

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

17 November 2021

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

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Annual Report 2020-2021

Purpose of Report

1. To present the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Annual Report 2020-2021.

Executive Summary

2. The report provides information on progress made during April 2020-March 2021. (Appendix 1).
3. The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, and associated action plan, was adopted by Council in September 2018. Changes to the reporting cycle were made during 2020 with the standard annual reporting period (April –March) being adopted.
4. While progress must be reported annually there is no statutory annual reporting period, unlike many of the Council's other plans or strategies.
5. During 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 have recovered.

Background

6. Standard 145 (Promotion) of the Welsh Language Standards requires the Council to produce and publish on the website a 5 year Strategy that sets out how it proposes to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in the area.

7. 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.
8. In February 2021 Cabinet approved the realignment of the reporting period to mirror that for other statutory plans. This is the first full year annual report under the new arrangements.

Progress April 2020 - March 2021

9. With the pandemic making its mark on services, staff and residents alike 2020-2021 was a year like no other. The challenges and impact on the Council and our communities as a consequence of the unprecedented situation brought about by the pandemic have led to changes in service delivery and working practices as well as the revaluation of our priorities and those of our communities as we recover, reset, renew.
10. We and our partners have continued to provide services utilising new, sometimes untested, ways of working with limited numbers of staff as well as meeting the challenges of implementing new services such as the Safe and Well service to help support those most vulnerable in our area.
11. Consequently progress against actions in the Strategy was affected during this period, with maintenance of services being the priority.

Key points

12. There has been a hiatus in progress over the last year – understandable given the situation faced during 2020-2021 – with maintenance of service a priority for many.
13. While some progress has been made in relation to Welsh medium education for example the provision of new/additional childcare spaces and additional Foundation Phase classrooms at five Welsh-medium schools, many actions have been paused. These actions fall within the remit of the new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022 -2032, currently being developed, and once approved will be Strategy for delivering on these actions.
14. The closure of leisure and cultural facilities impacted progress in these service areas, but with facilities reopening work to progress actions will recommence.
15. In addition there will be further opportunities to explore potential links between the Welsh Language, the proposed Heritage, Culture Sport and Leisure Strategy and other initiatives going forward.

16. Notable areas of progress include:

- A virtual Youth Club was established to encourage the social use of Welsh amongst pupils at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera and has been shortlisted for a Youth Work Excellence Award.
- One of our Youth Work Volunteering Team, won the Youth Work Excellence 'Outstanding volunteer in a youth work setting' Award for work in supporting young people in the Blaengwynfi and Cymmer Youth Clubs.
- Increase in the number of staff accessing online Welsh language courses.
- A wide range of Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot activities delivered over the period to help promote and support Welsh language provision amongst families and the wider community.
- 'Welsh Homework Help' was created by Mentrau Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot and Abertawe to offer parents in the Swansea/Neath Port Talbot area practical support on homework, and any issues about Welsh medium education.

Financial Appraisal

17. 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

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

Valleys Communities Impact:

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

Workforce Impact

20. There are no direct workforce impacts associated with the Strategy as all actions have been developed taking into account our current workforce and resources.

Legal Impact

21. 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

22. 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

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

Recommendations

24. Members note the progress made against the actions in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for the period April 2020 – March 2021.

Appendices

25. Appendix 1 – Welsh Language Promotion Strategy - progress report April 2020 – March 2021.

List of Background Papers

Neath Port Talbot Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

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