

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

1st November 2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING A.THOMAS

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2032

Purpose of report

1. To obtain approval to consult on Neath Port Talbot's draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032

Executive summary

2. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 20131 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).
3. Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP details the plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and planning for future growth. The plan details how further development will be secured over the next 10 years, January 2022 - January 2032.
4. The draft WESP will be subject to a comprehensive public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders for a nine week period, approval is therefore sought from members to embark upon the consultation process.

Background

5. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013¹ requires Local Authorities to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The WESP must contain proposals and targets to improve the:
 - Planning and standards of Welsh medium education and teaching; and
 - Report on progress made to meet the targets of the previous WESP.

6. Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP 2022-32, will be the cornerstone for the Council's vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in Neath Port Talbot, to enable all learners to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life. It both complements and assists in facilitating the National vision for the Welsh language, to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050:

The year 2050: The Welsh language is thriving, the number of speakers has reached a million, and it is used in every aspect of life. Among those who do not speak Welsh there is goodwill and a sense of ownership towards the language and a recognition by all of its contribution to the culture, society, and economy of Wales. Our vision is to secure favourable circumstances throughout the country that support language acquisition and use of Welsh language skills. We want to see an increase in language transmission in the family, early introduction of Welsh to every child, an education system that provides Welsh language skills for all

Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers (Welsh Government, 2017)

7. Welsh-medium education is an integral and essential part of the learning offer in Neath Port Talbot and all children should benefit from the opportunity to learn, appreciate and understand their lives through the medium of Welsh. This principle is underpinned by ensuring universal access to this provision across the county borough. Neath Port Talbot Council recognises that language and culture are critical parts of an individual's identity and is committed to promoting and celebrating Welsh language learning across all phases and sectors.

8. It is acknowledged that the statutory education system has a vital role to play in increasing the number of Welsh speakers. We must increase the number of school learners who have the opportunity to develop Welsh-language skills in school and the opportunity to use it in their everyday lives, significantly, to achieve our goals.
9. Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP details how we plan to support and further develop Welsh language education in schools and in the wider communities and how we plan for future growth. The plan details how we will secure further development over the next 10 years, January 2022 - January 2032.
10. The draft plan has been developed through close working with partners including Neath Port Talbot schools, Menter Iaith, RhAG, Muddiad Meithrin, Neath Port Talbot College, Academi Hywel Dda Swansea University, the Urdd and with Welsh Government.
11. It aligns itself to the national policy and guidance '*The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Wales) Regulations 2019*', '*Cymraeg 2050*' and to the '*Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action Plan 2017-21*'. The plan will reflect how the school system in Neath Port Talbot, including sixth forms, will move forward in the period until 2032 to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented effectively in our schools securing the opportunity and 'desire for learners to become increasingly bilingual with a strong grasp of other languages' (*Curriculum for Wales 2022*).
12. The overarching ten year target in Neath Port Talbot is to increase the number of Year 1 children taught through the medium of Welsh from 16.8% (252 pupils) in 2020/21 (PLASC 2021) to 31% (460 pupils) by 2032.
13. PLASC 2021 reception and second year nursery pupil numbers were 283 (18.7%) and 290 (21%) respectively, so over the short term, year 1 numbers and percentages are likely to increase.
14. Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP also contains information on mitigating any possible negative impacts on the Welsh language as a result of a new build English-medium primary school in the Swansea Valley area. This information is included as an appendix to the main WESP.

WESP Outcomes

15. The following outcomes are outlined in the draft WESP and address the broader aims outlined in Cymraeg 2050 and its implementation plan.
- More nursery children/3 year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
 - More reception class children/ 5 year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
 - More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another
 - More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh
 - More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school.
 - An increase in Welsh-medium education provision for learners with additional learning needs (in accordance with duties determined by the ALN Act
 - Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.

Consultation

16. Based on the statutory requirements set out in the Welsh in Education Strategic Planning regulations (Wales) 2019 (*“the 2019 Regulations”*) local authorities must consult with the stakeholders listed below.
- neighbouring local authorities
 - heads of all schools maintained by the authority
 - the governing bodies of all schools maintained by the authority
 - all further education sector institutions within the area
 - in respect of any foundation school or voluntary school in the area –
 - the person responsible for appointing governors
 - if the school has a religious character, the relevant religious body
17. The 2019 Regulations also specify which other prescribed persons need to be consulted, namely:

- The Welsh Language Commissioner
 - Initial Teacher Education providers
 - Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
 - Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (if applicable)
 - Her Majesty's Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
 - Bodies providing services for children and young people considered suitable by the Local Authorities
18. The draft WESP therefore will be subject to a comprehensive public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders for a nine week period. Subject to approval, the WESP will be published on the Neath Port Talbot Borough Council website and it is anticipated that consultation will take place between 5th November 2021 and 7th January 2022.
19. During this period, views can be expressed in writing to the Director of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning or via email to: education@npt.gov.uk
20. Following consultation, a report will be presented to members on the outcome of the consultation and the draft WESP will then be finalised.
21. The final WESP will then be considered by full council before submission to Welsh Government.

Financial Impact

22. There are no financial implications linked to this report. However if implemented financial impacts could occur, for example an increase in the number of Welsh-medium schools is likely to lead to increased capital and revenue costs.
23. Applications for grant funding have been submitted to assist with additional capital and revenue costs for identified projects through the 21st century schools programme and these will be the subject of further reports.

24. Additional financial impacts may be identified through the course of the 10 year plan and reports will be presented to members at the appropriate time for approval.

Integrated Impact Assessment

25. A first stage integrated impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
26. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.
27. This report seeks approval to undertake consultation on Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP and as such no negative impacts have been identified

Valley Communities Impacts

28. There are no impacts on valley communities as result of this report. Should the WESP be implemented it is likely that there would be positive impacts on the valley communities as the WESP aims to create and provide opportunities and experiences for all learners and the wider community to use Welsh and be part of Welsh life in order to increase confidence in the Welsh language and to feel a sense of belonging

Workforce impacts

29. There are no workforce impacts as a result of this report. However if implemented the WESP outcome 7 aims to increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subjects) and teach through the medium of Welsh, which is likely to positively impact on the workforce.

Legal impacts

30. The following legislation / regulations are aligned to this report:
- Section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
 - The WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019
 - The WESP (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020

Risk Management Impacts

31. Failure to gain approval to consult on the draft WESP will mean that the Council will not be able to fulfil its legal obligations.

Recommendation

32. Having had due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment, it is recommended that members approve consultation on the draft WESP, with consultation to take place from 5th November 2021 to 7th January 2022 in order to 2022-2032.

Reasons for proposed decision

33. This decision is necessary to comply with the consultation requirements imposed upon the council by Section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019.

Implementation of the decision

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

Appendices

Appendix A: draft WESP

Appendix B: First Stage Integrated Impact Assessment

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