



To:
Councillor Elliott King
Cabinet Member for Equalities
and Culture

Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and
Learning

Please ask for:
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23 May 2023

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Members for Equalities and Culture and Education and Learning. The letter concerns the meeting held on 9 May 2023 and the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2021/2022. A response is required by 13 June.

Dear Councillors King and Smith,

On the 9 May, the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2021/22. The Panel are grateful to yourselves and relevant officers for attending.

Overall you informed us that progress is being made in implementing the Welsh Language Standards. You informed us that there are over 160 standards which local authorities are required to adhere to and highlighted a few areas including the implementation of the Cwtsh- Ysgrifennu yn Cymraeg ' a virtual space for staff and the full embedding of the Welsh language into Integrated Impact Assessments.

The report informed us of the six Welsh language complaints received during this reported year. We noted that two complaints relate to Welsh language requirements for car parking machines and one relates to a street sign on a non-adopted road which is not within the Councils remit to provide, in affect reducing the number to three. We asked how Swansea's complaints compare with the rest of Wales and were informed this number compares equally with Neath Port Talbot.

The increase in Welsh language calls was raised by the officer and work continues on the new system for public complaints in regards to complying with the Welsh language standards. The Welsh language standards have strengthened the provision of bilingual services in health and social care across the Council as part of the "more than just words" offer. The Council has extended the offer to social care and housing staff to learn Welsh through work. There have been over 2,000,000 total page views

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on Staffnet in 2021 to 2022 and over 19,000 of these were related to Welsh and the Welsh language.

We noted that roughly 20% of translated words are being carried out by external providers, which was due to an increase in service demand, we wondered if it would be cheaper to increase internal staff rather than paying for external translators. The officer informed us they will look into this.

In addition we asked for some figures from the previous 3/4 years on how much translation has been carried out and how much of this was given to external translators in comparison to the 2021-22 figures given in paragraph 3.1.3 of the report. We would also be interested in the cost of external translators in comparison to the cost of in house translators so we can compare and consider value for money.

In discussing the complaints we commented on the challenge with signage which can occur when translations are not checked with the Welsh translation department and the keenness of the media to pick up on the small amount of errors. We are interested to know if there were any other breaches of standards other than the ones picked up in the complaints and would appreciate a response to this.

We were also made aware that out of office messages continues to be an issue throughout the Council but work with the communications team is ongoing to highlight this.

We were pleased to see the percentage of Welsh skills of Council staff going up from 6.8% to 10.2% and queried what standard of Welsh is considered under the term “Welsh skills” as labelled in the report. The officer informed that this was unknown and therefore could mean anything from learner to fluent Welsh speaker.

Regarding the school statistics in the report, we asked if there is an increase in Welsh skills in children due to the Welsh content in the syllabus as this will help to increase the number of Welsh speakers. Data on this was not available however the recent census information reports that overall the number of Welsh speakers in Neath Port Talbot and Swansea has decreased. But this is still a critical mass that needs to build and develop. Also the report does not cover that Welsh is an integral part of all schools in Wales, not just the Welsh medium schools.

Your Response

We welcome your comments on any of the issues raised and request a formal response by 13 June in regards to the following –

- Equivalent historic data to paragraph 3.1.3 regarding total words translated and how many were externally translated going back 3-4 years.
- The cost of external translation against the cost of in house translation.
- Details of any other breaches of the Welsh Language Standards other than those recorded as a formal complaint.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Holley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Chris Holley

Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel

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