

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Welsh Language Committee
DATE:	5 December 2022
LOCATION:	Hybrid & Chamber, Penmorfa
TITLE:	Key Points from the Welsh Language Commissioner's Assurance report; 'The Welsh language as a way of working', 2021-22.
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:	To present main findings from the Welsh Language Commissioner's Assurance Report, and to highlight the main issues Ceredigion County Council needs to give further consideration, to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.

BACKGROUND:

The Welsh Language Commissioner has published the annual assurance report; 'The Welsh language as a way of working', for the 2021-22 reporting period. To read the report in full, follow this link:

[Assurance Report 2021 to 2022 \(welshlanguagecommissioner.wales\)](https://www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales)

Purpose of the Report

The report provides the Commissioner's views on the way organisations, including Local Authorities implement the statutory requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. The Standards place a greater duty on Local Authorities to plan for and to increase the use of the Welsh language.

The Commissioner wants organisations to use the report to improve how they work; encouraging organisations to compare their own performance against the trends being identified in the report.

Among the key findings

- 32% saying that the opportunities to use the Welsh language in their everyday lives have increased
 - 84% of organisations' websites are now available in Welsh
 - There has been an increase in the ability of organisations providing Welsh-language services on social media
- However, in contrast:
- 10% of the Welsh speakers who were questioned choose not to use Welsh language due to the lack of availability of services, or an assumption that the service will not be of the same quality as the service in English.
 - The Welsh language is treated less favourably than English in 50% of job notices
 - The research shows that more people would be likely to use the Welsh language if organisations improved the way they delivered and ensured Welsh language services.

Matters that Ceredigion County Council needs to consider

1. Policy Making Standards: A Requirement to Assess the Impact on the Welsh Language: [page 26-29 in the Report]

This set of standards requires the Council to ensure that it considers opportunities for persons to use Welsh language, and not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English language when formulating a policy. The standard also requires the Council to assess any impacts a policy decision may have on the Welsh language; considering opportunities to make a policy decision less adversely in terms of the Welsh language, and more positively in the context of opportunities to use the Welsh language.

It is important that Council Officers understand their responsibilities and ensure that they follow the Integrated Impact Assessment process with any policy decision.

Action:

To help Officers carry out more comprehensive assessments as regards the effect of a policy decision on the Welsh language; the Council's Language Policy Officer will set about formulating and publishing guidance on how to assess impact on the Welsh language, as part of the Integrated Impact Assessment.

2. Operational Standards: Job Recruitment and Advertising: [page 31 in the Report]

The assurance report states, "User experience is dependent on organisations having enough Welsh-speaking staff, and those staff being in the right roles".

The set of Operational Standards places a duty on the Council to make progress with job recruitment and advertising; jobs where Welsh language skills are essential for achieving the job. There is a need to better identify which jobs require Welsh language skills, to ensure that the Council can always provide a complete service in Welsh.

There is also a need to improve the commitment to developing the skills that the current workforce has, by identifying staff who have language skills but are not being used to their full potential or where individuals' confidence to use their Welsh with others needs to be developed.

The report advises that the Commissioner will place a further focus on improving performance in skills assessment and improving the quality of recruitment processes. The report notes that; "The Commissioner will commission an independent evaluation of how organisations assess the need for skills in Welsh and how that contributes to their success in recruiting Welsh-speaking staff. It is hoped that the findings of this research will provide an opportunity to establish a baseline and overview of the current situation to inform further work in the future. The Commissioner will also open investigations and force change in this area where deficiencies persist."

The Commissioner also sees the relationship between using Welsh internally within an organisation with improving skills and confidence to use Welsh at work. Therefore,

the Commissioner will focus on considering how organisations develop internal Welsh language use policies to encourage and promote the use of Welsh at work.

Action:

The Council's Language Policy Officer has developed an action plan, to address areas where the Council is weak in complying with the Operating Standards. As part of this, we will create a guide to identify language skills needed for jobs and create a flowchart to help officers assess the need. Carrying out an assessment of the need for skills in Welsh for all vacancies or new roles is a requirement of Standard 136.

We will also be working with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to deliver a Confidence Raising course to use Welsh in the workplace; aimed at those who lack confidence or are shy in using their existing language skills in the workplace.

Democratic Service and HR Service has met and are currently discussing the draft work plan to address the above issues. It has been agreed that this group will meet regularly to implement the work plan. Progress reports will be provided to Leadership Group in a timely manner.

3. Key Services: Direct Calling [see page 14-15: Case Study]

Ceredigion County Council has made significant progress in maintaining telephone services in Welsh, by ensuring that Clic Ceredigion provides the proactive offer of a Welsh language service from first contact.

However, occasionally the Clic Ceredigion Service needs to transfer the call to an Officer within other services, in order to deal with queries that are more complex in nature and require technical knowledge. In these instances, the Clic Service will have asked and recorded the service user's language preference; it is key that Officers pay attention to the language preference of the service users, and to respond to the query in that language.

Action:

We propose that IT Service and the HR Service re-establish the practice of placing 'working Welsh badge' on the electronic directory, in parallel with the names of Welsh-speaking staff who are new to the organisation; this so that a Welsh speaker can be easily and discreetly found from the internal system. The Welsh Language Policy Officer will develop a guide that explains how to ask and record language choice in a meaningful manner.



This will also go towards meeting the 'More than words' requirements of 2022 – 2027

4. Promoting Services [page 4 and 5, 10-11 and 23]

The report notes that 10% of Welsh speakers surveyed choose not to use Welsh because of the lack of availability of services or due to an assumption that there was a less equitable Welsh service.

The data in the report suggests that more people would use Welsh if organisations did more to facilitate staff and customers' choices to use Welsh and were able to guarantee Welsh language services. Currently, 16% choose the Welsh-language service by contacting the Ceredigion Clic Service, which is a much lower figure than the numbers who speak Welsh within the County. It is necessary that the Council takes steps to promote and facilitate the opportunities available to use the Welsh language; and thus, ensuring that it is equally as easy to use the Welsh language, as it is to use the English language; this so that the public and staff have confidence in using the Welsh language services provided.

As a Council, we have already taken several steps to promote the Welsh language in line with the Standards, for example:

- The website clearly states on an English page that the page is also available in Welsh. by providing a direct link to the Welsh page.
- Job application forms give individuals a place to indicate they wish to obtain an interview or other method of assessment in Welsh.
- The Council will use specific dates in the Calendar for organising campaigns to promote the availability of Welsh language services e.g., St David's Day, Shwmae Day, Welsh Language Commissioner's Rights Day, Dydd Miwsig Cymru. Thus, alerting Ceredigion residents that Welsh can be used when contacting the Council, and encouraging them to us
- Ceredigion County Council will be taking part in the Welsh Language Commissioner's Welsh Language Rights Day on 7th December – a day where public organisations across Wales will work with the Welsh Language Commissioner to promote Welsh language services and a further opportunity for Welsh speakers and learners to show that they want to use the language in their everyday lives

Action

It is necessary to ensure that the Council has procedures in place to comply with the standards relating to promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language, and also to highlight to Welsh language users that the Welsh language services are available.

- Declare in official publications inviting persons to send a response, that the Council welcomes the receipt of correspondence in Welsh
- When developing a Welsh version and an English version of a separate form, ensure that the English version clearly states that the form is also available in Welsh.

5. The effect of service shortcomings on Welsh language users [page 22-23]

The report provides examples that demonstrate that Welsh speakers, who are already in a vulnerable situation, are negatively affected when an organisation does not treat their preferred language with respect and dignity.

Work is currently underway to respond to the 'More than Words' Action Plan and a further report will be submitted shortly.

Next Steps

The Council's Welsh Language Policy Officer will proceed to ensure that the Council puts in place procedures to ensure that the Council fully complies with the requirements, and to pay particular attention to those matters that have arisen as part of this Assurance Report: Welsh as a way of working: 2021-22.

RECOMMENDATION:

Member of the Language Committee to support the actions outlined in this report.

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