



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Cabinet – 16 September 2021

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032

Purpose:	To seek approval to consult on the draft statutory Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032.
Policy Framework:	Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires a local authority to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal, Partneriaeth Addysg Gymraeg Abertawe (PAGA)
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) Cabinet approves consultation on the draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032
Report Author:	Rhodri Jones
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires a local authority to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Swansea Council must submit the first ten year Plan to the Welsh Ministers for approval no later than 31 January 2022.
- 1.2 The WESP must contain the local authority's proposals on how it will carry out its education functions to improve the planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh, improve the standards of Welsh-medium education and of the teaching of Welsh, our targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education and for improving the standards of that education and of the teaching of Welsh in.

- 1.3 A copy of the draft WESP can be found at Appendix A and subject to Cabinet approval a statutory consultation period will commence on Monday 27 September 2021 and close on Monday 22 November 2021.

2. Statutory Requirements

- 2.1 As well as the requirement to prepare a WESP, Section 84 also sets out with whom a local authority is required to consult in preparing or revising its Plan and provides the Welsh Ministers with a power to prescribe other persons with which the local authority must consult. Section 85 of the 2013 Act requires each local authority to submit its Plan to Welsh Ministers for approval. The Welsh Ministers may approve the Plan as submitted, approve the Plan with modifications, or reject the Plan and prepare another Plan which is to be treated as the authority's approved Plan. Subsection (6) of Section 85 places a duty on a local authority to take all reasonable steps to implement its approved Plan.
- 2.2 The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing the Demand (Wales) Regulations 2013 were the first regulations made under the section 87 powers. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019 replace those regulations and make provision for a local authority to prepare a ten-year Plan, the first to have effect from 1 September 2022, subject to the Welsh Ministers' approval.
- 2.3 They also make provision for the form and content of a Plan (regulation 3), the duration of the Plan (regulation 4), the date by which the Plan must be submitted to the Welsh Ministers for approval (regulation 5), the approval of a Plan (regulation 6), timescales for submitting a review report (regulation 7), arrangements for revising a Plan (regulation 8), the persons and bodies that a local authority must consult on the draft Plan (regulation 9), the date by which the Plan must be published (regulation 10), the manner of publication of a Plan (regulation 11), the revocation, with savings, of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing Demand for Welsh Medium Education (Wales) Regulations 2013 (regulation 12).
- 2.4 The purpose of these regulations is to improve opportunities for local authorities to plan Welsh-medium education provision in order to support the current and future expectation for growth in Welsh-medium education. Improving the planning of Welsh-medium education will also support the long-term national ambition for the Welsh language as set out in the Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh speakers strategy, our strategy for promoting the Welsh language and also the introduction of a new curriculum for Wales.
- 2.5 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019 were amended. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 came into force on 1 December 2020 and make changes to the start date of the next WESP cycle being moved from 1 September 2021 to a year later (to September 2022).

3. Strategic Context

- 3.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies across Wales named in the Act to work towards achieving seven well-being goals, including 'A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language'. We have a duty to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language and to work towards the achievement of the well-being goals.
- 3.2 Prosperity for All: the national strategy and the programme for Government, Taking Wales forward 2016-2021 aims to drive forward improvements to the Welsh economy and public services in order to create a Wales which is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, and united and connected. One of the priorities is to develop a transformational approach to the learning, teaching and assessment of Welsh with the aim of ensuring that, in future, all learners will be able to use the Welsh language when they leave school.
- 3.3 Our national Welsh language strategy Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers was published in August 2017. Our ambition for reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and to continue to encourage more people to use and speak Welsh in their everyday lives is incorporated in the aims and values of the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and also Prosperity for all: the national strategy.
- 3.4 Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action Plan 2017-2110 sets out how the school system in Wales, including sixth forms, will move forward in the period until 2021 to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented effectively. The intentions for learners include a 'desire for learners to become increasingly bilingual with a strong grasp of other languages'. In 2018, the First Minister and Education Minister reaffirmed their commitment to the 2016 Progressive Agreement¹¹, updating the Common and Education priorities to include, amongst others, commitments to encourage teachers with some ability to speak Welsh to further develop their skills to teach through the medium of Welsh as well as continue to work with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and other partners to enhance skills provision, vocational courses, and promotion of Welsh-medium courses and teacher recruitment and retention, in line with our Cymraeg 2050 strategy.
- 3.5 The Welsh in Education, Action Plan 2017-2021 sets the direction for the development of Welsh-medium education and Welsh in line with the vision in Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers and Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action Plan 2017–2021.

4. Consultation Requirements

- 4.1 We are expected to consult for no less than 8 weeks with a prescribed list of persons as listed in the draft WESP (Appendix A).

5. Approval Process and Annual Monitoring

- 5.1 Following the completion of the consultation, a report will be prepared for Cabinet seeking final approval of the draft Plan before its submission to the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language for approval by 31 January 2022.
- 5.2 The Minister may approve the Plan as submitted, approve the Plan with modifications, or reject the Plan and prepare another Plan which is to be treated as the authority's approved Plan.
- 5.3 We are required to submit a review report to the Welsh Ministers, commencing in 2023, outlining the progress made to meet the targets contained in our Plan and the steps taken as a result of the statements in our Plan. The first review report must be submitted to the Welsh Ministers no later than 31 July 2023 and will outline the progress made and the steps taken by the local authority in the period since the first ten year Plan has effect.
- 5.4 Subsequent review reports must be submitted to the Welsh Ministers at intervals not exceeding 12 calendar months from the submission of the previous report.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
- 6.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 6.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 6.4 An IIA screening has been undertaken and it has been determined that the plan is not relevant for a full IIA report at this time.
- 6.5 This Plan will have a positive impact on children and young people and on all Swansea citizens as the benefits of being bilingual/multilingual citizens are realised.
- 6.6 All schools will be kept engaged to ensure that the benefits are realised across all our schools. All the recommendations fit within the expectations and considerations of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act with no risk in their implementation. The cumulative impact is seen as very positive.
- 6.7 Once the final Plan is approved by Cabinet, and subsequently the Minister, a full IIA will be completed to support our annual action plan to ensure that the impact of all actions are fully assessed and that the WESP has a positive impact on ALL children and young people in Swansea.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The statutory requirements are set out in the report. There are no additional legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers:

Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/guidance-welsh-in-education-strategic-plan.pdf>

Swansea WESP 2017-2020

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/wesp>

Appendices:

- Appendix A Draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)
September 2022 – August 2032
- Appendix B Integrated Impact Assessment Screening