

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council
2nd February 2022

**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,
LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING
ANDREW THOMAS**

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2032

Purpose of report

1. To report on the outcome of consultation on Neath Port Talbot's draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032 and to obtain permission to submit the plan to Welsh Ministers for approval.

Executive summary

2. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 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 has been subject to a comprehensive public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders for a nine week period, and this report outlines the findings from the consultation.
5. Members are asked to approve the draft WESP which will then be submitted to Welsh ministers for approval.

Background

6. Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 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.
7. 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)

8. 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.

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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*).
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. Neath Port Talbot's draft WESP also contains information on mitigating any possible negative impacts on linguistically sensitive areas. This information is included as an appendix to the main WESP.

WESP Outcomes

16. 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

17. The draft WESP has been subject to a comprehensive public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders for a nine week period between 5th November 2021 and 7th January 2022.
18. 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
19. 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
- Her Majesty's Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
- Bodies providing services for children and young people considered suitable by the Local Authorities

20. In total 13 responses were received. While the number of responses is less than anticipated it should be noted that great number of them were very lengthy and contained much detail.

21. Responses were received from the following –

Menter Iaith
 Mudiad Meithrin
 ESTYN
 Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
 Member of the Public (x2)
 Parent
 UCAC
 RhAG

22. Additionally responses were also received from Cllr. Alun Llewelyn, Cllr. Del Morgan and MS Sioned Williams.

23. During the consultation period, officers also met with head teachers in both the English and Welsh medium sectors, to present the WESP and to gather informal feedback.

Summary of Responses

24. Overall a significant number of comments were received which recognised that the WESP is an ambitious, creative and challenging plan, including the following

- *We welcome the fact that the strategy outlines an ambitious vision and set of targets for Welsh medium education. The strategy*

includes several original and positive action points and achieving the objectives and targets in this plan will contribute to the national vision of an increasingly bilingual Wales **Welsh Language Commissioner**

- *The vision is clear and exciting and sets the scene for the work of strengthening the development of education throughout the county* **RhAG (Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg/parents for Welsh-medium Education)**
- *Overall, it is an ambitious plan which aims to enable all learners, families and carers to develop their Welsh language skills and to use the language confidently in everyday life* **ESTYN**

25. Support has been expressed for the plans to support and increase the Welsh language skills of the workforce and these are generally welcomed, along with the proposal to open three new Welsh-medium primary schools through the plans lifetime.
26. Positive comments have been received relating to the recognition of the importance of early years provision in the plan, and the steps outlined to further develop good transition from childcare to formal education. The creation of a new Welsh language Promotion Officer post is also noted to be a positive step.
27. A number of comments ask for specific detail which hasn't been included in the overall WESP. In almost all cases this detail is already contained in the specific Outcome Action Plans which are far more detailed and will contain the action steps which need to be taken to reach the overall target of the particular outcome. It was felt that including every detail of these plans would cause the WESP to become a very lengthy and unwieldy document, which in turn would make it difficult to use. However it is noted that the detail is important and the action plans will be reported to the WESP forum on a regular basis and will also inform the annual monitoring report which will be presented to members.
28. A small number of comments were received which do not specifically relate to the WESP or which cannot be addressed through the WESP

actions. Examples of these include disagreement with Welsh Government policies around creating more Welsh speakers, and around the view that the WESP should focus specifically on Welsh-medium schools and that English-medium schools should not be aiming to create Welsh speakers.

29. Comments suggesting amendments/additions to the WESP have also been carefully considered, including the need to change wording and provide greater clarity. These include –
 - ensuring the WESP reflects the aim to create demand not just respond to demand for additional Welsh-medium provision
 - provide greater clarity around the issues of addressing workforce challenges
 - encourage greater third party involvement outside of the WESP forum members
 - provide clarity around when the three new primary schools are planned to open and where they will be situated
 - provide greater clarity around Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision and in particular to the provision of specialist units
30. Additionally a number of comments were received relating to the recently approved Swansea Valley primary school scheme and the inclusion of the mitigating action plan at appendix A. Comments have been received which state that the inclusion of this as part of the WESP has led to confusion and that if included, it should not be specifically aimed at the Swansea Valley but rather to any linguistically sensitive area in Neath Port Talbot. The WESP forum members agreed and amendments have been made. However advice has also been sought from Welsh Government to ensure this is acceptable and if necessary the document will revert back to the original plan if Welsh Government feel it needs to be included.
31. As a result of these and other comments, the draft WESP has been amended and these amendments have been agreed by WESP forum members. The revised WESP is included as Appendix A, with amendments shown in red for ease of reference.
32. A more detailed summary of comments received, along with officer responses is included at Appendix C for information.

33. It is the opinion of officers that the draft WESP 2022-2032 is now sufficiently developed for submission to the Welsh Ministers for approval and that the work to implement the plan should continue.

Financial Impact

34. 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.
35. 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.
36. 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

37. An 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.
38. The assessment has indicated positive impacts on most protected groups, with neutral impacts on others, and a positive impact on the development of the Welsh language.
39. The Integrated Impact Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix B.

Valley Communities Impacts

40. 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

41. 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

42. 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

43. Failure to gain approval for the draft WESP will mean that the Council will not be able to fulfil its legal obligations.

Recommendation

44. Having given due regard to the responses to consultation it is recommended that members permit the submission of the draft WESP to Welsh Ministers for approval.

Reasons for proposed decision

45. 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

46. The decision is for immediate implementation.

Appendices

Appendix A: Revised WESP

Appendix B: Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix C: Summary of Consultation responses

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