

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council

12 July 2023

Report of the Head of People and Organisational Development – S Rees

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the draft Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028 as reviewed by the Welsh Language Task and Finish Group. The draft Strategy was presented to Cabinet on 28 June where it was approved and referred to Council for formal adoption.

Executive Summary

2. A Cabinet Scrutiny Task and Finish Group was established to develop a revised Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, 2023-2028 (Appendix 1) to meet the requirements of the Welsh language standards.
3. The Strategy has been developed and has taken into account a number of factors:
 - a review of the current strategy
 - the advice and support of Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot
 - consideration of the content of current and proposed strategies and plans.
4. Following a period of public consultation between 17 April and 15 May the draft strategy was amended to take on board comments/suggestions as appropriate; to the main body of the strategy as well as the inclusion of additional actions.

Background

5. Welsh Language Standard 145 (Promotion) 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 Welsh Language more widely in their area.

6. The Council's first five year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy was developed by the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Task and Finish Group which was produced and endorsed by Council in 2018.
7. It was agreed at Cabinet on 19 October 2022 to re-establish the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Task and Finish Group in order to develop the second Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023- 2028. An evaluation of the initial strategy had been undertaken and formed part of the Task and Finish Group's considerations during the development of the revised Strategy.
8. Following a period of public consultation between 17 April and 15 May the draft strategy was amended to take on board comments/suggestions as appropriate; to the main body of the strategy as well as additional actions

Development of the Strategy

9. A Cabinet Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, established to develop the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028, met between 23 November and 30 May taking into account a number of factors including:
 - a review of the current strategy
 - the advice and support of Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot,
 - consideration of the content of current and proposed strategies and plans.
10. A draft strategy was developed and on 5 April Cabinet approved a four week public consultation, which took place 17 April and 15 May. Feedback received during this period has informed the final version of the strategy with amendments made to the body of the strategy as well as the inclusion of additional actions.
11. During this period officers from across a number of service areas have also identified additional actions for inclusion.
12. There is further work to do on in relation to the proposed set of measures included in the strategy. As the strategy is implemented more appropriate measures may be identified and we will also work

with partners to consider the best ways to measure the difference we make.

Consultation

13. Following approval by Cabinet on 5 April the public consultation ran from 17 April to 15 May 2023.

Activities included:

- an online survey/questionnaire via the Council's web site
- consultation packs in local and community libraries and civic centres
- awareness/consultation activities held in Port Talbot, Neath, Pontardawe, Crynant and Margam Park

The consultation was promoted via:

- the council's website on the consultation pages www.npt.gov.uk/consultations
- posters and at libraries, civic centres
- the council's corporate social media accounts
- press coverage generated by cabinet reports and press releases
- Council's internal communications channels; including 'In the Loop', Sway, Yammer channels
- link to the council's consultation pages sent via email to a range of stakeholders including schools, town and community councils, NPTCVS, Fforwm Iaith, Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot and local community groups via the NPT Community of Practice on Involvement and Engagement

Consultation Responses - Summary

14. The consultation received a total of the following responses from the various consultation activities as follows:

- 133 responses received in total from both versions of the questionnaire (11 in Welsh)
- Response rates for all of the questions ranged from 132 responses to 104 responses i.e. whilst we had 123 responses to the survey not all questions were answered by all respondents.
- The majority of responses to the full questionnaire (where indicated) came from Neath and the surrounding area. A small number of responses were received from the Pontardawe and the surrounding area.

- Three responses were received from groups/organisations including from our key partners, NPTCVS and Menter Iaith Castell-nedd Port Talbot.
 - An email of support from Blaenhonddan Community Council was also received.
 - A letter from Sioned Williams AS/MS
15. All views and comments expressed during the consultation have been considered prior to the strategy and associated action plan being finalised.
 16. It was disappointing to have received such a small number of responses from what is considered our language sensitive areas, with the highest number of Welsh speakers, notably the Upper Swansea Valley and Amman Valley areas. However, as part of our commitment of ensuring our engagement activities are as effective and accessible as possible full consideration will be given as to how we can better engage with communities in these areas.
 17. The vast majority of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the three strategic themes (77%, 75.4% and 70.3% respectively of those that answered the question). A lower percentage (56.5%) agreed/strongly agreed with the vision while nearly a third of respondent disagreed/strongly disagreed; a misunderstanding of the vision appears to be a significant factor to in eliciting this response. Responses to the target resulted in a similar outcome to that of the vision with comments from those who strongly disagreed/disagreed ranging from it 'not high enough' to dismissing the target in its entirety, 'There is no absolutely point. Waste of money'.
 18. A consultation report has been produced (Appendix 2) informed by the responses to the survey received (consultation summary attached at Appendix 3).
 19. A number of comments have been received during the consultation that are outside the remit of this strategy or require further consideration by relevant service areas. Examples include reference to Welsh medium education and/or actions in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (WESP), heritage and culture and street names. All such comments have been passed to the relevant officers for consideration. These comments are identified within the consultation report and once responses have

been received back from service areas the report will be amended accordingly.

Financial Impacts

20. Actions have been identified/developed for delivery within current budgetary constraints developed for delivery within current budgetary constraints. Additional grant funding is being sought, specifically SPF and HCT fusing as well as Cymraeg 2050 funding from Welsh Government, to further enhance and where possible extend the reach of the actions identified.

Integrated Impact Assessment

21. 'A first stage 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. The first stage impact assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment was required.
22. An overview of the Integrated Impact Assessment has been included below in summary form only and it is essential that Members read the Integrated Impact Assessment, which is attached to the report at Appendix 4 for the purposes of the meeting.'
23. Strategy has been developed in accordance with the legislative requirements of the Welsh language Standards (No1) Regulations and reflects the sustainable development principle of the Wellbeing of future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
24. While the anticipated outcome of the Strategy will be positive, some potential negative impacts have been identified during the consultation exercise and mitigating actions have been developed to address these. In addition, it is acknowledged that potential negative impacts are likely if implementation of the Strategy is not fully achieved and/or publicity is not undertaken sensitively.
25. Amendments which aim to address issues/comments raised during the consultation/assessment process have been made to the Strategy and Action Plan as appropriate
26. There is a predominantly neutral impact in relation to equalities although a positive impact is anticipated for the protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity and race.

27. The strategy will help alleviate socio economic disadvantage by supporting and increasing learning opportunities, increasing confidence, helping improve attainment levels which in turn will help increase opportunities in further education and accessing employment.

Actions have been included in the strategy to help address affordability issues thereby helping to increase participation and accessibility to courses, events and education.

28. There is an anticipated positive impact in relation to community cohesion/ social exclusion/poverty especially in instilling (greater) pride in the area and Wales as a whole. The various actions would help encourage participation and so bring about a new sense of belonging and community spirit.
29. There will be a positive impact with more opportunities to use Welsh as well as more activities and events held in Welsh thereby increasing the number of participants and helping ensure Welsh is more visible and audible in the area.
30. There is no impact on biodiversity at this time.
31. There will be a positive impact in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations as the well-being objectives have been developed in line with the five ways of working.

Valleys Communities Impacts

32. The strategy will likely have specific impact on some valley areas primarily due to the linguistic sensitivity of those areas. It is likely that some actions will help sustain/increase the language within these valleys while raising the profile of Welsh language, heritage and culture more generally across all valley and other areas of Neath Port Talbot.

Workforce Impacts

33. Staff with Welsh language skills continue to be encouraged to use Welsh in their work. In order to help increase the future language capability of staff the Council encourages the uptake of available Welsh courses. We continue to take every opportunity to recruit staff with Welsh language skills where appropriate.

Legal Impacts

34. This report deals with the Council's duty to comply with the final Compliance Notice issued on 25 April 2018.

Risk Management Impacts:

35. Failure to comply with the standards could lead to a £5,000 fine per standard. There is also a risk of damage to the Council's reputation.

Consultation

36. A draft Welsh Language Promotions Strategy was subject to a period of public consultation between 17 April and 15 May and was amended to take on board comments/suggestions as appropriate; to the main body of the strategy as well as in the form of additional actions.

Recommendation

37. Having had due regard to the Integrated Impact Assessment it is recommended that:
 - i. Council adopt the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028.

Reason for Decision

38. To ensure the Council meets the requirement contained in Welsh Language Standards 145 (promotion).

Appendices:

39. Appendix 1 - Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028
40. Appendix 2 - Consultation Report
41. Appendix 3 - Consultation Snap Summary Report
42. Appendix 4 - Integrated Impact Assessment

List of Background Papers:

43. Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice
44. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2018-2023 Evaluation Report

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