

**OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE OF RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL'S
WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group on Tuesday 28th November 2017 at 2pm at the Council Headquarters, Clydach Vale.

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

G Hopkins - Chairman

R Bevan J Rosser S Rees-Owen

Officers in attendance

Mrs W Edwards – Head of Community Learning

Mr S Gealy – Service Manger, Welsh Language Services

Ms E Siôn - Menter Iaith

Ms K Herbert – Graduate Officer

Ms Hannah Williams – Senior Executive & Regulatory Business Officer

7. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome Members to the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group.

Apologies for attendance were received from County Borough Councillors J James and M Webber, the Secretary to the Cabinet, Mr C Hanagan and the Temporary Director, Education & Lifelong Learning, Ms E Thomas.

8. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made pertaining to the agenda.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the 19th June, 2017 were approved as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

10. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION PROVISION

The Head of Community Learning provided the Steering Group with an opportunity to discuss the current simultaneous translation provision at full Council and various Committee meetings facilitated by the Welsh Language Services Unit, the Executive and Regulatory Business Unit and Legal and Democratic Services.

Members were advised that the fifteen Standards under the compliance notice could be found at Appendix 1 of the report. Although the implementation of the standards meant additional pressure on staff, the officer assured the Group that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council remained committed to treating the Welsh Language no less favourably than the English Language.

The Steering Group were referred to Appendix 2 of the report, where draft guidelines for facilitating bilingual meetings with the aid of translation were outlined. The officer explained that the guidelines were drafted to help Chairs facilitate meetings; alleviate the pressure on staff and to introduce good practice and a seamless approach into all bilingual meetings of the Council.

The guidelines included a variety of aspects such as:-

- Practicalities in respect of using and cleaning equipment and ensuring the meeting venue is of an appropriate size to allow for appropriate acoustics;
- Ensuring appropriate communication is undertaken with the interpreter prior to the meeting to alleviate pressure, ie: explaining what type of meeting will be held and providing them with appropriate documentation such as pre-prepared scripts etc.
- Ensuring advertisements and communication in relation to the agenda of the meeting is provided bilingually.

The officer concluded by explaining that RCT had a positive history of complying and that by implementing such guidelines, current concerns would be decreased and that with time, the approach to bilingual meetings would become a natural process.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report, commenting that although simultaneous translation provision was new for RCT CBC, it was a normal aspect of National Meetings, and that like the officer, he felt that, with time, this would be the case locally too.

The Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning welcomed the draft guidelines and referred the Steering Group to the bullet 'before you start speaking Welsh, please let others know that you're about to do so'. The Member emphasised the importance of this, emphasising how easy it is to miss the beginning of a statement if the speaker does not provide a warning to put the headphones on in time. The Steering Group agreed that this was important and all Welsh Speakers began to put this into practice immediately. Ms E Siôn, Menter Iaith, added that if a discussion is flowing in the medium of Welsh, she would hope that there would be no need to have to announce this each time, to which all agreed.

Councillor Rees-Owen also welcomed the draft guidelines, commenting that it would be a learning process for everyone involved and that as Chair of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee, she would seek to ensure the equipment is working prior to the meeting as outlined in the guidelines.

The Councillor raised concerns in respect of the volume of the equipment and whether the listener would hear both the speaker and the interpreter simultaneously depending on their volume, but added that this would be something which would become clearer with time.

The Councillor also queried the bullet 'Ensuring that the interpreter/ Welsh Language Unit received documentation relevant to the meeting beforehand, including any pre-prepared statements or scripts if appropriate', as more often or not, discussion would head in a different direction and the pre-planned script may be changed. It was advised that even if the translator is provided with documentation, they would, of course, need to remain alert and flexible should this occur.

Discussions ensued around the attitudes of people at meetings, with Members of the Steering Group agreeing that, with time, there would likely be a change in attitudes from all parties to ensure the Welsh Language is treated no less favourably than the English Language in the Council Chamber.

The Chair added that it was vital that Welsh Speakers avoid taking any frustrations out on the translators during the transition period as there is a small pool of resources available and that the focus should be on encouraging and up-skilling of translators at the Welsh Services Unit. Councillor Rees-Owen agreed with this, but queried how a Welsh Speaker would ensure what they said was interpreted correctly without undermining the translator. Mr S Gealy, Service Manager of Welsh Services advised the Group to follow the same process as they would, had they spoken in English and to explain at the following Committee meeting that the statement was incorrectly minuted. The Chair commented that it would be a two way process. For example, learners wanting to speak and listen without the use of the headphones to improve their skills may interpret incorrectly or misunderstand a sentence and therefore may not produce an appropriate response under pressure. Members of the Steering Group agreed that, if uncertain, all meeting participants should feel comfortable enough to ask for a question to be repeated, regardless of the language it was spoken in.

Ms E Siôn, praised the draft guidelines, commenting that she would welcome a discussion around the practical element of the guidance and how to develop the steps further.

Mr S Gealy advised the Steering Group that, should they approve the draft guidelines, an official document would be produced and brought back to the relevant Committee if necessary.

The Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the contents of the report
- b) To approve the draft guidelines for facilitating bilingual meetings with simultaneous translation.

N.B Councillor R Bevan notified the Chair in advance and left the meeting during discussions

11. STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE: THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR A WELSH LANGUAGE BILL – WHITE PAPER

The Head of Community Learning provided the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group with an outline of the contents of the Welsh Government's proposals for a new Welsh Language Bill.

The officer explained that the Welsh Language Commissioner's Assurance Report 2016-17, attached as Appendix 1, evidenced that, although newly implemented, the Standards were making a positive difference to the quality and consistency of services in the Welsh Language. However, the Welsh Government, believe that the Standards place too much emphasis on regulation, and not enough on promotion, and consequently launched a consultation on 9th August 2017 on proposals for a new Welsh Language Bill. The Steering Group were referred to section 4.3 of the report where the proposals with the intention of simplifying the solution were outlined.

The Steering Group were then referred to section 5 of the report where the five consulted options were outlined:-

1. No change
2. Reform the current system
3. A small set of more general Standards on the face of primary legislation
4. Regulated exceptions schemes based on a small set of more general Standards
5. Rights for individuals to use Welsh set out in primary legislation

It was explained that the Welsh Government's preferred option was Option 2 as it would offer an effective system, taking into account the previous work of the Welsh Government, Welsh Language Commissioner and others, maintaining the resources already invested into the Standards and in turn, help Bodies to review them and improve over time.

Ms E Siôn, advised the Steering Group that, having had involvement in the consultation process and hearing the opinions of many organisations, the results had been poignant with many commenting on the proposal to establish a new single body responsible for the compliance of the Standards. It was explained that the results would likely be shared in the coming months and would seek to improve the current arrangements for all Bodies involved.

As a recently appointed Member to the Steering Group, Councillor Rees-Owen queried whether RCT had a single document which outlined its goals and approach to promoting the Welsh Language and reaching the target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. The officer advised that in 2016-17, the Steering Group approved the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Action Plan to reach this goal and that the Councillor would be provided with a copy following the meeting. Cllr Rosser, Cabinet member for Education and Lifelong Learning also requested a copy of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Action Plan.

Ms E Siôn queried when the Steering Group would have a chance to review and scrutinise the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. Mr S Gealy advised that this could, of course, be brought back to the Steering Group in the New Year but that Welsh Government had commissioned an external representative to visit Local Authorities and review the steps which have been taken to implement the plans.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note and comment on the contents of the report
- b) That the Head, Community Learning would send Councillor Rees-Owen and Cllr Rosser, Cabinet member for Education and Lifelong Learning a copy of RCT CBC's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Action Plan

12. WELSH: WHAT'S CHANGED FOR COMMISSIONED PARTNERS

Ms K Herbert, Graduate Officer, provided the Steering Group with an update on the progress made on the project to support Partners commissioned by the Council in their requirement to meet all relevant statutory Standards as noted in the Statutory Compliance Notice under the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015.

Ms K Herbert reminded Members that she had attended a meeting of the Steering Group on the 19th June, 2017 to consult on the early stages of the draft and that feedback from the Group was that it would be more streamlined if it were to contain more specific reference to compliance issues with less emphasis on cultural factors.

The Steering Group were advised that the 'Welsh: What's Changed for Commissioned Partners' guide, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, includes:-

- A summary of the Welsh Language Standards and what they mean
- The five areas of the Standards
- An outline of which Standards are applicable to those Commissioned providers.

It was added that the pack would seek to resolve current concerns of Commissioned Partners who couldn't interpret the Standards by providing detailed summaries of each Standard and examples of how they relate to each commissioner.

Members of the Steering Group took the opportunity to congratulate the Graduate Officer on the comprehensive booklet put before them, agreeing that the resource was user friendly and is a step further than documentation which currently exists.

Ms W Edwards commented that the project assigned to the Graduate Officers had been an exciting opportunity for the Welsh Language Services Unit and had been a tremendous help in linking the Partners to the Strategy. The officer thanked the team for all of their help during the project.

The Chair asked the Graduate Officer about her next steps and wished her all the best for the future.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note and comment on the contents of the report
- b) To approve the 'Welsh: What's Changed? A detailed guide for Commissioned Partners' booklet

13. MENTER IAITH – GRANT CYMRAEG

Ms E Siôn provided the Steering Group with a verbal update in respect of an exciting new project funded by Welsh Government to be completed by March 2018.

It was explained that the grant of over £19,000 would fund an interactive Welsh Language computer game, set in the 1880's, which would follow the character 'Anwen' through the Valleys. Under development by 'Web Fire', the intention of the game is to interact with young people in a new and interesting way. The concept of the game is for the young person to complete a series of Welsh Language puzzles in order to reach the next step. Ms Siôn explained

that the puzzles will not be too intense, but will instead be a fun method of collecting data in order to further develop Welsh Language services for young people.

The Steering Group were advised that workshops had been arranged for young people to help develop puzzle ideas and names etc and that once launched, the game would be available worldwide with subtitles. Ms Siôn indicated that the launch was due to take place on 21st April 2018 and that if possible, the Rhondda Heritage Park would be a perfect location given the setting of the game. The exciting new project would not only contribute to the Welsh Language Strategy and goals, but it would place Rhondda Cynon Taf on the map.

The Chair spoke positively of the project and questioned details of Anwen's journey in the game. Ms Siôn advised that the character would be controlled by the player to travel through the game and that to move onto the next task, the player must complete a puzzle.

The Chair queried the price of the game and the sustainability of it in the future to which Ms Siôn advised that this was yet to be confirmed and that discussions were underway.

The Chair thanked Ms Siôn for information on the project and was assured that if any Members had ideas, they would be welcomed.

This meeting closed at 3:10PM

**Councillor G Hopkins
Chairman.**