



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Service Improvement & Finance**

Remotely via Video

Wednesday, 23 June 2021 at 10.00 am

**Present:** Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

P Downing  
L James  
B J Rowlands

**Councillor(s)**

D W W Thomas  
M H Jones  
P Black

**Councillor(s)**

P R Hood-Williams  
J W Jones

**Other Attendees**

Louise Gibbard  
Robert Smith

Cabinet Member - Supporting Communities  
Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

**Officer(s)**

Craig Davies  
Sarah Lackenby  
Emily Davies

Associate Lawyer  
Chief Digital & Transformation Officer  
Scrutiny Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): P K Jones and I E Mann

---

**14 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

**15 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips**

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

**16 Public Questions**

There were no public questions

**17 Welsh Language Standards Annual Report**

The Panel received an update from Sarah Lackenby, Chief Transformation Officer,

regarding the contents of the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report. Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities, and Cllr Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills, also attended to support discussions and answer questions.

Discussions focused on:

- New format of report this year, under guidance of Welsh Language Commissioner (September 2020).
- Officers highlighted that, generally, the report shows good progress despite any impacts of pandemic restrictions.
- Officers explained that the report aims to provide updates across the *Standards Groups* in terms of achievement.
- The Panel heard that the *service delivery* standard continues to be a priority, and this is also the main area for which complaints are received.
- It was noted from the report that the Council would like to increase the number of employees with Welsh language skills across the workforce. Officers highlighted that regard would be had to the five year strategy, enhancing training for existing staff.
- The report outlined that training last year was good despite pandemic restrictions.
- Officers have reviewed and updated the complaints policy, reflecting feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Ombudsman.
- The Panel asked about the Welsh Translation Services use of automation and were pleased to hear about increased rates of translation.
- Panel Members queried whether the translation service had now reached the point of maximum efficiency and whether anymore savings could be made. Officers explained that this is a joint service with Neath Port Talbot Council and, pending review later this year, the service is not likely to make any further savings, now working at an efficient level.
- Members queried whether a virtual translation service was available during live meetings. Officers explained that funding had been awarded by Welsh Government (E-Democracy grant) to enable upgrades of technology within the Council Chamber, including improved technology for simultaneous translation.
- Members queried the report recommendation to make more posts mandatory Welsh and the effect on recruitment. Officers assured the Panel that this will not apply to all posts, based on skills and job market, although some posts could be made mandatory Welsh in the future.
- Councillors acknowledged the hard work and efforts of staff, working at speed to turn around work within ambitious targets. It was acknowledged that the Welsh Translation unit played an important part during the pandemic helping to translate a huge amount of information.

The Panel considered the information provided, asked questions, and gave views on the available information. The Chair thanked all for their input.

The Panel received an overview regarding the current Byelaws and the process involved in revocation. Craig Davies, Associate Lawyer, attended to answer questions.

Discussions focused on:

- The Local Authority currently has 33 active Byelaws, intending to prevent or suppress nuisance. No new Byelaws have been implemented since 1999.
- Officers explained that the process involved in making a Byelaw is complex and lengthy, including a consultation period and specific timelines to adhere to.
- The Panel heard that Welsh Government do have a catalogue of model Byelaws, enabling Local Authorities to update current Byelaws.
- It was noted that Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) are similar to a Byelaw, although lasting for only 3 years.
- The Panel heard that trained officers would be needed to monitor and enforce Byelaws and any associated fixed penalties.
- Members queried the relevance of fines in terms of current monetary value.
- Revocation is a simpler process, removing obsolete Byelaws is more straightforward than creation.
- Panel queried historical Byelaws and whether the Council carry out a review of these, with a view to updating or revoking obsolete Byelaws. Officers explained that some historical Byelaws remain relevant and applicable, but agreed that a review could be advantageous.
- Panel Members agreed that current Byelaws would benefit from review and that this subject needs to be referred to the Chief Legal Officer.

## **19 Work Plan 2021-22**

The Panel noted the Work Plan.

The meeting ended at 10.45 am



**To:**  
**Councillor Louise Gibbard**  
**Cabinet Member for Supporting**  
**Communities**

*Please ask for:*  
*Gofynnwch am:*

Overview & Scrutiny

*Direct Line:*  
*Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

01792 636292

*e-Mail*  
*e-Bost:*

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

**And**

*Date*  
*Dyddiad:*

22 July 2021

**Councillor Robert Smith**  
**Cabinet Member for Education**  
**Improvement, Learning & Skills**

**BY EMAIL**

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities and the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills. The letter concerns the meeting held on 23 June 2021 and the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2020-21.

Dear Cllr Gibbard and Cllr Smith,

On the 23 June, the Panel met to discuss the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2020-21. The Panel are grateful to yourselves and to Sarah Lackenby, Chief Transformation Officer, for attending to discuss the report and contribute to discussions.

Officers highlighted the new format of the report this year, in line with new guidance issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner in September 2020. We also heard that 2020-21 was a challenging year due to the pandemic restrictions, however, in general the Council has continued to make improvements on implementing the Welsh Language Standards.

Officers explained that the report aims to highlight updates across the *Standards Groups* (Service Delivery, Policy making, Operational, Promotional and Record-Keeping Standards). We understand that the *Service Delivery* standard continues to be a priority, and this is also the main area for which complaints are received. Officers explained that the complaints policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect helpful feedback from both the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Ombudsman.

The main points from our discussion encompassed the translation services department and staff Welsh language skills, as follows:

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU**  
**SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE**  
GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE  
[www.swansea.gov.uk](http://www.swansea.gov.uk) / [www.abertawe.gov.uk](http://www.abertawe.gov.uk)

I dderbyn yr wybodaeth hon mewn fformat arall neu yn Gymraeg, cysylltwch â'r person uchod  
To receive this information in alternative format, or in Welsh please contact the above

## **Translation Services**

We asked about the Welsh Translation Services use of automated systems and were pleased to hear about increased rates of translation; noting that the unit translated 2.4m words during 2020-21, an increase of half a million words compared with the previous year.

We queried whether the translation service had now reached the point of maximum efficiency and whether any more savings could be made. Officers explained that this is a joint service with Neath Port Talbot Council and, pending review later this year, the service is not likely to make any further savings. We therefore understand that this service is now working at maximum efficiency and there will be no further cost-savings.

The Panel asked whether a virtual translation service was available during live meetings. Officers explained that funding had been awarded to Swansea Council by Welsh Government (E-Democracy grant) to enable upgrades of technology within the Council Chamber, including improved technology for simultaneous translation.

Members queried whether a rapid translation service was available to schools, citing an example of a job advert for Pentrehafod School that took six weeks to translate. Officers undertook to look into this particular case and revert with further information.

## **Mandatory Welsh Language Skills**

Members queried the intention for the Council to review whether more jobs can be recruited with mandatory Welsh skills, and the possible effect on recruitment. Officers assured the Panel that this will not apply to all posts, based on skills and job markets, although some posts could be made mandatory Welsh in the future. The Panel raised concerns over whether this could jeopardise the availability of the right candidates, should Welsh language skills become mandatory. Officers highlighted that regard would be had to the five year strategy, enhancing training for existing staff.

The Panel requested more information about Welsh language training available to councillors in general; officers undertook to better promote available training.

Councillors acknowledged the hard work and efforts of staff, working at speed to turn around work within ambitious targets. It was acknowledged that the Welsh Translation unit played an important part during the pandemic response, helping to translate a huge amount of information within tight deadlines.

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but, in this instance, we require no formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

**Councillor Chris Holley**

**Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel**

✉ [cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk)