

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Welsh Language Standards 2016-17

This document describes the Welsh Language Standards the Welsh Language Commissioner has determined should apply to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council from 30th March 2016 and 30th September 2016

If you require this information in larger print or in an alternative format, please contact the Corporate Strategy Team on 01639 763010 or email corporate.strategy@npt.gov.uk

This document is also available in Welsh

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Welsh Language Standards 2016-17

Introduction

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework for Welsh Language Commissioner to impose a duty on councils to comply with one or more standards of conduct on the Welsh Language. The Measure allowed for further regulations to specify standards in the following areas:

- service delivery
- policy making
- operational
- promotion
- record keeping

On 24th March 2015, The Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 were passed in the National Assembly for Wales Plenary Session. These regulations impose duties on county and county borough councils in Wales, national park authorities and Welsh Ministers.

Compliance Notice

As a result of the Welsh Language Standards Regulations a compliance notice was issued to the Council, along with all other councils in Wales, national park authorities and Welsh Ministers, identifying which standards had been applied and their imposition date.

The Council has lodged a challenge against 55 standards where it is considered they are unreasonable and disproportionate in terms of timescale, staffing levels, or the additional finances required to comply; the Commissioner has considered that the challenge on 54 of the standards is valid. As a consequence, and in accordance with section 60(2) of the Measure, the requirement for the council to comply with these standards has been postponed until:

- a) the Commissioner has determined whether or not the requirement is unreasonable or disproportionate, and
- b) the council's rights to appeal are exhausted

The Welsh Language Standards with which the Council has a duty to comply is appended to this document.

Implementing the Standards

The Council has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the standards. On a day to day basis the Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place to secure compliance.

Each member of staff is responsible for the successful implementation of the standards.

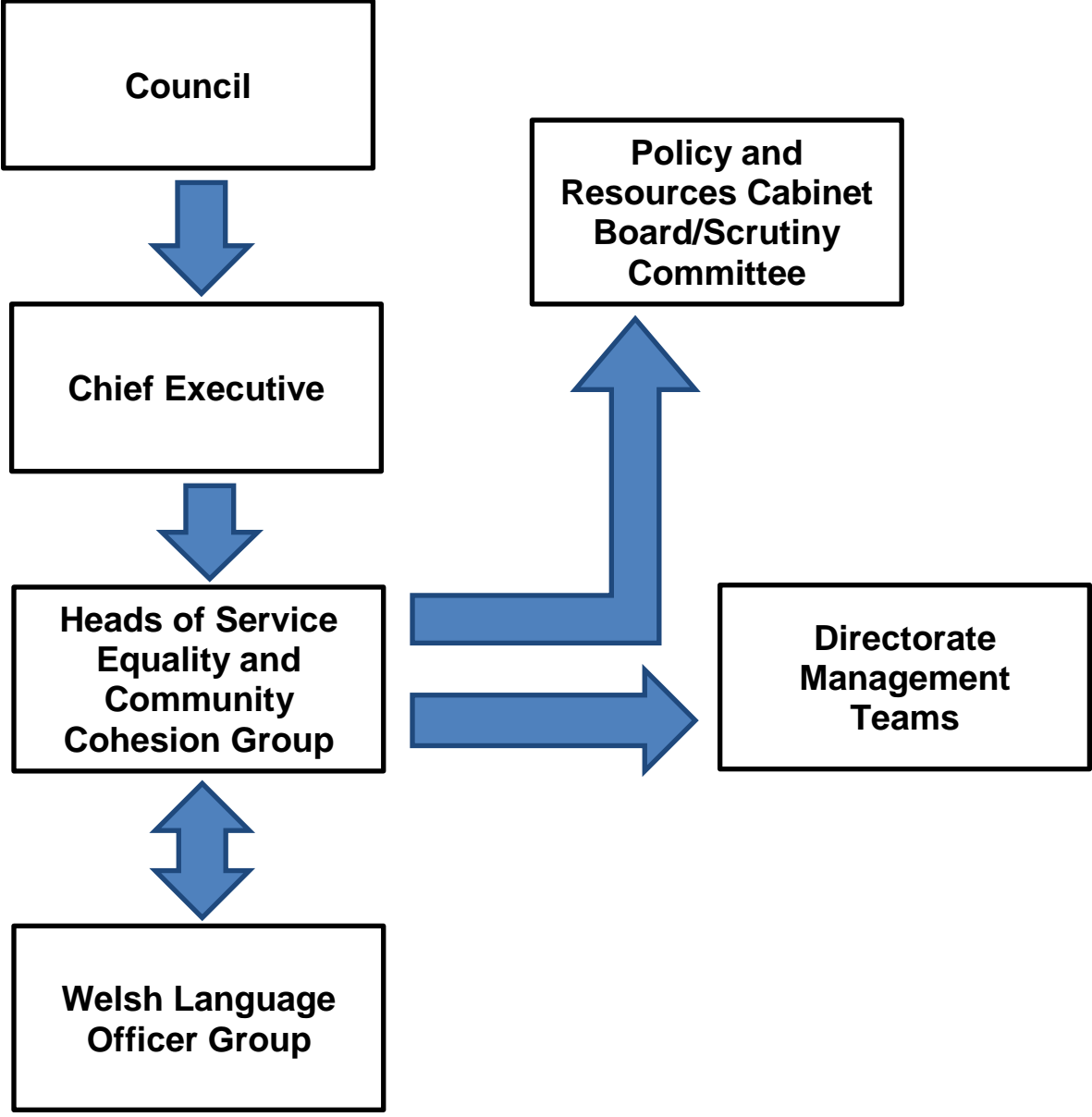
The Heads of Service Equality and Community Cohesion Group has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the standards and consists of representatives from each of the Council's directorates along with the Cabinet Member Equality Champion.

A Welsh Language Officer Group has been re-established in order to support the administration of the standards, to help with the early resolution of any issues that may occur and to support staff in the delivery of services in accordance with the duties placed on the Council.

Notes of the Welsh Language Officer Group will be reported to the Heads of Service Equality and Community Cohesion Group, whose notes in turn will be reported at individual directorate management teams for action/information.

The Council's Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board will keep the implementation of the standards under regular review and will be responsible for monitoring performance against the standards.

The following diagram illustrates this framework:



Promoting and Facilitating Services

The Heads of Service Equality and Community Cohesion Group will be responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place to promote the standards, including to staff, so that promotion is embedded in service delivery within individual directorates.

The number of Welsh speaking staff is presently limited. They will be encouraged to use Welsh in their work and to support access to services through the medium of Welsh wherever possible. When resources and circumstances permit we will strive to extend the range of services available through the medium of Welsh, including through digital channels.

The Council's usual communication and engagement channels will be utilised to promote services, the standards and the availability of bilingual services.

Regular features will be included in the staff newsletter and on the intranet to promote and facilitate services that that are offered in accordance with the standards. There will also be opportunities at employee development reviews to include this as a standing item.

Staff will be given guidance on the Welsh Language Standards; their background, purpose and general guidance on their implementation. Specific service related guidance may be required which will be developed where and when appropriate.

The guidance will also address translation services and how both Welsh speaking and non-Welsh speaking employees can help the public obtain a good service.

A corporate briefing programme and a Members' seminar for all Members of the Council has been arranged to promote the standards and their requirements

Complaints

When someone raises a concern that the Council is not complying with the Welsh Language Standards that are subject of the Compliance Notice issued to the Council by the Welsh Language Commissioner, this will be dealt with through the Council's Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure (**INSERT LINK**).

Where complaints cannot be dealt with on the spot, a full response will be provided within the set timescales; ten working days for stage one complaints and twenty working days for stage two. Where a full response cannot be provided within the set time scale, the complainant will be informed and given an indication of when a response will be provided.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied they have the right to seek an independent external consideration of the complaint. Information about making a complaint to the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and any other appropriate complaints handlers will be provided.

Where staff raise concerns about the use of Welsh within the workplace these will be dealt with through the Grievance Policy.

The corporate briefing programme will include information on dealing with complaints. Complaints officers will receive training as to how deal with complaints relating to the Welsh Language Standards.

Welsh Language Commissioner

We will provide any information requested by the Welsh Language Commissioner which relates to the standards with which we are under a duty to comply.

Under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 the Welsh Language Commissioner may conduct an inquiry into any matter relating to any of the Commissioner's functions. We will fully cooperate with any such inquiry as well as providing information or documents as appropriate.

Publishing

The Compliance Notice for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, which contains the Welsh Language Standards with which we have to comply, is available on our website **(INSERT LINK)** and at each of our offices that are open to the public.

This document is available on the Council's website and at each of our offices that are open to the public.

Annual Report

An annual report on how the Council has complied with the relevant standards will be produced no later than 30th June, for the previous financial year, and will be published on the website as well as available at each of our offices that are open to the public.