

WELSH LANGUAGE STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Welsh Language Steering Committee held by video conference on Tuesday, 13 July 2021 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

Observer – Councillor Meirick Davies

ALSO PRESENT

Head of Customers, Communications and Marketing (LG), Welsh Language Officer (MC) Modernising Education Officer (CE), Public Relations and Communications Officer (MJ) and Committee Administrator (RTJ)

1 APOLOGIES

None.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The committee administrator raised with the committee that a chair would need to be nominated for the next municipal year, and asked whether there were any nominations for the position of chair.

Councillor Arwel Roberts proposed Councillor Graham Timms for the position of chair, seconded by Councillor Ann Davies.

There were no other nominations. All present members agreed with the nomination of Councillor Graham Timms.

RESOLVED that Councillor Graham Timms be appointed as chair for the ensuing municipal year.

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

The chair queried with the committee whether they had any nominations for the position of vice chair for the municipal year.

Councillor Arwel Roberts proposed Councillor Emrys Wynne, which was seconded by Councillor Ellie Chair, there was no other nominations. All present were in agreement with the proposal.

RESOLVED – Councillor Emrys Wynne be appointed as a vice chair for the ensuing municipal year.

5 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

None.

6 MINUTES

The minutes of the Welsh Language Steering Committee held on 16 March 2021 were submitted.

Responding to a question raised the Welsh Language Officer clarified that reports with connections to the Welsh language had not been circulated to the local press, but work was underway to do so in future

The powers the committee held were raised, as members were not sure if they were a decision making committee. The Head of Communities and Customers assured members she would liaise with the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) to clarify the powers the committee had.

Street naming was queried and whether it could be discussed at a future meeting, members were advised that the matter had been discussed thoroughly through Scrutiny committees.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 March 2021 be received and approved as a correct record.

7 WELSH LANGUAGE JOURNEY IN THE COUNCIL

The Public Relations and Communications Officer (PRCO) introduced members to his Welsh language journey throughout the Council.

He had worked in the press office for 4 years and wanted to learn Welsh. It was clarified that the PRCO had attended a Welsh medium primary school, however he had moved to an English medium high school and lost his confidence and ability with the Welsh Language.

The PRCO informed the supportive nature of the Press team with his journey of learning the Welsh Language. The stated that the support made the whole experience easier. Whilst at work the PRCO would attend lessons through Popeth Cymraeg in Denbigh, which was a unique organisation set up by local Welsh learners and native speakers solely for the purpose of teaching Welsh to Adults in the area.

The PRCO highlighted the strain that the pandemic has caused on the learning journey, as since the pandemic the physical face to face lessons had finished, and were held on Zoom. However with the restrictions easing with the pandemic there was a chance the normal face to face lessons would resume.

The PRCO ended his short presentation by highlighting the culture in Denbighshire with the Welsh language was great, there was no judgement and everyone encouraged him to learn the Welsh Language.

Members discussed the following in further detail –

- Members praised the PRCO for his Welsh language journey, it was queried whether there was a passion throughout the Council, not only the press team. The PRCO clarified that there was passion for the Welsh language throughout the Council which was infectious.
- The Welsh Language Officer informed the committee that the PRCO had won two awards throughout his language journey, he had won the Excellency Denbighshire award for learning Welsh but also won the Welsh learner award at Coleg Cambria.
- The Lead Member for Education, Children's Services and Public Engagement, highlighted seeing the PRCO's skill grow was a great credit to himself and his team. It was important to show that staff had an interest and desire to learn the Welsh language, and there was a need to continue to progress with learning.

RESOLVED that the presentation on the Welsh language journey in the council be noted.

8 WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

The Modernising Education Officer (MEO) alongside Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts the Lead Member for Education, Children's Services and Public Engagement presented the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032 (previously circulated) to update Members. On the new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan which would set out how Welsh education would be developed in all our schools over the next 10 years.

Every new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan would follow the same guidance and would be arranged around seven outcomes. The outcomes reflect a learner's education journey and were consistent with the policy areas of Cymraeg 2050 and Education in Wales: Our National mission.

- Outcome 1: More nursery children/ three year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
- Outcome 2: More reception class children/ five year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
- Outcome 3: More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another
- Outcome 4: More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh
- Outcome 5: More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school
- Outcome 6: An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) in accordance with the duties

imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

- Outcome 7: Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh

The MEO added that schools and ALN and the Welsh language have really invested into this to ensure that no Welsh language children lose out. The MEO stated that there was a need to offer bilingual education in schools.

Each Local Authority has been set a target by Welsh Government to increase the number of year 1 pupils receiving Welsh medium education. The lower target for Denbighshire has been set at 35% and the upper target was 39%. As of 2020, 28% of year 1 pupils in Denbighshire access Welsh medium education. This amount was a large challenge for Denbighshire. The consultation for the report would be going out in September, as officer's avoided consultation over the summer Holiday. With the final plan submitted to Welsh Government in January 2022

Members discussed the following in more detail –

- The Members queried whether there were any plans for Ysgol Dewi Sant and a Cylch Meirthin, similar to the Cylch which had been implemented in St. Asaph. The officers clarified that the plans were still ongoing, however they would be supported by the Welsh Government as funding had been agreed.
- Members also highlighted the Cylch Meirthin in Ruthin and queried whether a location had been identified. The committee were informed that there were still ongoing issues, however if there was ever a development or investment that there would have to be an equal offer for both the Welsh and English Language.

RESOLVED that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and the target set for Denbighshire be noted.

9 WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY

The Welsh Language Officer (WLO) presented the Welsh Language Strategy report (previously circulated) which was to update on the proposed timetable for developing the new strategy.

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. There was an expectancy of the Council to revise its strategy five years on from publication date. The new strategy was due in March 2022.

These were the proposed themes of the new strategy –

- Theme 1 looks at how Denbighshire works with its key partners involved in delivering the Welsh language across the county and how they can work more strategically and planning their activities in a more co-ordinated manner
- Theme 2 looks at increasing the number of pupils becoming fluent in the Welsh Language during their school life and encouraging greater use of the language in future life. We were also looking at improving opportunities for children and young people in social settings through working with our Youth and Leisure services.
- Theme 3 looks at issues affecting communities in relation to the Welsh Language, with a key focus on the impact of policy decisions. A key focus was being placed on local planning issues and the 'More than Words' Framework to enhance bilingual services in health and social care.
- Theme 4 looks 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 were in place to ensure opportunities for young people to stay in the local community.
- Theme 5 looks at how the Council can enhance the Welsh language through providing training to staff and enhancing the bilingual ethos of the authority through promotion of the Welsh Language.

The new themes emphasized the challenge of retaining young people within their communities.

Members discussed the following in further detail –

- Members felt that the fourth theme was highly important, and wondered whether the matter could be included within the new corporate plan, and it be prefaced as a highly important matter. The Lead Member for Education, Children's Services and Public Engagement agreed that the matter merited inclusion.
- Concerns with the funding, and the term 'goodwill' as it would only go so far, the committee hoped that some money aside to assist with the development of the Welsh Language in the Council. The Lead Member for Education, Children's Services and Public Engagement the issue has been something which has been a challenge for the past 4/5 years, , however some other projects within DCC has developed things such as the Welsh Language Centre, which was a good sign that the Welsh Language was included in the most recent Corporate Plan.
- Members queried whether the amount of Welsh language speakers had increased since the Council was formed in 1996, officer responded stating that they didn't have the statistics to hand but would try and source them.

RESOLVED that the Welsh Language Steering Committee propose the Corporate Plan adopt the Welsh Language Strategy as one of the most important parts of the Corporate Plan, and a budget line be included within the budget to fund the strategy.

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

Members raised the following matters –

- It was queried whether an update with regards to the Welsh Language Strategy could be presented at the next meeting.
- The Welsh Language Officer clarified that there would be a brief update with the National Eisteddfod included with the Eisteddfod yr Urdd update.

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

The meeting concluded at 12.05 p.m.