

WELSH LANGUAGE STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Welsh Language Steering Committee held via video conference on Tuesday, 9 November 2021 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

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

Observer – Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Communities (NS), Welsh Language Officer (MC), Lead Officer - Destination, Marketing and Communication Team (SO), Committee Administrators (KJ – Host) (RTJ)

Mudiad Meithrin Provincial Manager (CG)

1 APOLOGIES

None.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Arwel Roberts declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, as he collected donations towards the Eisteddfod yr Urdd.

Councillor Huw Hilditch Roberts declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 as he was the treasurer for collecting donations for the Eisteddfod yr Urdd in Ruthin.

Councillor Emrys Wynne declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, as he was on the steering committee for the Eisteddfod yr Urdd in Ruthin.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

None.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Welsh Language Steering Committee held on 13 July 2021 were submitted.

Matters of accuracy –

- Members highlighted a typing error with regards to Councillor Ellie Chard's name, alongside a small translation error with regards to the appointment of vice-chair item.

Matters arising –

- Members queried actions from the previous meeting, and whether they had been carried out, these were the powers of the committee to make decisions as well as the development of the Cylch Meithrin in Ruthin. The committee administrator assured the committee that the relevant information would be gathered and circulated to committee members.
- Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies highlighted whether the number of Welsh language speakers of staff had increased since the Council formed in 1996. Responding, the Welsh Language Officer informed the committee that she had contacted Human Resources and whether the information was obtainable. She was still awaiting a response but would circulate the answer once she had obtained it.
- The Corporate Director: Communities suggested to the committee that due to the long wait times between meetings that an update sheet on all the matters arising from the meeting be circulated a couple of weeks after the meeting, as waiting until the next meeting often meant the issues were no longer relevant. Members of the committee unanimously agreed to the suggestion. Both the Welsh Language officer and the committee administrator would work on responding to members outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 July 2021 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 MUDIAD MEITHRIN

The Lead Member for Education, Children's Services and Public Engagement welcomed the Provincial Manager (PM) for Mudiad Meithrin to the committee; he thanked Mudiad Meithrin for all the hard work which they've carried out with Denbighshire County Council (DCC) over the years and highlighted the importance of making the committee aware of the work which Mudiad Meithrin carried out for the Welsh language speakers in the community.

The PM shared a presentation to the committee that highlighted all the work carried out by the Mudiad Meithrin. The main aim of Mudiad Meithrin was to provide every young child in Wales with an opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh to create new Welsh speakers. The work was achieved through support, advice, development and expanding the services offered by Mudiad Meithrins Members (Cylchoedd and nurseries).

The PM highlighted how Mudiad Meithrin supported the Cylchoedd Management committees, provided training, and qualified the Welsh-medium early years' workforce and to promote Welsh-medium Childcare and Education.

The PM informed the committee that Mudiad Meithrin was almost on all forms of social media; this was to raise awareness of the work Mudiad Meithrin carried out.

Multiple programs were created to encourage and normalize teaching young infants to learn the language. There were also Cymraeg@adre, which were sessions

aimed to teach children the Welsh Language through short videos; this aimed to teach children and their parents/guardians the Welsh Language together. The committee were also made aware of the Cylch Meithrin Ti a Fi, which was a Welsh parent and toddler group for new-borns to pre-school-aged children.

Members discussed the following in further detail –

- The staff retention and hiring in the Cylchoedd Meithrin in Denbighshire was raised, the PM responded that on the whole, there was no issue with staffing in Denbighshire; however, there were concerns about the staff requirement at Pentrecelyn.
- Councillor Arwel Roberts queried the Cylch Meithrin sites in Rhuddlan not being open since the Pandemic. The PM clarified that the sites were currently closed. However, there was community funding being sought to look at hiring a coordinator for both locations
- Members outlined the programs discussed earlier and whether the pandemic had caused issues with these as you could not meet face to face. In response, the PM informed the committee that initially, it was an issue. However, it allowed parents to have more flexibility, as they could join any programs being held remotely throughout the County, not ones in their locality.
- The Committee and the PM outlined the difficulties the pandemic had caused for children and the Welsh Language, as many parents found teaching at home through the medium of Welsh challenging. The PM stated that roughly two years' worth of children had not come through the Mudiad and agreed they were difficult times.

RESOLVED that the Welsh Language Steering Committee note the information with regards to Mudiad Meithrin.

6 MORE THAN WORDS

The Corporate Director: Communities (CDC) presented the Welsh Language Steering Committee an update following the More than Words Evaluation report (previously circulated).

The CDC drew members' attention to the letter which had been circulated to members. The areas of progress were –

- An increase in the use of visual markers to identify Welsh-speaking staff and investment in Welsh language higher education courses in health and social care.
- An increase in the focus placed on the importance of Welsh language provision and the Active Offer (offering a service in Welsh without someone having to ask for it) within higher education and inductions for new staff members.

Critical gaps identified include:

- buy-in at the middle management or operational planning level

- understanding of how to improve Welsh language service provision, beyond recognizing the importance of doing so
- targeting of training to the areas and staff for whom this would make the most difference to Welsh language service provision
- Data collection systems and processes to record and share information on the Welsh language needs of services users and Welsh language capacity of the workforce.

The following steps for More than Words were -

- The Welsh Language in Health and Social Care Partnership Board oversees the delivery of More than Words. Members of the board have proposed the establishment of a small Task and Finish Group to work up a 5-year work plan for More than just Words based on the recommendations of the evaluation and other evidence.
- The Task and Finish Group would meet regularly starting in September 2021 and provide Eluned Morgan AS/MS (Minister for Health and Social Services) on the next steps by the fifth of November.
- The CDC informed the committee that since the publication of the More than Words report on the 31st August 2021, Denbighshire County Council had organized Welsh language sessions for people who have Alzheimer's.

Members discussed the following in further detail –

- Members commended all the hard work carried out by officers since the report was published.
- Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies queried the Seven Key objectives within the evaluation report, as the link within the letter was not working. Officers responded, stating that the seven objectives were –
 - National and Local Leadership, and National Policy
 - Mapping, Auditing, Data Collection, and Research
 - Service Planning, Commissioning, Contracting and Workforce Planning
 - Promotion and Engagement
 - Professional Education
 - Welsh in the Workplace
 - Regulation and Inspection.

RESOLVED that the Welsh Language Steering Committee note the update regarding the More than Words follow-up letter.

7 EISTEDDFOD YR URDD

The Welsh Language Officer (WLO) presented the members with an update on preparations for the Eisteddfod and the Council's role in the event (previously circulated).

The WLO guided members through a short presentation on work carried out in preparation for the Eisteddfod.

- The Council, as a critical partner, would have a marquee on a prominent site on the Eisteddfod field. The theme for the marquee was all about Welsh language, culture, heritage, tradition, recycling, climate change, and the countryside.
- The Council's activities would be carried out through the medium of Welsh (Urdd rule)
- Welsh speakers and learners would staff the Marquee throughout the week. The WLO informed the committee that a manager would be allocated to the stand each day and supported by a team of corporate staff members. The Council would also be involved in a press briefing on the Monday of the Eisteddfod week
- There were multiple groups throughout Denbighshire working to ensure that the organization went as smoothly as possible. These included the; Safety advisory group, Communications group and the Education group.
- The WLO made the committee aware that Primary Schools were invited to participate in the Primary School show. The show would take place in the main pavilion on Tuesday evening.
- Lastly, the WLO informed the committee that the Lead Officer - Destination, Marketing, and Communication Team had been working closely with the Acting Director of the Urdd Eisteddfod and the Arts with a partnership between the Urdd and Denbighshire.

Members discussed the following in further detail –

- The challenges the pandemic had caused with the collection of donations was highlighted as a significant task by the committee. The WLO agreed that virtual collecting had been a challenge.
- The WLO informed the committee that the Eisteddfod yr Urdd was celebrating 100 years since it was established by Syr Ifan ab Owen Edwards in 1922. She asked if anyone had any stories to share about the first ever Eisteddfod held in Corwen in 1929 if they could send any information onto her, she would then liaise with the relevant officers.
- Responding to queries the WLO informed members that promoting local myths and legends would be carried through the medium of art at the Eisteddfod.

RESOLVED that the Welsh Language Steering Committee approve the content of the report.

8 WELSH LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER

The Welsh Language Officer (WLO) presented the results of the Welsh Language Commissioner's Monitoring Report. Every year, the Welsh Language Commissioner carries out checks amongst organisations implementing the statutory Welsh Language Standards to ensure those organisations comply with the legislation.

The Commissioner's team also arrange an annual meeting to discuss the findings and to report on progress with the yearly Welsh Language Monitoring Report. Dylan Jones, on behalf of the Commissioner, explained the Commissioner's new way of

working from this year on looking at organisations' compliance with the relevant standards. Recruitment was their priority.

The findings – Service Delivery -

During May and June 2021, Welsh Language commissioner officers had negative experiences when corresponding with the Council by receiving English-only responses to correspondence sent via the Council's online form. The WLO explained the process when the Council received such correspondence and explained that she had discussed it with the managers of the relevant departments. It seems that the mistakes of individual officers were to blame. Managers have been sent a message for cascading to all their staff

During the 2021-22 surveys, portions of the automated message when phoning the main Council number were unclear. The investigation discovered that not all documents and forms contained a statement on the English versions that they were also available in Welsh. There was 1 example of a document that did not comply with standard 49, namely: Denbighshire Schools Information Guide 2021-22, as well as two examples of a form that did not comply with standard 50A. These were: Denbighshire County Council concern/complaint form.

Lastly, Welsh Language commissioner officers made two visits to the reception area of the Council offices in Caledfryn, Denbigh. They received no Welsh services during either visit. The WLO noted that one member of staff (a Welsh learner) had left, and therefore the WLO suggested the appointment of a Welsh speaker before the pandemic. The proposal was still in place, and consequently, a Welsh-speaking receptionist would be assigned once the reception in Caledfryn reopened.

Policy Making

It was noted that the Council's self-assessment evidence when considering the impact of policy decisions on the Welsh language was positive. The possibility of exploring this further was discussed to create an example of effective practice for that particular section on the Commissioner's new website. Promoting the Welsh language - Assess the achievement of a Welsh language promotion strategy

The WLO noted that work is underway to revise the strategy for a launch at the Urdd National Eisteddfod in Denbigh in 2022. The WLO felt frustrated that the results of the census in terms of the Welsh language would not be available by the time the new Strategy was published, which made it difficult to see whether the target which was set five years ago had been met. The lack of information also has an impact on setting a target for the next strategy, as well as knowing where resources need to be targeted. The WLO mentioned the possibility of planning a 10-year strategy with more ambitious long-term targets.

Members discussed the following in further detail –

- Members highlighted swimming lessons within the report; they queried why there were so few swimming lessons held in the medium of Welsh in contrast to ones held through the medium of English. The WLO informed the

committee that wait times were for both mediums; however, there was never a shortage of English lessons. The WLO also clarified that when parents would register their children for classes, they would specify their chosen languages. However, most parents were not willing to wait until enough children were waiting for Welsh-medium swimming lessons.

- Members queried whether Denbighshire Leisure (DL) was required to conform to the same Welsh Language standards as Denbighshire County Council (DCC). Responding the Lead Member for Education, Children's Services and Public Engagement informed the committee the DCC and DL were both meant to conform with the Welsh Language Standards and told the committee that if anyone had any concerns, they could raise the matters with either himself or Councillor Bobby Feeley as they both were members of the governance board for DL.
- Responding to queries about new starters to the Council and whether they were made aware of the Welsh Language Standards, the WLO made members aware the standards were within the induction process to the Council.

RESOLVED that the Welsh Language Steering Committee note the Welsh Language Commissioner's Monitoring Report and approve the action plan.

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

Members raised the following matters –

- The Welsh Language Policy would be discussed at the next meeting. Members queried whether the next meeting could be held at the Welsh Language Centre in St. Asaph. Officers responded, stating they would look into the matter.

Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies raised complaints regarding the standard of the Welsh Language and how they were not reported. The WLO informed the member that each formal complaint, which was concerning the Welsh Language, was noted within the annual Welsh Language Commissioner's Monitoring Report. However, there was a difference between formal and non-formal complaints; the appropriate Head of Service would deal with the non-formal points raised at meetings.

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

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.