

# NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Cabinet

24 February 2021

### Report of the Head of Human & Organisational Development – S Rees

#### Matter for Decision

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

**Report Title:** Welsh Language Promotion Strategy - progress report October 2019-March 2020

#### Purpose of Report

1. To present the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy progress report for the period October 2019-March 2020
2. To seek Members' approval to realign the reporting period to reflect other statutory annual progress reports.

#### Executive Summary

3. The report provides information on progress made during the six month period October 2019-March 2020, Appendix 1.
4. The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, and associated action plan, was adopted by Council in September 2018. With the Strategy being adopted midyear, reporting periods have followed a similar arrangement; an annual reporting period of 1 October to 30 September.
5. While progress must be reported annually there is no statutory annual reporting period, unlike many of the Council's other plans or strategies. Although in itself this is not an issue, with the reporting period out of step with other progress reports it does hamper members' holistic oversight of the Council's progress.
6. Bringing the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy reporting period in line with other plans will allow for a more holistic understanding of the Council's progress in relation to its statutory requirements.

7. During early 2020-2021 the redeployment of many of our workforce into other service areas to support the work of tackling the COVID-19 outbreak and to support residents in these unprecedented times impacted on our ability to provide Welsh language services to pre outbreak levels. However, as time has progressed matters have eased and while we continue to face challenges our Welsh language services are being stepped up.
8. Although a decision was made early in the lockdown for all communications in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak to be in English only to provide information as quickly as possible (a decision made on the basis of health and safety as well as on the more practical issue of limited resources in such challenging times) over the summer we were able to reintroduce bilingual communications. With the recruitment of two Welsh speakers to the Communications Team during the autumn we have ensured there is ongoing capacity for all future communications.

### **Background**

9. Standard 145 (Promotion) of the Welsh Language Standards states that every Local Authority must produce and publish on their website a 5 year Strategy that sets out how they propose to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in their area.
10. The Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and action plan were adopted by Council on 26 September 2018. The first progress report for the period October 2018-September 2019 was approved by Cabinet in December 2019.
11. The annual reporting period has been dictated by the date of adoption of the strategy, October – September, which is inconsistent with other progress reporting periods.

### **Progress October 2019-March 2020**

12. Progress reported is primarily in relation to activities in the education sectors as well as in relation to 'Welsh in the Workplace'
13. In light of the short reporting period there has inevitably been limited progress to report which has been compounded by the outbreak of the COVID-19 outbreak toward the end of the reporting period that affected, and continues to affect, service provision and data collection.
14. Any additional information that becomes available for the period 2019-2020 will be included in the annual report 2020-2021 which will be reported during autumn 2021.

### **Realigning the reporting period**

15. By reporting annually for a period that is inconsistent with other statutory reporting requirements it is difficult to fully appreciate the Council's progress.
16. A realignment of the reporting period at this time is considered appropriate given the limitations on services and activities as a consequence of the Covid-19 outbreak, the disruption to services, redeployment of staff (although temporary) as well as the reprioritisation of work within the Council as well as by our external partners.
17. As a result it is proposed that a six month progress report for October 2019-March 2020 is presented initially with future annual reports presented that are consistent with our other plans and strategies i.e. April – March each year. Thus the progress report for April 2020 – March 2021 will be reported during autumn 2021.

### **Financial Appraisal**

18. There are no additional financial impacts attached to the implementation of the Strategy as all actions have been developed within budgetary constraints.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

19. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment.

### **Valleys Communities Impact:**

20. Progress against a number of actions in the action plan will help promote and support the Welsh language within the valley communities.

### **Workforce Impact**

21. There are no direct workforce impacts associated with the Strategy as all actions have been developed taking into account our current workforce and resources.
22. By realigning the reporting period it is anticipated that data collection will be streamlined and will ensure that more seamless reporting for staff and members will take place.

### **Legal Impact**

23. This report sets out how the Council meets its legal duty under the Welsh Language Standards which has been referenced in the body of this report.

### **Risk Management**

24. There are no direct risk management impacts associated with the report however; there may be a financial risk to the Council for failure to comply with the Welsh Language Standards.

### **Consultation**

25. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

### **Recommendations**

26. Members note the progress made against the actions in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy action plan for the period October 2019-March 2020.
27. Members agree the new reporting arrangements.

### **Reason for Proposed Decision**

28. To enable the Council to meet the Welsh Language statutory requirements.

### **Implementation of Decision**

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

### **Appendices**

30. Appendix 1 – Welsh Language Promotion Strategy - progress report October 2019-March 2020.

### **List of Background Papers**

[Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and action plan](#)

### **Officer Contact**

31. Mrs Sheenagh Rees, Head of Human & Organisational Development Tel: 01639 763315 or e-mail: [s.rees5@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s.rees5@npt.gov.uk)
32. Mrs Rhian Headon, Corporate Policy Officer Equalities and Welsh Language e-mail: [r.headon@npt.gov.uk](mailto:r.headon@npt.gov.uk)