
WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS STRATEGY

LEADER (COUNCILLOR HUW THOMAS)

AGENDA ITEM: 4

Reason for this Report

1. To agree and approve the Council's revised **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** in accordance with Welsh Language Standards **127-140** and **151-154**, and to ensure the provision of high-quality Welsh and English language services to the people of Cardiff.

Background

2. In accordance with Welsh Language Standards **158**, **164** and **170**, Cardiff Council has a statutory duty to provide the following information in its *Annual Report on the Welsh Language Standards*:

Employees Welsh language skills
The number of employees who have Welsh language skills at the end of the financial year in question.
Welsh Medium Training
The number of members of staff who attended training courses offered in Welsh during the year. If a Welsh version of a course was offered during that year, the percentage of the total number of staff attending the course who attended the Welsh version.
Posts Advertised
The number of new and vacant posts that were advertised during the year which were categorised as posts where: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welsh language skills were essential;

- Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post;
- Welsh language skills were desirable, or
- Welsh language skills were not necessary.

The **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** provides a standard and uniform template to support reporting on the above.

3. The purpose of the Strategy is to enable the Council to maintain an overview of its linguistic skill needs and resources and to coordinate its training and recruitment activities. It brings together staffing, training and recruitment procedures in order to ensure that the people of Cardiff have equal access to services whether they choose to deal with the Council in English or Welsh, whether they are individuals, groups or communities, or the public in general, and whether by correspondence, telephone, at meetings or by any other means.
4. The **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** is a revision of the previous strategy approved by Cabinet in 2014.

Legislative Context

5. The **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** supports the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards. The Standards derive from the *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011* and describe how Cardiff Council ensures that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language in Wales. The **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** provides procedural guidance for recruitment, Welsh language training, designating and advertising posts as Welsh essential, and recording staffing data. The Council has a statutory duty to record and report on a number of aspects of Welsh language service provision (as described in section 2. above). The **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** provides a standard template for this reporting which can be applied across all Cardiff Council Departments and Service Areas.

Strategic Context

6. The Council's *Bilingual Cardiff Strategy 2017-2022* supports the Welsh Government's target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050, as described in its *Cymraeg 2050* strategy, and includes a target to increase the number of Welsh speakers in Cardiff by 15.9% from the 2011 Census to the 2021 Census.
7. The methodology used for this target was to apply the percentage increase required each year in the number of Welsh speakers to reach a million by 2050 (from 562,016 in 2011 Census). This 1.5% per annum growth rate if applied to Cardiff would increase the number of Welsh speakers to 42,584 by the 2021 Census; an increase of 15.9% on the 2011 Census figure.

8. The **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** supports Cardiff Council's *Bilingual Cardiff Strategy and Action Plan for 2017-2022*. The production and publication of a 5-year action plan to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh is a statutory requirement in accordance with Standard **145** of the Welsh Language Standards.
9. The *Bilingual Cardiff Strategy* sets out our priorities under 3 strategic areas:
 - 1) The Family, Children and Young People
 - 2) Community and Infrastructure
 - 3) Welsh Language Services and the Workplace

The **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** supports the delivery of all three strategic areas. However it is mostly concerned with developing and maintaining Cardiff Council's capacity to deliver high quality Welsh language services and promotion of the Welsh language in the workplace. The Strategy's commitments to provide all staff with the opportunity to access Welsh language training, and the provision of guidance to ensure Welsh Essential posts are identified uniformly across the Council, will work to increase the language's profile and promote a bilingual working culture.

10. The Welsh Language Skills Strategy also supports the target set in the *Bilingual Cardiff Strategy* to increase the number of Welsh speakers in the Council's workforce by 50% by 2022. This number was 776 in the 2019/20 Annual Report which represents an increase of 81.7% since 2017 (427).
11. The **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** also supports Cardiff Council's *A Bilingual Cardiff – A Bilingual Council* strategy. This describes the Council's commitment to promoting and facilitating the use of Welsh within its internal administration. As the Local Authority serving Wales's capital city, Cardiff Council believes in a bilingual working environment where staff using Welsh language skills in work is both valued and actively encouraged.
12. The aims of the *A Bilingual Cardiff – A Bilingual Council* strategy are:
 - developing the formal and social use of Welsh amongst the Council's workforce through the provision of regular learning and social opportunities and greater participation in a variety of formal and informal language networks and events;
 - increasing the number of opportunities available to staff to develop their Welsh language skills, increase confidence, and improve the quality of the bilingual services provided; and
 - promoting and projecting a bilingual workplace ethos to attract greater numbers of bilingual staff.

13. The aims are supported by commitments made in the **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** to:
- provide all staff with the opportunity to learn Welsh to Level 1 in accordance with the ALTE linguistic proficiency framework¹, or improve their Welsh language proficiency, through the provision of training;
 - record and analyse the number of Welsh essential posts throughout the Council to ensure that the people of Cardiff have access to high quality Welsh language services at all times; and
 - meet the Council's statutory reporting requirements in relation to staff Welsh language skills, the number of Welsh essential and desirable posts advertised, and the number of staff who have received Welsh language training.
14. Provision of Welsh language training opportunities for staff, and promoting Cardiff Council as a bilingual employer through these training opportunities and the identification of Welsh Essential posts, will work directly to increase the number of Welsh speakers in Cardiff. It will strengthen the Welsh language as a valuable business skill and create employment opportunities for young people who have engaged with Welsh medium education.

Issues

15. The Strategy (included as **Appendix A**) supports Cardiff Council's implementation of the Welsh Language Standards and other key policy commitments such as the *Bilingual Cardiff 2017-2022* and *Bilingual Cardiff – Bilingual Council* strategies. It provides a framework to assist service areas in developing and maintaining the Welsh language skills profile of employees to ensure the delivery of equally high standard services in both Welsh and English.
16. **25%** of all staff registered on the Digigov system reported some level of Welsh language proficiency as part of the reporting for the *2019/20 Annual Report on the Welsh Language Standards*. However data received from the Council's Human Resources Department demonstrates that only 1.7% of all posts in the Council are designated as Welsh Essential and, of these, only 26.4% are currently filled by qualified Welsh speakers.
17. These percentages are extremely low and the Bilingual Cardiff Member Group wrote to Cabinet to raise their concerns following scrutiny of the Annual Standards Report 2019-20 requesting that this matter was urgently addressed. It was agreed that revising the **Welsh Language Skills Strategy** would be the most effective way of achieving this.

¹ The ALTE Linguistic Proficiency Framework is included as **Appendix 2** in the **Welsh Language Skills Strategy**.

Bilingual Council

18. In the last completed Staff Perception Survey (2018), **74.0%** of respondents were interested in attending a course to develop their Welsh skills. It is proposed that all Council staff should be provided with the opportunity to participate in training to develop or further improve their Welsh language skills.
19. Proficiency in multiple languages is an important business skill and supports the provision of high-quality services to the people of Cardiff in the language of their choice.
20. Research has shown that bilingualism and multilingualism are beneficial in terms of mental health and staff wellbeing, and that bilingualism may delay the onset of conditions such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease (see reference in the ***Welsh Language Skills Strategy*** for further information).
21. Welsh language training will provide Cardiff Council staff with the opportunity to learn the language, or improve their Welsh language skills, so they may support and directly engage with their children's Welsh language education.

Consultation

22. The revised strategy has been considered by SMT, the Bilingual Cardiff Members Group, Cardiff Council's Welsh Language Co-ordinator Network, HR, and the Trade Unions prior to Cabinet consideration.

Reasons for Recommendations

23. The framework put forward in the ***Welsh Language Skills Strategy*** will:
 - facilitate reporting on the number and percentage of Welsh speaking staff in all Council departments, including their level of proficiency;
 - effectively identify roles as Welsh essential to ensure sufficient capacity and expertise to deliver high quality Welsh language services;
 - inform procedures to ensure sufficient Welsh speaking staff members are recruited to maintain Welsh language services;
 - provide all Council staff members with the opportunity to engage with Welsh language training to reach Level 1 proficiency on the ALTE framework; and
 - link up HR platforms such as Talentlink and Digigov across the Council.

This will support the Council's implementation of the Welsh Language Standards, meeting statutory reporting requirements, and contribute to the delivery of key policy documents such as *Bilingual Cardiff 2017-2022* and *Bilingual Cardiff – A Bilingual Council*.

Financial Implications

24. The Welsh Language Skills Strategy sets out a series of proposed actions in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards. In the event of any of these actions resulting in costs then the funding will need to be identified from within the current budgetary allocation of the relevant individual directorates.

Legal Implications

25. The Council has to be mindful of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards when making any policy decisions and consider the impact upon the Welsh language and the report deals with all these obligations.
26. The Council has to consider the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how this strategy may improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act') places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, and is globally responsible.
27. In discharging its duties under the Act, the Council has set and published well-being objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving the national well-being goals. The well-being objectives are set out in [**Cardiff's Corporate Plan 2020-23**](#).
28. When exercising its functions, the Council is required to take all reasonable steps to meet its well-being objectives. This means that the decision makers should consider how the proposed decision will contribute towards meeting the well-being objectives and must be satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet those objectives.
29. The well-being duty also requires the Council to act in accordance with a 'sustainable development principle'. This principle requires the Council to act in a way which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Council decision makers must take account of the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. In doing so, the Council must:
- look to the long term;
 - focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems;

- deliver an integrated approach to achieving the 7 national well-being goals;
 - work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions; and
 - involve people from all sections of the community in the decisions which affect them.
30. The decision maker must be satisfied that the proposed decision accords with the principles above; and due regard must be given to the [Statutory Guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers](#).
31. The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties) – the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED). These duties require the Council to have due regard to the need to
- eliminate unlawful discrimination;
 - advance equality of opportunity; and
 - foster good relations on the basis of ‘protected characteristics’.
32. The ‘Protected characteristics’ are:
- age;
 - gender reassignment;
 - sex;
 - race (including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality);
 - disability;
 - pregnancy and maternity;
 - marriage and civil partnership;
 - sexual orientation; and
 - religion or belief (including lack of belief).

Where a decision is likely to result in a detrimental impact on any group sharing a Protected Characteristic, consideration must be given to possible ways to mitigate the harm. If the harm cannot be avoided, the decision maker must balance the detrimental impact against the strength of the legitimate public need to pursue the recommended approach. The decision maker must be satisfied that having regard to all the relevant circumstances and the PSED, the proposals can be justified, and that all reasonable efforts have been made to mitigate the harm.

HR Implications

33. The HR implications arising from the approval of the Strategy are mainly within the areas of training, recruitment and staff management. They include:

- provision of the opportunity for Welsh language training to all Council staff to reach level 1 proficiency in accordance with the ALTE Framework;
- Welsh language and/or Community language skills consistent with level 3 on the ALTE framework as a desirable recruitment requirement for all customer facing roles;
- a regular manager-led audit to discern the number and percentage of Welsh speaking staff in every department and their level of proficiency;
- regular reporting on the number of Welsh essential posts within each department and the number currently filled by qualified Welsh speakers;
- a regular comparative analysis of the number of Welsh speaking staff and the number of Welsh essential posts in each department. This analysis will provide a foundation to inform recruitment decision to ensure capacity to provide high quality Welsh language services is maintained or improved as required;
- provision of Welsh language awareness training to all staff; and
- continuation of Welsh language training for all staff who wish to improve their Welsh language skills.

Property Implications

34. The Strategic Estates implications arising from this recommendation is mainly around the communication of surplus and disposal of assets where all document and use of any form of external communication will require translation. This will also apply to appointed advisers acting on behalf of the Council.
35. The translation of internal documentation and publications will continue as per the existing regulations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to approve the Welsh Language Skills Strategy (attached as Appendix A).

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	SARAH MCGILL Corporate Director People & Communities
	19 February 2021

The following appendix is attached:

Appendix A Cardiff Council's revised *Welsh Language Skills Strategy 2021*