



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	10/05/24
Report Author	Andrea May
Service Area	Learning
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	

Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Council received its final Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner on 30th September 2015. This outlined the Council's duty to meet the statutory Welsh Language Standards established by the Welsh Government under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- 1.2 The Standards require the Council to compile an Annual Report by 30th June of each year that deals with the way that it has complied with the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Operational Standards. Provision is also included within the Standards concerning publishing and publicity of the Annual Report.
- 1.3 The Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report, attached as Appendix 1, reports upon the good progress that the Council continues to make towards complying with the Standards during financial year 2023-2024.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 The Council's Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report for 2023-4 be approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2011 the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and as part of the new legislation, in Wales, the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and must not be treated any less favourably. Public bodies are no longer required to develop and implement a Welsh Language Scheme but must comply with a set of Welsh Language Standards instead.

3.2 The Measure establishes a legal framework to impose a duty on some organisations to comply with standards of conduct on the Welsh language. The Measure notes that Welsh Ministers may, by regulations, specify Standards in the following areas:

1. Service Delivery
2. Policy Making
3. Operational
4. Promotion
5. Record Keeping

These Standards aim to:

- Make it clear to organisations what their duties are in relation to the Welsh Language.
- Ensure there is fairness, justice, and rights for Welsh speakers.
- Make the Welsh Language services more consistent and improve their quality.
- Ensure that the Welsh Language is a consideration in policy and legislation.
- Make it clearer to Welsh speakers about the services they can expect to receive in Welsh.

3.3 The Standards explain how organisations are expected to use the Welsh language in different situations. The Welsh Language Standards require the Council to compile an Annual Report, in relation to each financial year, that deals with the way that it has complied with the Service Delivery, Policy Making and Operational Standards. Provision is also included within the Standards concerning publishing and publicity of the Annual Report.

4.0 WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR 2023-2024

4.1 The Council's Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report for 2023-2024 attached as Appendix 1, reports upon the Council's progress towards complying with the Standards during the financial year 2023-2024.

Capacity

4.2 A new Welsh Language Policy Officer took up post in January 2024 and the portfolio at Corporate Management level moved under the Director of Education.

4.3 Monitoring and evaluation approaches have been further developed through resetting the focus of the Welsh Language Steering Group and utilising the Forum Sirol. Further approaches will be implemented going forward.

Standards

4.4 The Annual Report reports compliance towards the Standards that is subject to by highlighting:

- Any investigations received from the Welsh Language Commissioner.

- Information about complaints, Welsh skills of employees and Welsh Language training.
- The Welsh language activities planned/currently being undertaken across the Council, some of which are summarised below.

4.5 The Council is making positive progress towards its aims, objectives and targets outlined in the Welsh Language 5-year plan.

4.6 There were no complaints leading to the formal complaints' procedure in 2023-2024.

4.7 The Standards Setting and Compliance Officer of the Commissioner's Office has undertaken compliance activities which included utilising different communication channels such as email and telephone correspondence, to assess the Council response and compliance with the standards. The officer also considered social media channels and the corporate website. The Council is awaiting a written report on the areas for improvement identified.

Welsh Language Programme

4.8. The Welsh Language Programme forms part of the Council's Corporate Services work programme, supporting compliance with the Standards and delivery of the:

- Corporate Well-being Plan, 2023-2028: Well-being Goal: An Aspirational Merthyr Tydfil focused on learning.
- Merthyr Tydfil Welsh Language Strategy, 2022-2027
- Welsh Government Cymraeg 2050: Million Welsh Speakers Strategy; Leading in a Bilingual Country

The Programme is structured around compliance with the Welsh Language Standards, translation, and promotion of the Welsh Language. Key areas include: -

- Telephone and reception.
- Correspondence
- Website
- Development of supporting resources and materials
- Welsh Language Translation Services
- Welsh Language Training
- Welsh Language Courses marketing events- Learn Welsh Glamorgan
- Welsh language skills development- formal and informal learning
- Leading in a Bilingual Country- participation
- Management level engagement work to develop Siater #Shwmaeronment
- #Shwmaeronment Campaign and community partnership events

- Communication and Marketing through Social Media expansion
- Business Education Together Partnership engagement to promote the language.

Implementing the 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy

4.9 The annual report shows good progress achieved over the 2023-2024 period, working in partnership with a range of stakeholders in the key areas of Children and Young people, Community and Family and Workforce.

Partnership Working

4.8 The Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh in Education Conference held in June 2023 shows the strength and appetite for partnership working. This conference led to sharing of ideas and next steps for both strategic and operational work. A greater focus on targeting and integrating approaches will be made going forward.

Community, Family and Children and Young People

4.9 A range of community activities (appendix 1), as well as programmes and activities for children and young people continue to take place across the Borough. The number of activities is growing, as they become embedded in the #Shwmaeronment or 'normalisation' approach taken. For example, the number of businesses taking part in Diwrnod Shwmae has increased, as has the participation of the community. The Welsh Language Christmas Fair has also increased in terms of number of businesses, as well as activities for families, children and young people to utilise the language.

Workforce

5.0 The range of opportunities to both use and develop Welsh Language Skills, both across the Council workforce and within the community are developing.

5.1 Learn Welsh Glamorgan programmes, introductory Welsh courses on appointment, buddy and champion approaches, as well as informal coffee clubs are supporting the growth of language skills. The workforce data within the report indicate increases in all skills areas.

5.2 The opportunity for staff to update the details on our HR system themselves may be the main reason for the increase in numbers, as all new employees are asked to complete the monitoring form as a matter of course when taking up a new role. Those who identify with no skills or basic can enrol for Welsh courses to assist them in increasing their skill level if they wish.

Next Steps

5.3 Plans to introduce a Siater #Shwmaeronment to support directorates grow Welsh language skills, as well as develop the ethos and culture of the Council

are currently being discussed with Corporate Management and Senior Leadership as part of the public services Leading in a Bilingual Country work.

- 5.4 Gap analysis exercises to integrate and target resources, as well as develop partnership working more effectively are also developing.
- 5.5 Further developing the recording and reporting of data, alongside the Human Resources Directorate will also form part of the next phase of development.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications identified in the report.

6.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Note to report authors – please copy and paste the summary page table from your Integrated Impact Assessment into this report; and delete this message.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S/OFFICER'S NAME
TITLE**

**COUNCILLOR'S NAME
CABINET MEMBER FOR**

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.