commissioner to attend a council briefing meeting, or full council.

The Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC) thanked all for the invite to the meeting. He also thanked Councillor Graham Timms for introducing him in Welsh. The WLC wanted to update members of the current situation, he introduced Dylan Jones from the Welsh Language Commissioner team. The WLC also wanted to inform members of some changes that would be happening.

Members were advised that every year a report was published which reviewed standards within the Local Authority, complaints and how they were dealt with. In terms of change, they had seen a big difference. Since appointing a Welsh Language, internally there had been a big difference.

It was highlighted that a big change internally for Denbighshire was the moving of the Leisure Service. It would need to be monitored to ensure the same level of standards are applied.

The WLC advised that they reviewed recruitment between June and December 2018. There were 85 roles advertised in that time, 75 were Welsh desirable and 10 Welsh essential. The WLC advised that there should be further categories on the job in terms of Welsh, the current process needed to be reviewed.

The WLC explained some of the changes he had implemented since starting in the role.

He said he needed to ensure resources were available to conduct thorough and proper investigations and research.

This was because the commissioner could conduct an investigation without getting any information from the Local Authority. Once an investigation had started it would have to be completed in full.

The process was the commissioner would complete an investigation, present a report to the Local Authority, the Local Authority would accept the problem and would review how they could stop the same problem in the future.

The WLC and members highlighted the struggle Ireland were having with the Gaelic language, and the worry that official languages were dying out.

He did not want Wales to experience the same issues, roughly 9% of Welsh speakers use Welsh all day, every day, the Welsh Government have said they want the figure to be 20% by 2050.

The WLC said he wanted to complete some work regarding Welsh Language Skill level. He explained that during a recent visit to a school, it was clear that sixth form students could understand Welsh but struggled to respond in Welsh. He felt there needed to be something in place to ensure students continue to speak Welsh after education.

Students leave education not knowing that the Welsh language was a skill. This was why the WLC wanted to focus on recruitment policies, he felt that if 75 jobs were listed as Welsh desirable then not enough thought had been put into the assessment of the role.

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts agreed that standards were important but was only the start. He felt that attitude was a priority however great work had already been done in the LA.

As a county, there had been major investments in schools, Ysgol Carreg Emlyn, Ysgol y Llys etc. since, Welsh Education numbers had increased, with the hope that the figures would continue to increase. Cllr Hilditch-Roberts said he would welcome the WLC to support the Canolfan Iaith in Ysgol Glan Clwyd. The centre was important as they could push the Welsh Language from young people to adults.

Members highlighted that once pupils turn 16 and decide on their A-Level subjects, they tend to move to English education as it could offer more options. Something needed to be done to keep students in Welsh education.

The WLC advised that it is with the Local Authority to make decisions on percentage. For examples some departments could assess the role and conclude that Welsh was not essential as there was enough Welsh speakers in the department already.

He continued to explain that the issue was not the lack of Welsh speakers but confidence in those who can speak Welsh.

Coleg Cambria were now offering some exams in Welsh, some personal tutors also spoke Welsh. The WLC noted that although that was great, there could be much more done to support Welsh students.

The WLC felt it important the correct complaints process was followed. Once a complaint was received by the commissioner it would be allocated to an investigations officer, they would then make the decision whether or not it should be investigated fully. Investigation officers take into account previous complaints, measure put in place to avoid future complaints, the investigation officer would then make recommendations on whether a full investigation should take place. He advised that he would be happy to release internal resources when policies were created, rather than find problems further down the line.

The Chair advised members that as a learner of the Welsh language he was hesitant to speak it, he said he was a prime example of the people who need concentrating on. He felt that if he attempted to speak Welsh that he may be criticised for being incorrect even though he knows that wouldn't be the case. He asked whether there was anything being developed to ensure barriers like the above don't become an issue.

The WLC noted that wearing Welsh lanyards and badges was a great way to encourage people to speak Welsh with one another. But it would be something to review, if barriers were still present. The WLC noted that he had agreed to attend all Rhanbarth Llaes Cymru's meetings.

He continued to explain that they were working closely with Banks and Shops to increase the use of work language, Menter Iaith were responsible for smaller businesses.

To conclude the WLC commissioner thanked members for the opportunity to attend the meeting, and said he would be happy to attend future meetings.

RESOLVED: that the update received be accepted and noted by the committee.

6 PROGRESS WITH THE WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS (SELF ASSESSMENT)

RESOVLED: that members had discussed the item in the previous item and agreed to continue to the next agenda item.

7 EISTEDDFOD YR URDD UPDATE

The Team Leader for Communication and Campaign Management (TLCCM) advised members that 1,600 people had taken part in the 'gwyl cyhoeddi'. He continued to say that many schools had taken part and the Urdd were really impressed by Rhyl's response.

Communication – the strategic group were currently deciding on the main tent. The TLCCM advised that they wanted 3 sections to the tent; a studio, a section for business and tourism and a section for art and design.

Business and Tourism – the strategic group had many ideas, for example they wanted Llandegla bike centre to attend, SC2, open stalls that promote their business.

Art and Design – the idea was to have something happening throughout the whole week. An ongoing design competition for example that enticed people to return.

Sports area – 5x60 staff were bringing different sports in throughout the week, with equipment.

Schools – Primary school shows were already being planned, the shows were open to years 5 and 6, and there would also be a high school show.

RESOLVED: that the update on the Eisteddfod be received and noted by the committee.

8 WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY - BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

The Economic and Business Development Team Manager (EBDTM) presented a PowerPoint presentation to the committee on the Welsh in Business Pilot Project.

Firstly, the EBDTM noted that majority of the response said it would cost money, however the case study had examples to prove that it would be financially beneficial.

For the purpose of the minutes, a video was played to the committee

The video discussed support and advice regarding the Welsh Language and also Local Welsh Products.

Case Studies – the programme encouraged businesses to engage with staff. For example, Oriol House now provided 100% Welsh Weddings, statistics proved that productivity increased.

The EBDTM highlighted that the demand for Social Media Courses had risen. He also advised that the EBT team was much smaller which could cause delays in processes.

Members were advised that they were looking for local businesses to join the DCC tent at the Eisteddfod.

The committee were advised that the team had been working on established retailers. Working on how business and shops can be more friendly and welcoming, music etc.

The Chair noted that businesses played a vital part in using Welsh in the community. There was a need to encourage public facing staff to engage in the Welsh Language. He thanked the EBDTM for attending and welcomed the team back to future meetings.

To conclude the agenda item, it was noted that the EBDTM was leaving the authority and this would be his final meeting. The committee thanked him for his work and wished him well.

RESOLVED: that the committee received and noted the update regarding the Welsh language Strategy.

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's Forward Work Programme was presented for consideration.

RESOLVED: that the committee's forward work programme be received and noted.

Meeting Closed 13:00pm