

WELSH LANGUAGE STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Welsh Language Steering Committee held via Video Conferencing on Tuesday, 10 November 2020 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

Observer - Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies.

ALSO PRESENT

The Team Leader – Communications and Campaign Management (GW), Welsh Language Officer (MC), Corporate Director: Communities (NS), Democratic Services Manager (SP) (Host) and Committee Administrator (RTJ)

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 12 November 2019 were submitted.

Matters Arising –

Members queried whether there was an update on the Urdd Eisteddfod, officers clarified that they had queried with organisers whether a decision had been reached whether the event would be held. However nothing had been confirmed, hopefully the Council would receive an update soon.

RESOLVED: *that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 November 2019 be received and approves as a correct record.*

5 WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S MONITORING REPORT

The Team Leader for Communications and Campaign Management (TLCCM) presented the report (previously circulated) update Members on the findings of the

2020 monitoring work, carried out by the commissioner's office. The Welsh Language Commissioner annually monitors user experience by testing specific services – including correspondence, telephone, reception, websites etc – for a random sample of organisations.

The work happens intermittently during the year through mystery shopper exercises, site visits, and online inspection. The work was designed so that it does not lead to unreasonable use of organisations' resources. In 2019-20, Denbighshire was part of the random sample of organisations. The findings are outlined by the Commissioner's Office, with a view to the organization taking appropriate steps to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

A meeting would be organised with the Welsh Language Commissioner officers at the end of the year, to discuss the findings with the report.

General Debate –

The Welsh Language Steering Committee (WLSC) were the only committee that looked at the findings of the Commissioners report, there was also the Welsh Language Champion's meeting, which looked at the day to day running of the Welsh Languages within the Council.

Members queried whether the Commissioners report could be sent to a scrutiny committee for the work to be scrutinised further. The lead members informed the committee that the committee was formed to scrutinise the Welsh Language within the Council, and believed it would not be beneficial to duplicate work. The chair suggested the matter could be discussed in Scrutiny chairs and vice chairs.

The committee queried the translation of documents, the formatting and the occasional errors. Officers clarified that documents were translated through the agreement with Conwy County Borough Council. However the documents were sent back in the same format it was sent, unfortunately formatting errors could occasionally occur.

Members understood that there were some errors with the translation as sometimes the translators were not familiar with the certain terms, sometimes it proved difficult to translate certain matters if you did not have understanding of the matter being translated.

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

6 WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY

Team Leader- Communications and Campaign Management (TMCCM) presented the report developing a new Welsh Language Strategy for Denbighshire (previously circulated). The Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 has enabled the Government to set standards relating to the Welsh Language and the Welsh Government expected all local authorities to adopt a Welsh Language Strategy, as part of their response to the Standards.

The current strategy, adopted by Denbighshire's Cabinet in March 2017, outlines the approach towards promoting the Welsh Language and facilitating its use within the county and there is an expectancy of the Council to revise its strategy, five years on from publication date. The new strategy was due in March 2022.

Denbighshire was a predominantly bilingual county with a rich culture and heritage. We were proud of this and want this pride to be reflected in our day to day interaction with communities, with residents and with our staff. It was highlighted that the commissioner report clearly indicated the strengths of what Denbighshire County Council (DCC) were working well to get the strategy implemented into the culture of the Council.

Examples of this were small things such as Denbighshire Today which was circulated to all members, had some Welsh words for staff to learn some Welsh.

The economy was important, and needed to see the impacts on the economy and the Welsh language and DCC also needed to ensure that Staff were adequately trained in all departments, to ensure that work would be carried out to a certain high level of quality. The next steps was to ensure the best steps and procedures were shared throughout the Council. The whole narrative with the Council and the Welsh language was predominately strong the only recent negative was the lack of Welsh translation with virtual meetings. This was due to technical constraints and not the passion for the Welsh language.

The Welsh language commissioner wanted DCC to have the strategy in place by March 2022, it was up to Council discretion if they wished the strategy to be a 5 year plan or a longer term plan. Hopefully the team would begin work soon, this would allow a year to conduct the work.

General Debate –

The committee queried whether the old strategy could be reviewed and reviewed to ensure all the targets were reached, and to ensure we could work on certain aspects. It was suggested a workshop like session could be organised in the future, this would allow the matters to be discussed thoroughly.

The themes within report were highlighted the especially the fourth theme which read - *“Theme 4 looked at how Denbighshire and its economy development partners should recognise the importance of a thriving economy to the future of the Welsh Language and ensuring that strategies are in place to ensure opportunities for young people to stay in the local community”*

It was queried how many staff within the team were bilingual, and how could they convey the importance with the Welsh language in the community. Officers clarified that officers worked with external bodies such as Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych to ensure, that businesses worked through the medium of Welsh.

It was raised whether the Council challenged each planning matter in regards to the Welsh language. As there had been a recent planning application accepted for a small village which reduced the percentage of Welsh language speakers by 10% in the area. The lead member informed the committee the material planning matters

were in place through Welsh Government (WG) and not the local government. Councillor Graham Timms informed the committee that the Welsh Language was highlighted throughout the Wellbeing impact assessment.

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

7 WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

Lead Member for Education, Children's Services and Public Engagement presented the Welsh Language promotional activity report (previously circulated) which aimed to update members on the Welsh Language promotional activity since the last meeting and the outline plans for the year ahead.

The period since the last meeting of this Group has been challenging, with the team needing to find alternative ways of delivering Welsh Language promotional activity.

All activity over the past six months has been carried out through online meetings and promotion on social media and through internal communications channels. These included –

- **Partnership working** - Meetings of Partner Iaith (the Welsh Language Partnership in Denbighshire) have continued online. Although COVID has had some impact on the partnership's work, such as the work of analysing Welsh Language social activity across the county, it has been able to progress with some activities.
- **Mae gen i Hawl (I have rights) campaign** - This was a campaign by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office to promote people's rights to receive public services through the medium of Welsh. The campaign was an annual event, supported by a national programme of activities. In Denbighshire, we have supported this campaign through regular promotion but decided to implement it for a lengthier period of time, to extend the reach of our messages and be able to carry out various promotional activities.
- **Staff Eisteddfod** - The Council held its second Eisteddfod on March 6th as part of St David's Day celebrations, shortly before the coronavirus national lockdown. The event was part of the Council's efforts to raise the profile and gain a better understanding of the language, and to celebrate the culture of Wales. It comes at a time when there significant attention on the Welsh language and the fact that the Urdd Eisteddfod was due to return to the county in May 2021.
- **Paned a Sgwrs** - As the majority of staff now work from home, the Paned a Sgwrs sessions have been held digitally. There was a very good start to the virtual sessions with a number of members attending, but the numbers have declined in recent months. This was due to the fact that staff needed a break from being in front of the small screen over lunchtime so the session time was inconvenient compared to face-to-face sessions.
- **Owain Glyndŵr Day** This year to celebrate Owain Glyndwr's day, the Council shared a video it had produced on its corporate social accounts. The video shows Glyndŵr's links with Denbighshire and significant places within the county relating to its history. This received very positive feedback from

staff and many stated that they were not aware of the significant of Denbighshire to Glyndŵr's history.

- **Shwmae Sumae Day** - The Council supported the national Shwmae Sumae Day campaign in October. The day was intended to promote the idea of starting each conversation with a shwmae or
- sumae. The aim of the day was to show that the Welsh language belongs to everyone – fluent speakers, learners or those who may be reticent about speaking Welsh.
- **Tasgau Tachwedd/ November Tasks** - During the first week of each month we would draw up and present short and fun tasks for staff to complete online. The different themed tasks would always accompany the month/term. The aim was to engage with staff through the medium of Welsh and to try to get them to use and think in Welsh while working from home.

The members of the committee thanked officers for the continued hard work and dedication to the Welsh Language within the Council. It was suggested that external organisations be invited to future meetings of the Welsh Language Steering committee to discuss partnership working.

RESOLVED *that the Welsh Language Steering Committee note the promotional activity and the outline plans for 2021.*

8 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 11:34am