

Minutes of the Meeting of the Language Committee held at the Council Chamber, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Friday, 15 March 2024

Present: Councillor Catrin M S. Davies (Chair), Councillors Chris James (Vice-Chair), Gwyn Wigley Evans, Gareth Lloyd and John Roberts.

Officers in attendance: Elen James, Corporate Lead Officer- Lifelong Learning and Culture; Non Davies, Corporate Manager- Culture; Carys Lloyd-Jones, Language Policy Officer; Dwynwen Lloyd Llywelyn, Head of Theatr Felinfach and Felinfach Campus; Steffan Rees, Cered Team Leader; Mari Hopkins, Research and Performance Assistant and Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 11.53am)

1 Apologies

- i. Councillor Rhodri Davies apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillor Chris James apologised that he would be late in joining the meeting.
- iii. The Chair welcomed Carys Lloyd-Jones and wished her well in her new role as the Council's Language Policy Officer.

2 Disclosure of personal/ prejudicial interests

There were no disclosures of personal/ prejudicial interests.

3 To confirm as a true record the minutes of a meeting of the Language Committee held on 25 May 2023

It was RESOLVED to confirm as a true record of the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023.

4 Any matters arising from the minutes

The Chair provided a progress update related to agenda item 5:

- Staff members were thanked for their effort to increase the use of the Welsh language in the workplace and encouraged all to continue with this progress.
- Develop a Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for the next five-year period, in accordance with Standards 145/146- *in progress*
- Review the Integrated Impact Assessment Guide to assist officers in highlighting any impact on the Welsh language when presenting policy decisions- *completed*
- Develop a 'Croeso Ceredigion' project in an attempt to assimilate incomers, with the work emanating from the Bilingual Futures Forum- *in progress*
- Develop a guide to the use of the Welsh language for Town and Community Councils- *to be considered in due course*
- Update the 'Work Welsh' pages on the Council's intranet site, including guidance and developing additional resources to promote the Welsh language and to help staff use the language- *in progress*
- A project to promote awareness of Welsh culture and Welshness in residential homes- *to be considered in due course*

Clarification was received that although Helo Blod Lleol was no longer available, the national version continued to be in operation.

5 **Update on the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2024-2029**

The Language Policy Officer explained that the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework to impose duties on certain organisations, including Ceredigion County Council to comply with standards in relation to the Welsh language. Standard 145 placed a duty on the County Council to develop and publish a 5-year strategy that explained how the Council intended to promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of Welsh within the wider area by working with members of the Ceredigion Bilingual Futures Language Forum. As part of the Strategy, there was a requirement to set a target for maintaining or increasing the number of Welsh speakers within the area by the end of the 5 years in question. The Strategy supported the Welsh Government's vision, to create one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

An update on Ceredigion's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2024-2029 was provided. It was noted that Carys Morgan, the previous Language Policy Officer had undertaken much of the work. The Strategy was in the process of being refined and the first draft would be presented to the Language Committee on 25 June 2024.

The following goal had been set in the initial draft of the new Strategy:

"Increase the use of the language in all aspects of County life. Our vision is that the Welsh language and Welshness will belong to everyone in Ceredigion and will be a source of pride among all residents of the county."

Four strategic themes had been set to reach this goal- Ceredigion is a place where it is possible to **learn, live, belong and succeed** through the medium of Welsh. An action plan associated with each of the four themes will be developed to support the work. Following the presentation of the draft document to the Language Committee in June, the document will be presented to the Cabinet before opening a period of public consultation during July and August 2024. The intention was to publish the final Strategy in December 2024.

The following main points were raised during discussions:

- Although the assumed 267 (1%) increase in the number of Welsh speakers between 2021 and 2029 was low, it was based on Census data. Setting a target was key, to ensure there was something to work towards. There were concerns with the accuracy of the 2021 Census results and whether it provided a true account of the county's population.
- 2024/25 budget cuts would not impact directly on the Language Policy Officer as no budget was allocated to the work. The budget for the use of external translators had reduced and so Officers were encouraged to write more concisely to reduce the workload of the translation service.

It was AGREED to approve that the document will be presented to the Cabinet before opening a period of public consultation during July and August 2024.

6 Update on the Welsh Language - Census 2021 Results

A presentation was provided to the Committee outlining the following:

- Introduction
- The picture across Wales
- Welsh speakers in Ceredigion 1981- 2021
- Ceredigion- Welsh speakers by age and electoral ward
- Annual Population Survey
- Conclusion

The following main points were raised during discussions:

- Questions were raised with the sample used in the Annual Population Survey by ONS; the Officer agreed to share this information with the Committee following the meeting.
- It was highlighted that Ceredigion along with other counties in Wales lost many young Welsh speakers to Cardiff, therefore the data which suggested Cardiff had the largest increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers did not provide a true account of the situation.
- An increase of 0.5 percentage points in the percentage of Welsh speakers between 16-64 years old between 2011 and 2021 was a positive. Hopefully, with the introduction of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), there would be an increase in the number of Welsh speakers between the ages of 3-15 in the future. The WESP was considered a significant step forward, and there was a political commitment in place to proceed with this in 4 primary schools (Plascrug, Llwyn-yr-Eos, St Padarn's & Comins Coch), with New Quay Primary School subject to Cabinet approval on 19.03.24. Support would be provided to staff to improve their Welsh where necessary.
- Concerns were raised that the wording of questions related to the Welsh language could impact survey results, as people including Welsh learners were not always confident in their ability when required to self-assess.
- As parents/ guardians completed the Census on behalf of children/ young people under the age of 16, the results on the Welsh language for this age category in 2021 may not have fully captured the situation. As schools were closed for periods during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents/ guardians may have felt that children/ young people, particularly if from non-Welsh speaking families, were not as confident with the Welsh language as they had been previously when attending school daily.
- Non-Welsh-speaking parents/ guardians who opted to send their children to Welsh-medium education were commended, and the provision of support to families in this situation was key.

It was AGREED to note the information.

The Chair thanked Mari Hopkins for her attendance and for providing a comprehensive presentation to the Committee.

7 Theatr Felinfach's Annual Report 2023-2024

Consideration was given to Theatr Felinfach's Annual Report for 2023-24. Theatr Felinfach hosted and developed thousands of arts opportunities every year. Informal education methods along with the disciplines of drama, dance,

film and technical theatre were developed at the theatre along with opportunities and experiences that promoted creativity, skills, knowledge and understanding of the culture and arts of Wales and the world.

Although four years had passed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of the lockdowns was still evident in several areas, including the arts. Since 2022, Theatr Felinfach's Artistic Team had seen the impact of the pandemic on individuals and groups of participants. Among children and young people, a lack of confidence was evident in many and the lack of experience of working in a group and face to face had an impact on participants as well. Participation in theatre and arts disciplines developed personal confidence, physical confidence to move in a space / on a stage, confidence to use one's voice and to contribute ideas – from the Theatre's experience, there was work to be done with partners, schools and organisations to restore and build confidence. Despite the challenges, it had been an exciting time as the demand for participation work increased. An overview of the 2023-24 highlights as outlined in the report was provided.

Since the report had been written, Theatr Felinfach had received confirmation that they had been successful in a grant application for funding from Llwyddo'n Lleol- Arfor to offer a work experience placement. This was a bespoke opportunity that would allow the individual to explore different elements of creative production.

Reference was provided to the Arts Council of Wales' reviewed funding reduction of 2.5% per grant, Theatr Felinfach Resource Development and Staffing as outlined in the report.

The following main points were raised during discussions:

- Members praised the work of all at Theatr Felinfach for their dedication and success at leading in creative arts, and it was great to see a full programme of events once again following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Although the Arts Council of Wales had reduced grant funding, the impact on Theatr Felinfach was not as significant as others in the portfolio.
- Following a meeting held on 05/03/24 with representatives from the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales, the intention was to submit a report and a plan to improve the Theatre's resources.

It was AGREED to accept the report as a record of Theatr Felinfach's activity and its aim to promote the use of the Welsh language and culture through arts participation programmes.

8 Cered: Menter Iaith Ceredigion's Annual Report

A presentation was provided to the Committee outlining the following:

- Cered's Aim
- Strategic contribution
- Budget
- Staffing and Structure
- Partners

- 2024-25 Targets
- Themes & Highlights (Children, Young People, The Community, Welsh Learners and Infrastructure)
- Summary

It was highlighted that participation in Ras yr Iaith was resource intensive, with a large amount of Cered's budget used to support it. This had been raised with the Welsh Government, and although they wanted local authorities to support it, Aled Richards had recently said that it was optional for each local authority. As Ras yr Iaith did not celebrate anything specific and there was no set date, participation in the next event would be considered carefully as it was crucial that funding was used most effectively.

It was AGREED to accept the report as a record of Cered's work during the period in question and notes its work in promoting and developing the use of the Welsh language in Ceredigion.

9 Boosting confidence and promoting the Welsh language and Welshness in the workplace

The Language Policy Officer explained that one of her duties was to organise activities to promote innovation and continuous improvement as a point of view of increasing the Welsh language in the workplace. This could include normal activities to raise the confidence of colleagues to use the Welsh language. In January, an electronic newsletter was created to celebrate Saint Dwynwen's Day and the link was opened 352 times.

Following a discussion with Steffan Rees, Team Leader Cered and Huw Owen, Work Welsh Training Officer, a monthly electronic newsletter named '**GWENA 'Mae'n ddydd Gwener**' had been developed and would be published on CERINET only on the first Friday of every month, with this first published on 1 March 2024. Hopefully, the monthly newsletter would be beneficial to promote the Welsh language within the workplace and a means for the employees who learned Welsh with Huw to practice their skills in listening, reading and writing Welsh. The newsletter would be reviewed within 4/5 months with a short questionnaire.

The main aim of the newsletter was to promote the Welsh language and Welshness in a variety of ways by promoting CERED activities – Gigs/various events etc. and to ensure that there was a link between the tutor, learners, less confident speakers, Welsh speakers in Ceredigion County Council's workplace, CERED and the Language Policy Officer.

The Chair said she hoped that the videos to demonstrate how to pronounce Welsh words would benefit all. Members were encouraged to take note of the electronic newsletter.

It was AGREED to note the report and continue to develop and evolve this, evaluating the resource in 4 to 5 months.

10 Forward Work Programme

The following items were suggested by Committee Members:

- Draft Welsh Language Strategy 2024-2029 (June 2024)
- Presentation on the ALTE Framework + Welsh in the workplace (June 2024)
- Report on Ceredigion’s Social Media accounts (November 2024)
- Update on Street Naming and Numbering Policy (November 2024)
- Progress update on Boosting confidence and promoting the Welsh language and Welshness in the workplace (November 2024)

11 Any other matter which the Chairman decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee

- The Chair explained that she had received an e-mail from Councillor Keith Evans in August 2023 to highlight that there was no option to identify as a Welsh citizen and only as a British citizen or ‘Other’ when applying to vote at elections. It was understood that the forms were created by the Electoral Commission. It was agreed that this matter would be followed up with the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services for a formal response.

The Chair added that Councillor Keith Evans also raised concerns about the inability to identify Welsh postal addresses with Royal Mail, which led to difficulties in using the addresses online. As this was considered a national issue, the Language Policy Officer agreed to refer this matter to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

- Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans queried whether adequate support was provided to local authority staff members to learn Welsh, and how they could be encouraged to use the language in the workplace.

The Chair suggested that this matter could be considered at the next meeting and that the relevant officers could be asked to provide an update on the situation.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Language Committee held on 25 June 2024

Chairman: _____

Date: _____