

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

27 June 2018

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer K.Jones

Matter for Decision:

Wards Affected: All Wards

Welsh Language Standards - Annual Report 2017-2018

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report for 2017-2018, produced in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015.

Executive Summary

2. This is the second annual report produced in accordance with the Standards. The report provides information on the way in which the Council has complied with service delivery, policy making, operational and promotion 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, policy making, operational and promotion 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. Specific information in relation to the Welsh language skills of employees and new and vacant posts are included under operational standards:
 - (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. Five complaints were received during the year; three via the Welsh Language Commissioner and two direct to the service. Details of these are also included in the report

Background

- 6. The original 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 the months following the submission of the Challenge. The Commissioner determined a number of standards during 2017-2018 and the annual report reflects this where appropriate. A revised compliance notice was received and is appended to the annual report for reference.
- 8. The Commissioner's final determination was received on 28 April 2018.

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, policy making, operational and promotion standards that were implemented during the year 1 April 2017 - 31 March 2018.

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 three complaints via the Welsh Language Commissioner which has required us to follow the Commissioner's procedure and timetable – which has been a rather protracted process. One of the complaints has yet to reach the end of the process.

Financial Impact

13. The majority of 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 in 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 Impacts

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 Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer to publish the report on the Council's website by the statutory deadline, 30 June 2018.

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 an urgent one for immediate implementation, subject to the consent of the Scrutiny Chair (and is therefore not subject to the call-in procedure).

Appendices

23. Appendix 1 - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2017-2018

List of Background Papers

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

Officer Contact

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