

WELSH LANGUAGE STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Welsh Language Steering Committee held in by video conference on Tuesday, 8 November 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ellie Chard, Ann Davies, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Paul Keddie, Huw Williams and Emrys Wynne

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Governance and Business (GW), Welsh Language Officer (MC), Committee Administrators (SW (Host) RTJ)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received by Councillors Merfyn Parry and Elfed Williams.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest had been raised.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Welsh Language Steering Committee held on 8 November 2022 were submitted.

The appointment of vice chair was not agreed at the previous meeting, however, Councillor Emrys Wynne proposed that Councillor Elfed Williams be appointed as chair, seconded by Councillor Huw Williams. All present agreed.

No other matters were raised.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 November 2022 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS - STANDARD 98

The Welsh Language Officer (WLO) introduced the Welsh Language Standards - Standard 98 report (previously circulated); the report was about the Welsh Language Standards - specifically standard 98.

The chair highlighted the appendices as the Conwy policy for information purposes; the WLO clarified that the policy would be followed in forming the policy for DCC.

The Welsh Language Standards were introduced in Denbighshire in 2015 as part of a rollout to public sector organisations in Wales. The Standards were created in direct response to the Welsh Language Measure (2011) and the role of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Standards have been introduced to ensure that the Welsh Language is treated as fairly as the English Language. Denbighshire must comply with 167 standards broken down into five key areas: Service Delivery, Policy Making, and Operational. Record Keeping and Promotional.

The following discussed the following –

- The committee queried whether Denbighshire Leisure limited would have to conform to the Welsh Language Standards the same as Denbighshire County Council; officers informed members that DLL would conform to the same standards as the Council.
- The committee raised concerns that too much work could be called upon the workforce regarding the policy and hoped it wouldn't cause too much work for the staff.
- Officers clarified to members that the policy was being brought to them today to see if they were happy with the structure and wording ahead of being taken to CET and SLT ahead of being brought back to the committee in 2023 to be finally agreed upon.
- The WLO reassured members that the language of correspondence with the general public was not a burden to staff as all initial letters were sent out bilingually to ensure if conformed to the Welsh Language standards. However, if the member of the public responded by stating their preferred language of correspondence, then it would continue in their language of choice.
- Members suggested that throughout the policy, reference should be made to pre-existing policies, such as street naming, as they had been discussed at length through various meetings.

RESOLVED that members of the Welsh Language Steering Committee note the content of the Welsh Language Standards - Standard 98 report.

6 WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER FEEDBACK

The Welsh Language Officer (WLO) introduced the Welsh Language Commissioner Feedback report (previously circulated); the report referred to the results of the Welsh Language Commissioner's Monitoring Report.

Every year, the Welsh Language Commissioner carries out checks amongst organisations that are implementing the statutory Welsh Language Standards to ensure those organisations are complying with the legislation.

The Commissioner's team also arrange an annual meeting to discuss the findings and to report on progress with the annual Welsh Language Monitoring Report.

Dylan Jones, on behalf of the Commissioner, explained the Commissioner's new way of working this year on looking at organisations' compliance with the relevant standards. Recruitment and Policies were their priority.

A body that creates and publishes documents and forms

During the 2022-23 surveys, it was discovered that not all documents and forms included a statement in the English versions, also available in Welsh. There were two examples of a document that did not comply with standard 49, namely:

All the documents on the Council's internet site were raised, and the work to put the note on all of these could take weeks/months; we were awaiting confirmation from the Welsh language monitoring office.

The Council noted medium compliance for their apps, noting that the ParentPay app was unavailable in Welsh. It was discussed that ParentPay was not an app that the Council had published, and it was confirmed that the schools had an agreement with the company.

During the 2022-23 surveys, it was noted that one message on Twitter and one message on Facebook were published in English only on the Council's corporate media.

- Using the Welsh language within the body's administration It was noted in the self-assessment questionnaire that the Council did not have a policy on the use of Welsh within the administration of a body.
- Recruitment and appointment standards It was noted during the 2022-23 surveys that two job advertisements contained monolingual English words and/or titles.

The errors highlighted have already been resolved.

- Members thanked the WLO for the report; however, they highlighted some concerns with social media as some posts only showed as English and not bilingual. The WLO confirmed that social media was a challenge due to the algorithm only highlighting one language or another.
- The WLO also informed the committee that another challenge with social media was that some departments had made their social media accounts in areas within the Council. They would need to be reminded of the Welsh language policy.

RESOLVED that the Welsh Language Steering Committee note the activities taken during 2023 and endorse the proposed activities for 2023.

7 ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE THE WELSH LANGUAGE

The Welsh Language Officer (WLO) introduced the report highlighting the activities to promote the Welsh Language (previously circulated); the report aimed to inform the committee of the internal and external work to promote the Welsh Language.

These were as followed –

- Staff Eisteddfod

The Council held its fourth Eisteddfod between 18 February and 1 March as part of the St David's Day celebrations. The event is part of the Council's efforts to raise the profile and ensure a better understanding of the Welsh language and also to celebrate Welsh culture. It was held during a period of considerable focus on the Welsh language with the return of the Urdd Eisteddfod to the County in May 2022. Once again this year, because of Covid-19, the Staff Eisteddfod was held digitally. Our private staff Facebook platform was used to hold the Eisteddfod and to promote the various categories for staff to compete in by uploading a photo to accompany each category. Categories included Pet in the Best Condition, Most Talented Pet, Before and After/Old and New, a sentence from DEWI SANT, my favourite place in Denbighshire and many more; this was made to encourage more people to participate in the Eisteddfod this year, it was decided that all Council staff should be adjudicators. They chose the winners by 'liking' photos/videos on the Facebook page, and those with the most 'likes' were the winners. The response and support received were extremely encouraging again this year, with a good level of staff engagement.

- The Urdd Eisteddfod in Denbighshire

The Urdd Eisteddfod returned to Denbighshire this year and was held at Kilford Farm on the outskirts of Denbigh. Preparations for the Eisteddfod began in 2018; however, it had to be postponed twice because of the Pandemic. Arranging the Eisteddfod re-started in 2021 with many busy months leading up to the event itself. Denbighshire County Council was one of the Eisteddfod's main sponsors this year, and we were also sponsored the two shows – the primary schools' show 'Ni yw y Byd' (We are the World) and the secondary schools' show 'Fi di Fi' (I am Me). We had a large marquee on the Eisteddfod field, and our theme was 'Discovering Denbighshire'. The marquee had several sections, which concluded of a theatre, business/tourism, arts and crafts and countryside. It was an extremely successful Eisteddfod, and Denbighshire's marquee was busy all day, every day. It was lovely to see so much excitement and buzz on the maes after such a long time.

- Paned a Sgwrs

Sessions are still being held virtually. Numbers reduced during 2021 as a result of the sessions being virtual, but they have risen again over the last year, and the sessions are going from strength to strength. We have face-to-face reading clubs once a month at Denbigh and Ruthin Libraries. Staff choose a book from the 'Amdani' series, which is suitable for learners and read it by the next session, where the book is then discussed, allowing learners to use Welsh to express their opinions. These sessions have been very successful, with staff favouring the face-to-face sessions. Weekly written tasks are also prepared for staff to help them develop their written skills.

Next steps: Proposed timetable of activity for 2023:

Month Activities

- October 2022 – August 2023 - Internal campaign on 'Doubling your daily use of the Welsh language
- November – December 2022 - FIFA World Cup
- November 2022 – March 20223 - Welsh Language Strategy
- November 2022 – January 2023- Policy on Implementing the Welsh language internally

The committee discussed the following further –

- The committee fully supported the activities which were carried out.
- Members suggested that lanyards and badges be used more, online and in person, which would make starting conversations easier.
- The committee raised that there needs to be an encouragement of a good environment to get people to speak Welsh within the Council.

RESOLVED that the Welsh Language Steering Committee note the update regarding the activities to promote the Welsh Language.

8 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The committee's forward work programme was presented for consideration.

The committee discussed the following further –

- The WLO informed the committee that the Report on the success of the Language Strategy 2017-2022 could possibly be postponed until July.
- The committee queried whether a report on the Welsh Language policy within education could be discussed at a future meeting.
- The WLO also confirmed that the Welsh Language Standards - Standard 98 report would be brought back to the committee for the 5th July meeting.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the Committee's Forward Work Programme be received and noted.

9 FOR INFORMATION - WELSH AS A WAY OF WORKING REPORT

RESOLVED the Welsh Language Steering Committee receive and note the Welsh as a Way of Working Information Report.