

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Policy and Resources Cabinet Board

14 June 2017

Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services K.Jones

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: All Wards

Welsh Language Standards - Annual Report 2016-2017

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report for 2016-2017, produced in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015.

Executive Summary

2. This is the first annual report produced in accordance with the Standards for a complete financial year. The report provides information on the way in which the Council has complied with service delivery, operational and policy making standards with which we had a duty to comply during the year.
3. The report includes:
 - the way in which the Council has complied with the service delivery, operational and policy making standards
 - the number of complaints received which relate to compliance with the service delivery, operational and policy making standards and the Welsh language generally.
4. In addition there is additional specific information that must be included:
 - (a) the number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of the year in question (on the basis of the records you kept in accordance with standard 151);

- (ch) the number of new and vacant posts that you advertised during the year which were categorised as posts where –
 - (i) Welsh language skills were essential,
 - (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post,
 - (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable, or
 - (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary, (on the basis of the records you kept in accordance with standard 154);
- 5. Three complaints were received during the year; two in relation to compliance with the Welsh Language Standards and one in relation to the Welsh language. Details of these are also included in the report

Background

- 6. The Compliance notice issued on 30 September 2015 imposed 171 Standards. 116 of these were considered achievable as they mirrored or were very similar to the commitments made in the existing Welsh Language Scheme. The remaining 55 standards were the subject of a challenge which was submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner on 15 January 2016; 54 of which the Commissioner considered valid.
- 7. There have been meetings and correspondence with the Commissioner and her representatives over recent months in relation to the Challenge. The Council is currently considering the latest correspondence and will bring this and a proposed response to members at the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board on 14th June 2017.
- 8. The requirement for the Council to comply with the Standards being challenged is postponed until the Welsh Language Commissioner makes a final determination or the appeal process has been exhausted. Therefore, the Annual Report does not contain reference to these standards.

The Annual Report

- 9. The annual report, attached at Appendix 1, provides information on the way in which the Council complied with the service delivery, operational and policy making standards that were imposed during the year 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2017.

10. As the standards were similar to the commitments expressed in the Council's previous Welsh Language Scheme expectations on compliance was not significantly different post April 2016.
11. However, there were some areas where work was required to ensure compliance was possible; the single main telephone number, creating Welsh corporate social media accounts, amendments to the Equality Impact Assessment framework, revision of email signatures, etc.
12. The Council received 2 complaints via the Welsh Language Commissioner which has required us to follow the Commissioner's procedure and timetable – which has been a rather protracted experience. One of the complaints has yet to reach the end of the process.

Financial Impact

13. The standards imposed from 30 March 2016 are considered to be the same as, or similar to, commitments in the previous Welsh Language Scheme. However, because of the impact of austerity on the Council's human and financial resources full compliance with these standards is proving to be a challenge.

In so far as the Standards that are subject to the challenge is concerned the cost of full compliance is estimated to be very considerable and there is presently no additional funding made available to the Council to meet such costs.

Equality Impact Assessment

14. As the focus of the annual report is to report on compliance there is no requirement to undertake an equality impact assessment.

Workforce Impacts

15. Staff with Welsh language skills continue to be encouraged to use Welsh in their work.
16. In order to help increase the future language capability of staff the Council encourages the uptake of available Welsh courses. The

Council also recognises the limits to increasing language capability currently due to restrictions on external recruitment.

Legal Powers

- 17 This report deals with the Council's duty to comply with the Compliance Notice issued on 30 September 2015.

Risk Management

18. Failure to comply with the standards could lead to a £5,000 fine per standard. There is also a risk of damage to the Council's reputation.

Consultation

19. There is no requirement under the constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

20. It is recommended that:

Members monitor the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2016 – 2017, attached at Appendix 1, and authorise the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services to publish the report on the Council's website.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

21. To discharge the Council's duty in relation to Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015.

Implementation of Decision

22. The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

23. Appendix 1 - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2016-2017

List of Background Papers

24. Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015

Officer Contact

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