

**OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE OF RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCILS WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET
STEERING GROUP**

Minutes of the Special meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group on Wednesday 22nd July, 2015 at 9.30am at the Council Headquarters, Clydach Vale.

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

G Hopkins – Chairman

R Bevan

(Mrs).E Hanagan

(Mrs) M Webber

C Davies

Officers in attendance

Mrs E Thomas – Service Director, Schools and Community

Mr C Hanagan – Service Director, Cabinet & Public Relations

Mrs W Edwards – Head of Community Learning

Mrs E Wilkins – Cabinet Business Officer

1 WELCOME

The Chairman thanked the Members and Officers for attending the special meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group and spoke of the importance of the meeting, following the Council's receipt of the Draft Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner.

2 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Enir Sion, Menteriaith

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

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

**4 WELSH LANGUAGE STATUTORY STANDARDS: DRAFT COMPLIANCE NOTICE: SECTION 47
WELSH LANGUAGE (WALES) MEASURE 2011.**

The Head of Community Learning presented her report to the group and reminded Members of the new Welsh Language Standards published by the Welsh Language Commissioner, which all public bodies would need to adopt. Members were advised that a draft compliance notice from the Commissioner had been received on the 22nd June, 2015 which outlined the specific standards RCT Council is required to comply with; the timescales within

which each standard must be implemented; and the deadline by which the Council must respond with any concerns regarding the standards and or timescales required.

The officer advised that under the draft compliance notice the Council is required to meet 168 of the 176 standards. She advised that a large number of the standards included in the Draft Notice were currently included in the Council's Welsh language scheme and would already be embedded across services in recent years; however, additional requirements had been introduced. The Group were advised that a response to the Notice had been compiled and was attached as an appendix to the report before members, with the response identifying the standards that were capable of being implemented but within a longer time frame and those deemed to be challenged as disproportionate or unreasonable. The Head of Community Learning advised that the response needed to be presented to the Commissioner by the 24th July, 2015.

The Chairman thanked the officer for the overview of the position and the Officer continued to outline the Council's draft response to the group, to which members provided their comments.

Members discussed the importance of utilising Welsh speaking staff within service areas and not just the translation unit and discussed how the public could identify staff who would be able to speak in the medium of Welsh. Officers advised that pin badges were available for staff and a logo was also attached to their email signatures to advise that they could converse bilingually if preferred. One member commented that an audit of all language skills should be undertaken, due to the different nationalities residing within the County Borough.

Members discussed the aspects of social media and the Service Director, Cabinet & Public Relations advised on the current position and the good work taken forward in this area as well as the resource pressures facing the service.

Officers advised Members that the response in relation to standard 70 was to be amended as the Council already currently meet the standards in respect of notices and displays.

Members spoke positively in respect of the current position of the Council in meeting the standards, although noted the significant challenge, compliance to the notice would bring. Members also commented that in their opinion the importance and priority of the Welsh language as being a 'Living Language' was becoming lost, due to the minutiae of some of the standards requirements, with resources being used more effectively to ensure the importance of the language.

Members enquired to the financial implications to the Authority in implementing the standards and officers advised that it was too early to assess the impact financially. The group discussed taking forward representation to the Welsh Government, advising of the Council's commitment to fulfil the Welsh language standards required, but also to press the extent of the challenges facing local authorities in meeting the standards.

Following the detailed discussions on the Draft Compliance Notice and the Council's Draft Response it was **RESOLVED**

- a. That the Council's response be amended to reflect the comments of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group
- b. That following amendments, the Draft Compliance Notice and Council draft response is presented to Cabinet as an urgent item at its meeting on the 23rd July, for approval and submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner by the 24th July, 2015.
- c. That the Chairman of the Steering Group (and in his role as Welsh Language Champion) makes representation to the Welsh Government, advising of RCTCBC's commitment to fulfil the Welsh language standards required, but also to press the extent of the challenges facing local authorities in meeting the standards in conjunction with the ambitious timescales and that further funding from the Welsh Government would assist in its implementation.

This meeting closed at 10.30am

Cllr G Hopkins

Chairman.