



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	4 th May 2025
Report Author	Andrea May
Service Area	Learning
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	11 th June 2025

Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report April 2024 – March 2025

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 Welsh Language Standards and the Welsh Language 5 Year Strategy during the financial year 2024-2025.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 The Council's Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report for 2024-25 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 2024-2025

4.1 The Council's Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report for 2024-2025 attached as Appendix 1, reports upon the Council's positive progress towards complying with the Standards during the financial year 2024-2025. Section 2 of Appendix 1 gives details of progress.

Background/Context and Governance

4.2 The Council recognises the importance of the Welsh Language Standards and ensure it is given the highest priority across the Council. It recognises that the support of the entire Council is needed to be able to offer and promote Welsh Language Services from the first contact.

4.3 Cross directorate language champions, a workforce development officer and the equity officer provide additional capacity to the Welsh Language Policy officer to widen the duty of implementing the standards and ensuring Welsh language is the responsibility of all not a few.

- 4.4 The Welsh Language Strategy Group engages a range of stakeholders, including the Chair of the Forum Sirol, to support the self-evaluation and monitoring processes, ensuring there is progress against the targets within the Welsh Language Strategy.
- 4.5 The service is monitored through the Councils performance management framework. Section 4.4 of the new Self Evaluation and Delivery Planning framework reflects service area provision for the Welsh Language Standards.
- 4.6 Monitoring and evaluation approaches have been further developed with the introduction of a new tool, which considers the stage of implementation and compliance. This will be implemented for reporting in 2025-26.
- 4.7 Secret shopper style exercises are undertaken with regular updates given to the Corporate Management Team and the Senior Leadership Team. These indicate the Council's compliance with the several standards and is reviewed to make sure it is consistent. The Welsh Language Policy Officer has worked with teams to ensure compliance.

Promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh Language

- 4.8 A new approach to implementing the Welsh Language Strategy and Standards has taken two formats. This includes
- **Welsh Language Standards:** Raising Awareness, Developing Understanding and Monitoring Progress
 - **Welsh Language Strategy:** Creating an ethos and Culture and engaging in community activity
- 4.9 A notable development during the year, and part of the new approach in line with 'Leading a Bilingual Country' was the introduction of a pilot initiative entitled **#SiarterShwmaeronment**. This bespoke programme, tailored to three specific directorates, seeks to embed the use of Welsh more organically in daily operations. While still in its initial stages, early feedback has been encouraging and indicative of growing engagement.
- 4.10 In parallel, a programme of raising awareness has ensured the Welsh Language Strategy and standards is high on the agenda across all directorates.
- 4.11 The Council has actively promoted a suite of resources to support officers in their use of Welsh, alongside expanding awareness of training and development opportunities. Communications through the People Services and Transformation bulletin and regular staff emails have significantly raised the profile of training provision offered by Learn Welsh Glamorgan, part of the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

Progress in Implementation

- 4.12 The Annual Report reports on compliance towards the Standards that it 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.
- 4.13 The Council continues to make positive progress towards its aims, objectives and targets outlined in the Welsh Language 5-year plan and in its implementation of the Welsh Language Standards.
- 4.14 There were no complaints leading to the formal complaints' procedure in 2024-2025.

Service delivery Standards

Through the approach of raising awareness and developing understanding, a number of service standards have been subject to development.

- 4.15 Key highlights include
- Resources developed to support communication within standards 8-11, 18-19, 64-66 and 83.
 - Ongoing review of Awarding Contracts in line with Standards 76-82 due to new Welsh government approaches

Policy Making Standards

- 4.16 Key highlights include
- Review and development of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) in line with Standards 88-93
 - Update to the Complaints Policy and procedures in line with Standards 162

Operational Standards

- 4.17 Key highlights include
- Update to the Internal Welsh Policy which is awaiting council approval- Standard 98
 - Compliance of People Services and Transformation Policies in line with Standards 105-111.
 - Start of a work programme to ensure compliance with Standards 121-126
 - Changes to approaches for assessing Welsh Language Skills in line with the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR)- Standard 127

- Two new e-learning awareness modules for training in line with Standard 132
 - Update to the Induction modules for new staff in line with Standard 133
- 4.18 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.
- 4.19 The outcomes of the monitoring indicated a number of areas were compliant with the relevant standards. However, key areas were still too variable and a few areas not meeting the compliance required.
- 4.20 The Council has responded to the areas for improvement identified. Ongoing raising awareness, specific training, development of resources and monitoring to ensure compliance with the standards which the council is subject to.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATING THE 5 YEAR WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY

- 5.1 The annual report shows good progress achieved over the 2024-2025 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

- 5.2 Partnership working continues to play an integral part in the delivery of the Welsh Language Strategy. Throughout 2024-5, this has been particularly important in the delivery of workforce development and community activities, supporting children and young people in particular.

Community, Family and Children and Young People

- 5.3 A range of community activities (Appendix 1, Section 3), as well as programmes and activities for children and young people continue to take place across the Borough. A number of activities are now part of the regular annual calendar of events and have seen increased participation and engagement from local businesses and the community. For example, the Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae event took place for the first time in Penderyn Square, with an increased number of businesses and increased footfall seen as an outcome. This also extended into the evening with a Welsh Language 'gig' held at The Crown.
- 5.4 The National Eisteddfod held in Rhondda Cynon Taf was a highlight of 2024-2025 with over 80 officers from across a range of directorates showcasing the work around the Welsh Language in the Council and Borough in partnership with The College, Merthyr Tydfil. The stall featured a diverse range of activities, exhibits and reflected the Welsh Language, the cultural heritage of Merthyr and the services offered by the Council itself. There were approximately 1500 visitors to the stall during the course of the week.

Workforce

- 5.5 The range of opportunities to both use and develop Welsh Language Skills, both across the Council workforce and within the community are developing well.
- 5.6 Internally developed resources have contributed to increased incidental use of the Welsh language in the workplace, with a noticeable shift in linguistic behaviour across offices.
- 5.7 The workforce data within the report indicates a consistent number of employees with high-level Welsh language skills over the past three years. Slight improvements can be seen in basic and routine skills categories, indicating gradual upskilling. However, a significant proportion of staff remain with 'no skills' or low-level skills across listening, speaking, reading and writing. This equates to approximately one third of the workforce.
- 5.8 Furthermore, the rollout of new Language Awareness modules marks a pivotal step in embedding long-term understanding.
- 5.9 Regular collaboration with the People Services and Transformation team has been key to monitoring and driving progress. A revised approach to language skills—aligned with the CEFR framework and National Centre standards—will be integrated into recruitment materials and staff surveys. These collaborative efforts are set to continue throughout 2025–26, supporting a sustained commitment to linguistic equity and organisational growth.
- 5.10 The Council continues to work in partnership with Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg (Learn Welsh Glamorgan) to provide workplace training opportunities for staff and Councillors. This includes an ongoing promotional campaign to encourage staff and Councillors to undertake Welsh language training opportunities via drop-in sessions, through the intranet, by email, and taster sessions.
- 5.11 The Council has introduced several initiatives. The Welsh Word/Phrase of the Week appears in the People Services and Transformation team bulletin, aligning with the standard featured to encourage everyday Welsh among staff and Elected Members.
- 5.12 A Welsh Language Coffee Morning, held twice monthly in partnership with local organisations, offers an informal, supportive space for learners and those regaining confidence, complemented by a dedicated Teams group for ongoing support.
- 5.13 These efforts are part of the Welsh Corner in the People and Performance bulletin, which includes resources such as standards focus, language tips, learning materials, and promotion of programmes like *Paned a Sgwrs* and *Cymraeg Gwaith*.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Fully implement the CEFR-based Welsh language skills framework across all recruitment materials and internal surveys to gain clear understanding of employee skills.
- 6.2 Increase availability, expand and tailor Welsh Language Training to meet the needs of the different directorates. Continue to offer formal and informal opportunities, ensuring time is allocated to support employees.
- 6.3 Strengthen recruitment requirements, targeting customer service and public service posts.
- 6.4 Continue promotion and engagement with employees, deepening understanding of the Welsh Language Standards and building the ethos and culture across the Council.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

SUE WALKER
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

COUNCILLOR GARETH LEWIS
CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION,
CULTURE & WELSH LANGUAGE

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council Compliance Notice	2015	https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/media/3947/merthyr-tydfil-county-borough-council-compliance-notice.pdf
Welsh Language Strategy	2022	https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/media/8403/welsh-language-strategy-2022-2027.pdf
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

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