

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 28TH FEBRUARY, 2022

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 17TH FEBRUARY, 2022

“ WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY (CX) –

The purpose of the report was to seek Committee’s views on the draft Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022-2027 following a period of assessment and consultation, and to seek Members’ views on the proposed Action Plan. Following consideration by Members, the minutes from the meeting would be referred to the Council’s Cabinet for consideration alongside the below documents at a meeting where approval would be sought for the same, with work on the Strategy and Action Plan commencing from 1st April 2022.

The report was presented by the Head of Policy & Business Transformation and Dai Thomas from Cwmni2, a consultancy firm that has been working with the Council over the last few months in the development of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, who outlined the following:

- A report detailing the consultation activity undertaken and the results from this activity (Appendix A to the report). The feedback was fairly mixed with about half of respondents questioning the need for a strategy at all. Of the remaining respondents, the feedback was around key areas such as that the Welsh language should be given the opportunity to thrive and be treated with equal respect to English, that there should be further opportunity for adults and children to access Welsh language provision and training and more opportunities to use it socially as a language outside of the classroom.
- An updated assessment of the current (2017-22) five-year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, following a period of consultation (Appendix B to the report).
- An updated five-year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, following a period of consultation (Appendix C to the report).
- An accompanying Action Plan to pursue the objectives and commitments contained in the Strategy (Appendix D to the report).
- An Equality Impact Assessment relating to the Strategy and Action Plan (Appendix E to the report).

This was a statutory requirement with the Council having a duty to produce and publish a five-year strategy setting out how the Council intended to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of Welsh more widely in their area under the Welsh Language Standards (standards 145 and 146).

Regarding the Action Plan, the following key points were raised with Members:

- The Action Plan, formed and based on feedback from the public as well as input from Council Officers, Elected Members and partners such as the Fforwm Iaith (the Vale's Welsh language forum), was more focused compared with the previous five-year plan that was put in place originally.
- This current version of the Plan has been updated to fit under the three themes of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy. A number of actions from the previous Plan as well as new ones had been merged and placed under these three themes in order to improve the reporting and to make it more accessible.
- As part of the related assessment, the Council had been identified as being good at collecting data, but different reports used data in different ways. As a result, the Action Plan now had a greater focus on pulling together such data to be presented in a more uniform or consistent way. It was important that this target and approach was adopted by all of the Council's partners involved to ensure its effectiveness.
- An additional column had been added to the new Plan showing links for each action to the Council's Corporate Plan and how the actions in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy contribute to the Council's corporate objectives and wellbeing objectives.
- There was also more of a focus on young adults and retraining adults who were entering the workforce. For example, there was a much greater focus on Welsh as an employment skill.
- On concerns previously raised at this Committee around the monitoring of people from ethnic minority and other socio-economic backgrounds within Welsh medium education, there were now actions within the new Action Plan that reflected such concerns by aiming to get better data, better engagement, as well as promotion targets around Welsh medium promotion.

Following the presentation of the report, the subsequent comments and questions were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor John highlighted the challenge of the promotion and learning of Welsh due to gaps in learning and speaking the language as a result of school term times and Welsh not being spoken necessarily outside the school environment such as at home with family or friends. It was good to see that the Action Plan was addressing the latter issue, and there was need for perhaps having informal 'discussion groups' for children and adults learning to speak Welsh outside of school or college term times in order to build and maintain their Welsh fluency. It was important to also encourage those non-Welsh speaking parents who sent their children to Welsh medium school to also learn and use Welsh at home.
- Councillor Dr Johnson felt that the Action Plan sharpens the focus of what can be achieved over the coming years. However, he believed that some targets within the Action Plan were too 'generic' and ideally the Council should be looking to make some of these targets more local and 'embedded' tying in with the specific circumstances within the Vale, going forward. He also sought clarity on whether the targets were looking to assess future needs or to 'stimulate' these and there did not seem to be any reference to RhAG (Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg - Parents for Welsh Medium Education), particularly in light of previous comments around deprivation and black and

minority ethnic groups and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The document needed a greater emphasis on parental involvement in Welsh education and he raised the possibility of setting up a county wide version of RhAG to help address key issues within Welsh medium education such as school transport issues and movement from one formal type of education to another, for example from year 6 to 7 (primary to secondary).

- The Chair wished to reiterate the points raised by the Members above and the need to involve and engage parents more about the promotion of the Welsh Language and to prevent them being alienated from this process, i.e. such as those from a purely English-speaking background. Also, there was a need to move the use of Welsh language from a formal, educational environment to a more informal environment. This could be at home or in the playground, for instance. The Chair suggested ways of promoting Welsh informally such as informal social clubs or groups to speak 'conversational' Welsh including deprived and minority groups within this and training for Councillors and Officers within the Vale of Glamorgan Council on speaking Welsh should be explored.
- In response to the above, the consultant from Cwmni2 stated:
 - On Welsh being used mainly in the school environment and not so much at home and informally, there was now as part of theme 2 of the Action Plan additional or strengthened emphasis on greater community and family use of Welsh particularly amongst young adults after leaving school or education and to move away from Welsh as just a 'school language'.
 - On the 'generic' nature of some of the actions within the Plan, this was explained as in part due to Councils with a lower percentage of Welsh speakers (such as the Vale) having similarities in a lot of the actions they set because every single one of these Councils was going through the same process of increasing the population in terms of how many people were speaking Welsh. Also, this Action Plan had a number of actions around partnership working not just locally but regionally and nationally as well having been added in order that the Council could copy good practice too.
 - On RhAG, it was explained that they do not deliver Welsh language services to the public in the way that the partners that have been listed in the five-year plan do. This was the reason why they had not been named as a partner within the Action Plan, because they would not be responsible for delivering actions under the plan. But it was possible, if there was common agreement on this, that RhAG could be added in as a potential partner to share information under the Plan such as under promotional targets.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RECOMMENDED – THAT Cabinet be informed of the comments made by Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, namely:

- The need for the Strategy and Action Plan to encourage the learning and use of Welsh outside of schools and the education environment, such as encouraging families to speak Welsh at home and to pursue more informal methods of teaching Welsh outside of school times as well as the possible use of informal 'discussion groups' or similar in order to continue and expand Vale residents' speaking and understanding of Welsh.
- The importance of including and involving parents from a non-Welsh speaking background who have children in Welsh medium education as part of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, in order to help achieve its success.
- The need to encourage both Elected Members and Officers within the Vale of Glamorgan Council to learn and to use Welsh both inside and outside their roles.

Reason for recommendation.

In order for Cabinet to consider the views of the Scrutiny Committee when considering this matter in due course.”