

Meri Huws  
Welsh Language Commissioner  
Market Chambers  
5-7 St Mary Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 1AT

Dear Commissioner,

**Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Compliance Notice: Challenging future duties**

I write in response to your letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018 which follows the meeting held between officers of this Council and representatives of your office dated 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018 and the subsequent information exchange.

Can I first say that I very much welcome the constructive way in which your officers have engaged with us in seeking to find a mutually acceptable resolution to the issues we have raised in connection with nine of the standards which were still subject of Challenge. I believe that we now have a basis upon which to reach agreement.

The Council wants me to re-state its support for the Welsh Government's policy objectives regarding the Welsh Language and wishes to place on record again that the representations we have made regarding your proposed determinations have been founded on a genuine concern that the Council would not be able to comply with a range of standards as initially presented to us. The basis of our arguments has been to secure a position which the Council could regard as reasonable and proportionate, given that the Council has a wide range of duties to discharge and must balance Welsh language duties amongst other duties. Importantly, the impact of continuing austerity together with the imposition of new duties that were not accompanied with new resources has limited the Council's genuine wish to make progress in relation to Welsh language responsibilities. Meeting the standards that will now apply to the Council as the Challenge process comes to a conclusion will be challenging. I would wish to assure you that the Council will make its best endeavours to meet those standards.

Turning now to the detail of your letter I would comment as follows:

#### Standard 22

The Council welcomes and accepts the proposed variation 'in relation to messages provide by an eternal provider on mobile phone systems'. This reflects the reality that commercial service providers are not yet able to offer a an automated messaging/call handling service that complies with the Welsh Language Standards as presently drafted.

#### Standard 41

The Commissioner's acceptance of the Council's need to include a statement making it clear which language was used in the original version of published minutes is very welcome. This will assist the Council in defending any challenges that could arise where there could be differences between the Welsh and English versions of our official records. That said, the cost of translating agendas and minutes is significant as the Council will need to rely on external translation until the Council is in a position to recruit suitably qualified bilingual staff within the democratic services function. We accept however, that you are not in a position to make further variation to this standard.

#### Standards 61 and 62

We are pleased to have received confirmation that the Commissioner does not expect the Council to translate street names where there is no Welsh equivalent and that the convention we propose to use - eg Stryd Conduit Street - would be deemed compliant with the standard.

#### Standard 64

We welcome the pragmatic approach taken to the delivery of reception services. We accept that standard 64 should apply to our main reception services at the Neath and Port Talbot civic centres and also accept that standard 66 should be applied to all other reception services.

#### Standards 84 and 86

We are pleased that the Commissioner has accepted the basis of our arguments concerning our Challenge to this standard and confirm that the variations proposed to standard 84 puts us in a position where we can now accept the standard (as varied).

#### Standards 99 and 100

The Commissioner's support for the insertion of a suitable statement on any translated contracts of employment (which would enable the Council to respond to

any challenges arising from differences between the source and translated documents) is very helpful.

Furthermore, the pragmatic approach now taken in relation to the requirement set out in standard 100 assists in enabling the Council to reach agreement to this standard.

Therefore, I am pleased to confirm on behalf of the Council that we are able to accept the proposed determination. I look forward to working with you and your officials as we seek to implement the standards and would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks to your officers for their support in enabling this phase of the work to be concluded.

Yours sincerely



**Karen Jones**  
**Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Digital Officer**

**Chief Executive's Office**

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**Swyddfa'r Prif Weithredwr**

**Karen Jones**  
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We welcome correspondence in Welsh and will deal with Welsh and English correspondence to the same standards and timescales.  
Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymdrin â gohebiaeth Gymraeg a Saesneg i'r un safonau ac amserlenni