

Report To: Welsh Language Committee

Date of Meeting: 18 December

Lead Member / Officer: Huw Hilditch Roberts / Nicola Stubbins

Report Author: Gareth Watson, Team Leader- Communications and Campaign Management

Title: Strategic Welsh Language development

1. What is the report about?

This report sets out work carried out in relation to development of the Welsh Language in Denbighshire, in line with national legislation and the Council's own Welsh Language Strategy.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To inform members of the progress made in relation to the strategic development of the Welsh Language

3. What are the Recommendations?

To note the contents of this report.

4. Report details

A considerable amount of work has gone on in Denbighshire in the efforts to respond positively to changes in language legislation. The Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 has enabled the Government to set standards relating to the Welsh Language and the Welsh Government expects the Council to adopt a Welsh Language Strategy, as part of its response to the Standards.

The strategic responsibility for the Welsh Language in Denbighshire lies with the Council's Corporate Executive Team. The Lead Director is Nicola Stubbins, with Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts being the political Lead Member with responsibility for the Welsh Language. Day to day handling of Welsh Language issues is the responsibility of the Team Leader for Communications and Campaign.

The Council is already responding positively to the Welsh Language Standards and has already implemented many of the agreed actions. It has also responded positively to the More Than Just Words framework which has been put in place to improve Welsh language provision in the health and social care sector. A comprehensive action plan is in place and Denbighshire has committed to implementing the action plan in the county, for the benefit of the county's residents.

Welsh Language Standards: The Council's main focus over the past three years has been around preparing and implementing the 169 Standards issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner. Extensive work has gone on within services to change processes, ensuring that customers receive a bilingual service, with a focus on the active offer. The Standards are categorised under four key themes: correspondence, promotion, policy making and internal administration within the Council.

Extensive communication has taken place around the Standards, including regular staff messages from the Chief Executive, presentations at Leadership Conferences, drop-in sessions for staff, presentations at team meetings.

A key development from the Standards is the creation of a Welsh Language Strategy. The Strategy outlines the Council's commitment towards promoting the Welsh Language and facilitating its use within the county. The ambition is to halt the decline in the number of Welsh speakers in Denbighshire. As a result, we aim to increase the number of Welsh speakers in Denbighshire by 0.5 % over the next five years, with a view to considering a longer term target to increase the number of Welsh speakers over the next 15 years.

The Council will deliver the main elements of this strategy by working strategically and in collaboration with a host of community organisations to further mainstream the Welsh Language into service delivery and ensure that it becomes an essential consideration in future projects, strategies and work plans.

There are five key areas for development highlighted in the strategy:

- Theme 1: Strategic planning of the Welsh Language in Denbighshire
- Theme 2: Children and Young People
- Theme 3: Community
- Theme 4: Business and the economy
- Theme 5: Internal administration within the Council

These five themes emerged from extensive research carried out on behalf of the authority.

Welsh Language Champions: All services have nominated Welsh Language Champions in their service and their role is to encourage compliance with the Standards and to report any examples of non-compliance. Posters have been placed in main buildings and reception areas, to inform staff of their service champions. Meetings are held quarterly.

Drop in sessions for staff – The Council has held a series of drop in sessions for staff with questions about the implementation of the Standards.

Working Welsh Lanyards – All members of staff who are fluent Welsh speakers or learners have been given lanyards, so they are instantly recognisable as being Welsh speakers to members of the public and internal colleagues.

E-mail signatures: Staff have been provided with templates to assist them in preparing their e-mail signatures bilingually.

Cysill and Microsoft Office in Welsh: All Welsh speakers and learners have had Cysill installed on their computer systems. Guidelines have also been issued to staff on how to access Microsoft Office through the medium of Welsh.

Telephone answering – The Council has provided templates for staff with guidelines on how to answer the telephone bilingually, including providing wording written phonetically.

Intranet – The Council has introduced a brand new intranet which is available in Welsh, as well as English.

Collating information about staff - The Council hosts annual surveys, asking staff to self-assess their linguistic skills. This information is then reported back to services and should be used as part of the workforce planning process.

Council's main telephone line – The Council has introduced a system where people can choose the language of their choice when they contact the Council through the main telephone number.

Staff Excellence Awards – A special award has been introduced into the Awards, to honour staff for their commitment and dedication to developing the Welsh Language within the Council.

Culture and ethos of the organisation – The Council has published a position statement on how it intends to enhance the bilingual culture and ethos of the organisation. Work will get underway in 2016 to progress this, including promotion of Welsh language training courses and informal and formal opportunities to use Welsh in the workplace.

Mystery Shopper exercise – The Council is working closely with Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych and over the next six months, a 'mystery shopper' exercise will be carried out, to check compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.

Introducing Welsh Language compliance in Service Challenges – The Council has introduced a section on Welsh Language compliance into the annual service challenge process where each service is asked to provide evidence on performance.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The Council has drawn up a vision for the Welsh Language and this was approved as part of the Welsh Language Strategy. This is an underpinning element that is linked to all of the corporate priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The Council is currently advertising for a Welsh Language Officer that would report to the Team Leader- Communications. They will assist the Team Leader in the strategic development of the Welsh Language in the authority.

There is no other budget in place for the Welsh Language, with any costs incurred being absorbed through existing budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

Whilst no formal Well-being Impact Assessment is needed for this report, it is worth noting some of the key benefits in relation to the Well-Being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language Standards.

One of the key components of the well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is having: “A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language : A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation”.

The Council also has a role, through its Welsh Language Standards, to promote opportunities for local communities to get involved in Welsh Language activities.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Extensive consultation meetings have been held with Cabinet, the Senior Leadership Team, Corporate Executive Team, Staff and the Members Welsh Language Forum throughout the process of planning for and implementation of the Welsh Language Standards.

Consultation also took place around the creation of the Welsh Language Strategy, with all services involved in its creation. It was also ratified by the Senior Leadership Team, as well as Cabinet.

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

The main risk is to the reputation of the authority, as we have already made a commitment in our Welsh Language Strategy and through the Welsh Language Standards to continue to proactively support services through the medium of Welsh.

To mitigate the risks, on-going proactive work needs to continue with all services to keep Welsh language development and the Welsh language legislation at the forefront of people’s minds.