



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

Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel 23rd June 2021

Welsh Language Annual Report 2020-21

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| Purpose | To provide the panel with the Welsh Language Annual Report 2020-21 |
| Content | This is the fifth Annual Report since the standards became effective and provides an overview of the activity within the financial year ending 31 st March 2021. |
| Councillors are being asked to | Note the report |
| Lead Councillor(s) | Councillor Robert Smith (Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills) Councillor Louise Gibbard (Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities) |
| Lead Officer(s) | Sarah Lackenby |
| Report Author(s) | Sarah Lackenby |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report attached at Appendix A is the fifth annual report since the standards became effective and provides an overview of the activity within the financial year ending 31st March 2021.
- 1.2 The report is in a slightly different format this year, aiming to follow the annual report guidance issued by the Commissioner in September 2020.

- 1.3 Swansea Council remains committed to the Welsh Language Standards. This report contains examples and highlights of new projects and activities during the year to meet the standards. The report also includes work or actions as a result of any feedback, investigations, or monitoring work by the Commissioner, or as a result of complaints received directly from the public. It concludes with recommendations going forward.

2. Summary of the Report

- 2.1 2020-21 was a challenging year due to the pandemic. However, in general the Council has continued to make improvements on implementing the Welsh Language Standards during the year despite Covid-19. General feedback indicates that officers are more educated in relation to the requirements of the Standards.

- 2.2 Key areas to highlight in the report include:

- a) Actions taken during the year in each of the Standards Groups are highlighted throughout the report (Service Delivery, Policy making, Operational, Promotional and Record-Keeping Standards)
- b) Moving forward the priority continues to be Service Delivery Standards as they are the greatest number (86), they are the most visible, and all five complaints made directly to the Council were in the Service Delivery category. Awareness raising activities will be undertaken to help staff understand this set of standards in more detail
- c) Employees with Welsh skills including and excluding schools are shown at section 3.3.4. Excluding schools around 7% of employees have Welsh skills across the Directorates. Section 4 also highlights the comparative numbers of students attending Welsh Medium Education
- d) The Council will be reviewing the five year strategy and plan in the current year and explore ways of attracting Welsh speakers to work for the Council from Welsh medium schools and the universities and colleges in the area. The Council will also review whether more jobs can be recruited with mandatory Welsh skills
- e) The Welsh Translation Unit is a joint service with Neath & Port Talbot Council and translated 2.4m words during 2020-21. This was an increase of half a million words compared with the previous year. This was at a time when the Council was reacting very quickly to the pandemic. We owe a debt of gratitude to the unit for their quick turnaround of communications, especially early on in the crisis. The unit has also been bringing in new ways of working, using technology and automation alongside proof reading to increase turnaround times, especially of long and complex documents.
- f) Also attached to the report at Appendix 1 is the updated Complaints Policy. The Policy was reviewed this year and feedback provided by both the

Public Service Ombudsman Wales (PSOW) and Welsh Language Commissioner. The Policy now provides more detail to anyone wanting to complain to the Council about compliance with the Welsh Language. In addition, the Council is developing a corporate complaints system which will identify and monitor Welsh Language complaints.

- g) Finally, the Council is looking to replicate the very effective data protection compliance and reporting process for the Welsh language standards, e.g. introducing breach panels and a Welsh Language Board.

3. Assessment

3.1 It has been a very challenging year for the Council due to the Covid-19 pandemic with both staff and Councillors diverted into directly supporting the community, particularly the most vulnerable. Despite that, the Council continued to support and deliver the Welsh language standards as evidenced by examples throughout the report.

3.2 Areas that require focus for the current year have also been highlighted.

Background Papers: None

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Date: 15th June 2021