

## **POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 11<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2019**

### **WELSH LANGUAGE**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To set out more detail regarding the incorporation of the Welsh Language.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At Policy & Resources Committee in September 2019, the Town Clerk was asked to research the current requirements on Community & Town Councils regarding the Welsh Language.
- 2.2 As a result, several of the larger Community & Town Councils in south east Wales were contacted. The responses were mixed - some do not have a Welsh Language Scheme, a couple have a Welsh Language Scheme but with little evidence from the website of any documents being bilingual or indeed that the website was bilingual. One Council with a scheme had the following on the website “ Welsh versions of any documents that appear on the website including agendas and minutes will be made available on request.”
- 2.3 Contact was made with One Voice Wales to ask for advice on this matter particularly in relation to the change from the Welsh Language Board and requirement for Welsh Language Schemes to the Welsh Language Commissioner and Welsh Language Standards.

#### **3. FEEDBACK**

- 3.1 OVW provide useful information regarding the transition from the Welsh Language Board to Commissioner:

*“A number of years ago, the Welsh Language Board began to approach Community & Town Councils to require them to introduce a scheme based on the most appropriate one having regard to the make up of their communities from the three examples found on the One Voice Wales website.*

*Only a relatively small number of Community & Town Councils were approached before the Board became the Commission and the focus of the Commission’s work moved towards introducing Standards for County Councils and so many Community & Town Councils are without a scheme.*

*We understood that Standards would be issued for our sector but they have not been forthcoming and are not currently anticipated.*

*That said it is One Voice Wales recommendation that every Community & Town Council introduce a scheme which can still be based on the models issued by the Board some years ago the Schemes issued suggest that they need to be run past the Board before they are published but given the Board no longer exists that cannot be achieved.”*

- 3.2 OVW also send an issues paper which can be found in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 OVW has three Welsh Language Scheme templates on their website, the one for this area (less than 30% of the population are Welsh speakers) is attached in Appendix 2. There are a number of elements within this scheme that would be challenging to implement without additional cost and realistically delay, for example:
- All circular or standard letters to the public will be bilingual
  - Any public meeting that is held to discuss the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax or any information regarding local elections/by-elections will be bilingual.
  - When the Council contacts the public via information technology, namely computers, website, e-mail or touch screens, this information will be available in Welsh and English for the public
  - All publications aimed at the public, such as documents and explanatory material dealing with the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax, information about local elections/by-elections and grant forms will be bilingual with both language versions forming one document. The versions will be printed side-by-side where possible to facilitate easy cross-reference, distribution and offer language choice.
- 3.3 OVW also provided guide translation costs of between £60 - £70 per 1000 words. By way of an example, the cost of translating this report without appendices (440 words) would be £30.00, with appendices (3800 words) £228.00. The Annual Report sent to all households would cost approx. £150 to translate plus additional design and printing costs to produce a bi-lingual document approximately a total additional cost of £300. The cost of simultaneous translation for meetings (a number of years ago) is approximately £400 for an all-day event plus expenses.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To discuss whether the Abergavenny Town Council should have a Welsh Language Policy

## Appendix 1

### Issues Concerning Bilingualism

#### Advice 1

##### Bilingualism:

Community and Town Council documents and websites need (or do not need) to be bilingual according to your agreed Welsh Language scheme, if there is one currently in operation for your Council. Two points need elaborating:

1) It may well be the case that you do not at present have a language scheme or policy published. If that is the case, you could either instigate one, or (as this is a fairly significant task) you could agree for the time being a policy just for the website itself. Try to reflect the needs of your community, just as with any other activity you engage in.

2) Remember that being bilingual is not necessarily an all-or-nothing option, either. You could decide to have all web pages bilingual if your area is high in Welsh speakers, or else some of the main pages if you don't have quite so many speakers living locally. You also have the option of creating bilingual pages (two languages on the same screen) or having two separate versions, with a flag or button to switch between one and the other. Lastly, you can of course have one language presenting all of the information, with the other language presenting a subset or a summary along side.

#### Advice 2

##### Translating:

It is indeed a difficult area for smaller community councils to deal with the issue of bilingualism, as the various actions and activities required invariably need a certain amount of expenditure, which of course small councils would find a problem as they don't normally have much by way of spare funding. However, some councils do what they can to accommodate bilingual issues - both in terms of Welsh speaking councils providing assistance for non-Welsh speakers, and also in terms of English language-operating councils providing the means for individuals to communicate with them in Welsh.

Some councils will have a Welsh Language Scheme in existence, following the call for councils to adopt such a scheme a few years ago by the former Welsh Language Board. Now, the responsibility for these matters has passed to the Welsh Language Commissioner, who can often advise on individual cases or issues such as this. If your council does not have a Welsh Language Scheme in place, you might like to consider what you are able to do in order to help the situation. There is no "common" solution, but some councils appoint individual members to assist with translating (or summarising) at actual meetings to help monoglot listeners; others use the paid office of the clerk to produce a limited amount of translation for the agendas, etc. To pay for formal translation of minutes would be expensive, and so it is not commonplace for minutes to be translated wholesale. It might be possible, however, for you to produce a summary of Welsh language minutes in English,

and then members of the public might be in a position to "drill down" into specific items and ask for those paragraphs to be translated in their entirety. Unfortunately, this is all a little piecemeal and none of these examples or procedures are clearly defined or laid down for our sector, being such a wide spectrum of local bodies of different sizes up and down the country. Much of what is put into place by the smaller councils will be voluntary, whilst some of the larger councils can afford some formal translation.

### Advice 3

Bilingual websites and publicity:

Community and Town Councils should be operating according to their agreed Welsh Language scheme, if there is one currently in operation for the Council.

It may well be the case that you do not at present have a language scheme or policy published. If that is so, you could either instigate one, or (as this is a fairly significant task) you could agree for the time being a policy just for individual items, such as your publication of meetings, your publication of major documents or policies, your website contents, etc. Try to reflect the needs of your community, just as with any other activity you engage in.

The former Welsh Language Board did produce a series of model schemes for our sector, and you could look at these for drafting certain elements of policy for yourselves if desired. An example of this is concerning publications – I have pasted below an extract from the “blue” scheme, which shows what you could be aiming at. In terms of progress, you can of course be taking small steps to get to the point described in such a scheme, rather than expect your council to get there in one go. If it's difficult, just take one small item at a time.

Remember also that being bilingual is not necessarily an all-or-nothing option, either. For example, you could decide to have all pages of your council website bilingual if your area is high in Welsh speakers, or else some of the main pages if you don't have quite so many speakers living locally (which may well be the case in many parts of Wales). You also have the option of creating bilingual pages (two languages on the same screen) or having two separate versions, with a flag or button to switch between one and the other. Lastly, you can of course have one language presenting all of the information, with the other language presenting a subset or a summary along side. If you were starting from a position of having no Welsh content at all, then, for example, you could perhaps get the home page made bilingual (maybe seek out a volunteer to help with this or use some of the Welsh Government grant money available this year), followed by a few major headings on other pages, etc., etc. This approach would show that you are keen to take on board your responsibilities for the Welsh language.

Needless to say, any major signage (such as on your premises) should be considered in the light of your aim to increase the level of bilingualism, as appropriate.

[\(Extract from model Welsh Language Scheme:\)](#)

["4.3 Publishing and Printing Material](#)

4.3.1 All publications aimed at the public, such as documents and explanatory material dealing with the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax, information about local elections/by-elections and grant forms will be bilingual with both language versions forming one document. The versions will be printed side-by-side where possible to facilitate easy cross-reference, distribution and offer language choice.

4.3.2. If Welsh and English versions are published separately they will appear simultaneously, be distributed together and be equally accessible.

4.3.3. Press releases dealing with the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax, information about local elections/by-elections and grant forms will be bilingual, and will specifically target papurau bro (monthly community papers).

4.3.4. All Advertising and publicity activities will be bilingual.

4.3.5. Council advertisements and notices dealing with the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax, information about local elections/by-elections to be placed in the press, on notice boards or any other medium will be bilingual.

4.3.6 Job advertisements will appear in the English language in English publications, apart from when bilingual skills are desirable then the advert will be bilingual. Advertisements will appear in Welsh only in Welsh language publications."

#### Advice 4

Translating external documents into Welsh:

Translating external documents, such as correspondence or reports from national bodies or other organisations, into Welsh could be organisationally prohibitive. One Voice Wales does not have the resources to cater for any request for assistance from member councils; in principle, it is the distributing body that needs to be compliant with the requirements of Welsh Language legislation. The right approach could be to ask the body who sent the information to get it translated; if they choose not to, then your council could decide whether to take issue with them or escalate the matter further.

**WELSH  
LANGUAGE  
SCHEME**

The Council's Welsh Language Scheme was prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993.

This Scheme received the approval of the Board under section 14 (1) of the Act on the date noted in section (b).

By signing section (a) below, the Council has agreed to conform to this Scheme and to operate in accordance with all the clauses outlined in the body of the Scheme.

*(a) to be completed by the Chair of the Council*

Council name:

.....

Full name of Chair:

.....

Signature:

.....

*(b) to be completed by the Welsh Language Board*

Date of approval:

...../...../.....

## **1. OPENING STATEMENT**

The Council has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales it will treat Welsh and English on a basis of equality. This scheme sets out how the Council will implement that principle in the provision of services to the public.

The Council recognises that members of the public can express their views and needs better in their preferred language, that enabling them to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice rather than a concession and that the denial of that right could place members of the public at a real disadvantage. The Council will therefore offer the public the right to choose which language to use in dealings with the Council.

The Council aims:

- to enable everyone who receives or uses the Council's services or contributes to the democratic process to do so through the medium of Welsh or English, according to personal choice.
- to encourage the use of the Welsh language in the community
- to encourage others to use the Welsh language in the community.

## **2. SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY**

### **2.1 New Policies and Initiatives**

2.1.1 In devising new policies and initiatives the Council will:

- assess their linguistic effect and ensure that they are consistent with the Welsh Language Scheme.
- promote and facilitate the use of Welsh wherever possible and will move closer to implementing the principle of equality fully at every opportunity.
- consult with the Welsh Language Board in advance regarding proposals that will affect the scheme, or the scheme of any other public body. The scheme will not be altered without the Board's agreement.
- ensure that those involved in formulating policy will be aware of the Scheme, and of the Council's responsibilities under the Welsh Language Act 1993.



- ensure that the measures contained in the Scheme are applied to new policies and initiatives when they are implemented.

## **2.2 Standards of Quality**

2.2.1. Services provided in English or Welsh will be of an equally high standard and equally prompt.

## **3. DEALING WITH WELSH SPEAKING PUBLIC**

### **3.1 Written Communication**

3.1.1. The Council will welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

3.1.2. Correspondence through the medium of Welsh will not lead to any delay

3.1.3. Every correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh.

3.1.4. All correspondence following a telephone or face-to-face conversation in Welsh or a meeting where it was established that Welsh is the preferred language of the person, will be in Welsh.

3.1.5 All correspondence with a member of the public will be initiated in his/her preferred language if known.

3.1.6 All circular or standard letters to the public will be bilingual.

3.1.7 The Council will make arrangements to translate correspondence as needed in order to respond to correspondence promptly in the original language.

3.1.8 The Clerk of the Council will be responsible for translating correspondence.

3.1.9 The Council's official headed paper will include a statement in both languages making it clear that correspondence is welcome in either Welsh or English.

### **3.2 Telephone Calls**

3.2.1 The Council will welcome telephone calls in Welsh or English.

3.2.2 If the Clerk is not bilingual, he/she will offer to arrange for a Welsh speaking Council member to return the call when a member of the public wishes to speak Welsh, or explain that the individual is welcome to continue with the call in English or send in their enquiry in written form in Welsh.

### **3.3 Public Meetings organised by or on behalf of the Council**

*[namely meetings the Council arranges with the public, for example, road diversion, improve facilities or annual general meeting. Not the Council's regular meetings where members of the public can attend and listen, but not contribute without prior invitation – see 3.4.]*

- 3.3.1. Any public meeting that is held to discuss the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax or any information regarding local elections/by-elections will be bilingual.
- 3.3.2 All publicity for public meetings will be bilingual, and will invite those attending to notify the Clerk of their language choice in advance so that appropriate translation arrangements can be made.
- 3.3.3 The Council will provide translation facilities, according to need, for public meetings arranged by or on behalf of the Council.
- 3.3.4 When the Council is aware that a member of the public wishes to speak Welsh in a public meeting that would otherwise be conducted in English, this should be respected by providing appropriate translation arrangements.
- 3.3.5 Any written materials such as leaflets or acetates that are used in public meetings about the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax or information about local elections/by-elections will be bilingual.

### **3.4 Council Meetings**

*[namely the Council's regular meetings, which are open to the public, but where the public are not part of the meeting.]*

- 3.4.1 The notice and agenda for the Council's meetings will be available bilingually on request.
- 3.4.2 A bilingual version of the minutes will be available to the public on request.
- 3.4.3 The Council will respond to requests for information in relation to the minutes, or sections of the minutes in the preferred language of the individual.

### **3.5 Face-to-Face Meetings with the Public**

- 3.5.1 The Council will welcome meetings with the public in either Welsh or English and the Clerk will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to enable any member of the public who wishes to discuss matters in Welsh to do so with a bilingual officer or Member of the Council. If none of the officers or elected member can speak Welsh, the Clerk will politely explain the situation and offer the individual the opportunity to discuss the matter in English or send in their enquiry in written form in Welsh.

### **3.6 Other Dealings with the Public**

- 3.6.1 When the Council contacts the public via information technology, namely computers, website, e-mail or touch screens, this information will be available in Welsh and English for the public.

## **4. THE COUNCIL'S PUBLIC FACE**

### **4.1 Corporate Identity**

- 4.1.1 The Council's corporate identity will be bilingual.
- 4.1.2 The name and address of the Council will appear bilingually on official headed paper, fax papers and compliment slips, and any other promotional material.

### **4.2 Signage**

*[This guideline is relevant to Council office signs, if an office exists, and any external public signs.]*

- 4.2.1 All new information signs or those replacing previous signs on Council property will be bilingual, as will any other public information signs for which the Council is responsible. The two languages will appear side by side, with the Welsh version appearing to the left. Where this is not practical, the Welsh version will appear first. The size, quality, legibility and prominence of text will be equal in Welsh and English.

### **4.3 Publishing and Printing Material**

- 4.3.1 All publications aimed at the public, such as documents and explanatory material dealing with the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax, information about local elections/by-elections and grant forms will be bilingual with both language versions forming one document. The versions will be printed side-by-side where possible to facilitate easy cross-reference, distribution and offer language choice.
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- 4.3.6 Job advertisements will appear in the English language in English publications, apart from when bilingual skills are desirable then the advert will be bilingual. Advertisements will appear in Welsh only in Welsh language publications.

#### **4.4 Statutory and promotional functions**

- 4.4.1 In the information that is sent to those intending to apply for financial assistance towards local activities, the Council will make it clear that there is need for applicants to describe how they intend to reflect the linguistic nature of the community and their audience in the activities for which they require financial support. When considering applications, the Council will ensure that applicants have appropriately reflected the linguistic nature of the community and their audience in their application.
- 4.4.2 When the Council is consulted on planning applications, the Council will encourage applicants to erect bilingual signs in locations such as offices, businesses and shops and supermarkets by referring to the linguistic nature of the area.
- 4.4.3 When the Council is consulted on the naming of streets, developments and new estates, the Council will support the use of standard or indigenous names when appropriate. The Council will ask the opinion of the Welsh Place Names Standardisation Panel in any cases of uncertainty.

#### **4.5 Services by Other parties**

- 4.5.1 Any arrangements made by the Council to use a third party to deliver services to the public on its behalf will comply with the specific requirements in the Scheme as outlined by the Council. The Council will outline which relevant measures in the Scheme the third party will have to adhere to within the tendering or contract specifications.
- 4.5.2 The Third party will need to confirm that it has complied with the relevant aspects of the Scheme by letter.

### **5. IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE SCHEME**

#### **5.1 Staffing**

- 5.1.1 When the position of Clerk to the Council becomes vacant it will be noted in the advert that bilingual skills are desirable for the post to ensure that the Council can implement the clauses contained in this Scheme.

#### **5.2 Administrative Arrangements**

- 5.2.1 This scheme has the full support of the Council.
- 5.2.2 The Clerk will be responsible for implementing the Scheme on a day-to-day basis within the Council.

### **5.3 The Translation Service**

- 5.3.1 The Clerk will be responsible for the written translation needs of the Council, and will also be responsible for the standard of all Welsh text produced.
- 5.3.2 If the Clerk cannot complete the work within the timescale, the Council will employ an external translator.
- 5.3.3 The Clerk will be responsible for arranging simultaneous translation facilities for all the Council's needs.
- 5.3.4 When needed, this facility will be available for all public meetings arranged by or on behalf of the Council, and in any other Council meeting if that is the decision of the Council.

### **5.4 Monitoring**

- 5.4.1 Responsibility for monitoring the Scheme will rest with the Clerk of the Council.
- 5.4.2 The Council will receive a brief annual report on implementing the Scheme that will be displayed locally (the local press, local information boards, papurau bro etc) with a copy being sent to the Welsh Language Board. Also the Council will invite local residents to offer their views on the service and how it could be improved, by placing a copy of the Report in a public place.
- 5.4.3. The Report will deal with every aspect of the Scheme.
- 5.4.4. The Council will welcome suggestions from the public (by letter or telephone communication) regarding improvements to any aspect of the Scheme.

### **5.5 Publicity**

- 5.5.1. The Council will publicise the Scheme regularly through the local press and/or on its notice boards.

### **5.6 Contacting the Council**

- 5.6.1 Any comments, complaints or suggestions regarding the Scheme should be addressed to the Clerk of the Council.

## **6. TIMETABLE**

- 6.1 The Council will be expected to outline its timetable for implementing this Scheme in writing to the Welsh Language Board. The timetable will be considered as an integral part of the

Welsh Language Scheme and implementation in accordance with the timetable will be compulsory.

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