

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

Minutes of the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group on Thursday 21st July, 2016
at 2pm at the Council Headquarters, Clydach Vale.

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

G Hopkins – Chairman

R Bevan

(Mrs) E Hanagan

C Davies

Officers in attendance

Mrs E Thomas – Temporary Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Mr S Gealy – Service Manager, Welsh Language Services

Ms E Siôn - Menter Iaith

Mr C Hanagan – Service Director, Cabinet & Public Relations

Mrs E Wilkins – Cabinet Business Officer

Ms H Williams – Cabinet Business Officer

Others in attendance

Mr C Campbell – Sbectrwm

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for attendance were received from County Borough Councillor M Webber and Wendy Edwards, Head of Community Learning.

2 WELCOME

The Chairman thanked the Members and Officers for attending the meeting of the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group and introduced them to Mr Cefin Campbell, a consultant assisting the Council to deliver its 5 year Welsh Language Strategy. The Chairman took the opportunity to thank the Welsh Language Service Unit for their highly commended work in relation to the Council's approach to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Statutory Standards and spoke of the need for the services of the Council to work together with Mr Campbell's assistance to establish the best way forward.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

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

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the 10th November, 2015 and the 7th March, 2016 were approved as an accurate reflection of the meetings.

5 RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL'S 5 YEAR WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY

The Service Manager of the Welsh Language Service Unit provided Members with a brief background on the position of the Council in respect of the Welsh Language Statutory Standards. The officer expressed the need for the Council to prepare their 5 year strategy in compliance with Standard 145. It was explained that in order to do this, the Council had acquired the assistance of Mr Campbell to assist and challenge Members and officers in producing the plan.

Before initiating discussions, Mr Campbell advised Members that the two main objectives in terms of maintaining and promoting the Welsh Language are:-

1. To increase the number of people who speak it
2. To continue to use it on a regular basis

He explained that in order to meet these objectives, the Council must focus on developing:-

1. The use of the Language at home
2. Education – Learning at primary school and ensuring the continuation of usage at secondary school and beyond the school gates
3. Maintaining/Learning the Language as an adult

➤ The use of the language at home

Members spoke positively on the enthusiasm of young learners but expressed concern that ultimately, there seems to be deterioration in the usage of the language post-school. Mr Campbell asked why this seems to be the case and the Temporary Director of Education & Lifelong Learning explained that there is a distinct lack of confidence in practicing the language outside of and after school. It was suggested that there is a need for parents to interact with their children in Welsh at home to promote confidence.

The representative from Menter Iaith reiterated this, commenting that if pupils grew up in English speaking households, they are less likely to speak Welsh at home out of force of habit and a lack of confidence. She expressed that this lack of confidence is echoed when young people leave school, commenting that they are less likely to opt for a Welsh Speaking job if there has been a gap of usage between English primary and secondary schools.

➤ Education

Discussions embarked around the education provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf with Members commenting on the success of Welsh speakers at primary school level.

Discussions evolved around further promoting the language in English medium speaking secondary schools where Welsh is taught as a second language.

Members were referred to an informative 'Being Bilingual' booklet produced in partnership with Menter Iaith as an action from the Welsh in Education Plan. The booklet provides parents with information about the benefits of sending their child to a Welsh Medium School. It was explained that there needs to be wider distribution for the leaflet and that it would be useful to have copies at local leisure centres, libraries and on the website to target new parents.

One Member voiced concerns over the decline in parental choice, should the Welsh language become a priority at an early age. He reiterated the importance of dual language schools but highlighted the need for integration, adding that social division could be caused.

The query was raised in respect of Universities in Wales and whether there are broad opportunities to use the language at a higher level. Members commented that there are a variety of universities where Welsh has a prominent position, including Aberystwyth and Bangor but that there are also opportunities for continuation courses closer to home such as at the University of South Wales and local colleges.

In respect of Welsh Language Education provision it was agreed that

- Visits to the schools be arranged for the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services, Equalities & the Welsh Language to establish current Welsh Language standard levels.
- Ensure that CPD is available for staff in English medium secondary schools to ensure the Welsh Language standards are raised

➤ **Maintaining/Learning the Language as an adult**

Mr Campbell referred Members to the final point in respect of opportunities for adult Welsh language learners. Members were advised of the work already undertaken within third sector organisations and the Children sector. The representative of Menter Iaith spoke positively on the collaborative work which seeks to improve the provision of the number of speakers and create specific pathways from education to the job sector.

Organisations such as the Urdd were also described as informative links for young people transitioning into the job sector. The officer informed Members that these opportunities were developing but still needed more comprehensive plans to succeed.

Discussions moved onto the older community who may have left school a number of years ago but want to learn the language. It was advised that there are a variety of courses within the County, where residents have the opportunity to sign up to a class in line with their ability. Queries were raised with regard to the costs and officers explained that staff working for the local authority now have the opportunity to learn for free, dependent on service delivery. Members spoke positively of the current provision in place allowing staff to be released from work to attend a language classes, showing the positive steps already made. Members expressed the need for inexpensive, informal classes, stating that this would tackle the ongoing issue of a lack of confidence.

One Member suggested the need for more community engagement in order to promote local events, such as a website or leaflet. It was advised that there is already a process in Treorchy which is popular with residents who attend courses and choirs on a weekly basis.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED:**

- That Mr Campbell would gather information from across the local authority and include ideas from today's meeting to document a draft 5 year Welsh Language Strategy
- That the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group meet in the future to approve and amend the draft 5 Year Welsh Language Strategy as appropriate

This meeting closed at 15:35pm

Cllr G Hopkins

Chairman.