

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

28th September 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 obtain permission to publish Neath Port Talbot's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032, following approval by Welsh Government.

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 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 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. In February 2022 full Council gave permission for the draft WESP to be submitted to Welsh Government for approval. Following further amendments the WESP was approved and now permission is sought to publish the final WESP and begin implementation. Members are asked to approve the final WESP and commend the plan to Council for permission to publish.

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 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 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 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 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 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 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. In total 13 responses were received. While the number of responses were less than anticipated it should be noted that a great number of them were very lengthy and contained much detail. Overall the response to the WESP was very positive, with many responders commending the plan for its vision, and recognising that the WESP is an ambitious, creative and challenging plan.

Welsh Government Approval

19. The draft WESP was submitted to Welsh Government ministers following approval by full Council on 2nd February 2022.

20. In May 2022, in line with Section 85(5)(a) of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 ("the 2013 Act"), Welsh Government consulted with officers regarding modifications to the plan. Following further discussions the majority of modifications were agreed and the WESP was amended.
21. In summary the amendments relate in general to including additional data, updates to Flying Start provision and the childcare offer following Welsh Government expansion of the schemes, an update on planned immersion centre provision, further information on transition arrangements and additional data and information regarding the workforce.
22. Information and targets relating specifically to the Swansea Valley proposal were initially included in the submitted draft WESP on the request of Welsh Government. The WESP forum felt strongly that specific references to the Swansea Valley proposal should not form part of the 10 year whole authority plan and should be addressed in a separate document. Following meetings with Welsh Government during the summer term, it was jointly agreed that specific reference to the Swansea Valley proposal will not be included in the WESP at this point in time as a result of a potential review.
23. Formal approval of the WESP was then granted by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language in July 2022.
24. The final WESP is attached at Appendix A.

Next Steps

25. Council approval is now needed to publish the WESP and to progress implementation.
26. A five year action plan will be sent to the Minister by the end of the autumn term 2022, and will be reviewed annually, with progress reported to members following the review.

Financial Impact

27. 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.
28. 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.
29. 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

30. 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.
31. 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.
32. The Integrated Impact Assessment is attached to this report as Appendix B.

Valley Communities Impacts

33. 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

34. 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

35. 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

36. Failure to approve the WESP will mean that the Council will not be able to fulfil its legal obligations.

Recommendation

37. Having given due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment it is recommended that Council approve the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan as detailed in Appendix A to the circulated report for publishing and to progress implementation.

Reasons for proposed decision

38. This decision is necessary to comply with the WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019.

Implementation of the decision

39. The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

Appendices

Appendix A: Final WESP

Appendix B: Integrated Impact Assessment

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