

Committee: **Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15th December 2022**

Report Subject: **Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Steve Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member Corporate Overview and Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Emma Scherptong, Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	10.11.22	07.12.22			15.12.22	18.01.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the Report is to present the Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Council has a legal obligation to produce and publish the strategy under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, Standard 145 and Standard 146 as set out below:

2.2 Standard 145

You must produce, and publish on your website, a five-year strategy that sets out how you propose to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in your area; and the strategy must include (amongst other matters) –

- a) a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in your area) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in your area by the end of the 5-year period concerned, and
- b) a statement setting out how you intend to reach that target; and you must review the strategy and publish a revised version on your website within 5 years of publishing a strategy (or of publishing a revised strategy).

2.3 Standard 146:

Five years after publishing a strategy you must –

- (a) assess to what extent you have followed that strategy and have reached the target set by it, and

(b) publish that assessment on your website, ensuring that it contains the following information –

- (i) the number of Welsh speakers in your area, and the age of those speakers
- (ii) a list of the activities that you have arranged or funded during the previous 5 years to promote the use of the Welsh language.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 CLT noted the draft Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27 (Appendix 1) and Assessment (Appendix 2) prior to formal consultation on the 10th November, 2022.

3.2 Option 1

Members to consider and recommend that Cabinet approve the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022-27 prior to its publication.

3.3 Option 2

Members to consider the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022-27 and recommend suggestions / amendments for improvement prior to approval by Cabinet.

4. Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

4.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to produce and publish a five-year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

4.2 The strategy is aligned and recognised within the Blaenau Gwent Corporate Plan 2022/27 and will support the Council's vision of 'Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open, and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities'. In identifying Welsh as a key performance measure for helping us to achieve our priorities, positively demonstrates our commitment and continued support towards raising the profile and use of the Welsh language.

4.3 The strategy also contributes towards the national well-being goal of 'a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

Failure to comply with the requirement to produce a Welsh language promotion strategy could lead to financial penalties issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner. The quoted figure is £5,000 by breach. There is a small financial requirement for translation of the strategy into Welsh. This will need to be met by the Policy & Partnerships budget.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is a reputational risk to the Council if the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27 is not published, or it is not published on time.

The Welsh Language Commissioner can investigate without warning and has the authority to gain power of entry. Any evidence of failure to comply with a Standard could lead to a penalty.

5.3 ***Legal***

The Council has a statutory requirement to produce and publish a Welsh language promotion strategy under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (Welsh Language Standard 145).

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Organisational Development has a key role in supporting Objective 3 – ‘We will increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in the workplace’, including supporting training of staff in Welsh language skills and awareness and the promotion of Welsh language skills via its recruitment policies and procedures.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 Welsh Language Standard 145 sets out a requirement to set “a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in your area) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in your area” by 2027 and “a statement setting out how you intend to reach that target”.

6.1.2 To meet a target of 46% increase of Welsh speakers by 2050, we would need to gain an additional 1,856 Welsh speakers against the 2021 Census’ Blaenau Gwent baseline of 4,035.

6.1.3 Therefore, this represents an average annual increase of 66 additional Welsh speakers i.e., 4% of the target figure of an additional 1,856 in Blaenau Gwent for the next 28 years.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The production and publishing of the report exemplifies the Council’s commitment to the Welsh language speaking community within the area and looks to achieve the following outcomes:

- More people engage with the Welsh language
- More people attain fluency in the Welsh language
- More Council employees can use the Welsh language

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Involvement to inform the development of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27 was delivered in two phases:

6.3.1 **Phase 1 (informal engagement)**

Citizen and professional insight was collated to determine what we did well; where we can improve and whether there are any gaps in our approach to achieving our former Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2017/22.

6.3.2 **Phase 2 (formal consultation)**

We delivered a range of consultation activities including an online survey, offered workshops, and held a range of informal engagement activities (available in Welsh & English).

6.3.3 **Consultees:**

- Corporate Leadership Team
- Wider Corporate Leadership Team
- Blaenau Gwent Council Staff
- Members
- Blaenau Gwent Secondary & Primary Schools (pupils & parents)
- Blaenau Gwent Community Hubs
- Blaenau Gwent Welsh Network
- Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Forum
- Gwynllyw Secondary School (pupils & parents)
- Welsh Language Commissioner
- Grŵp Deddf
- Cymdeithas Cymraeg Blaenau Gwent
- Youth Forum & Blaenau Gwent Youth Network
- Older People's Network
- Blaenau Gwent Citizen Panel
- PSB Engagement Group
- Blaenau Gwent Local Delivery Partnership

6.3.4 We received 39 responses to our online survey. The feedback was considered and used to inform the development of our final plan. A summary of findings is as follows:

- Overall, there was positive feedback received about the plans use of language. People told us it was concise, easy to read, and understandable.
- People were supportive of our target but noted we could be more ambitious. People told us the plan should focus on education and learning for adults.
- Some people shared concerns towards having a Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for Blaenau Gwent and it being made a priority against other current pressing issues (for example, Cost of Living crisis), given Blaenau Gwent has the lowest number of Welsh speakers within Wales. This feedback has been considered and indicates the need to prioritise a positive change in attitude towards the Welsh language in the area as an action across all three of our objectives.
- Objective one - 67% of participants voting somewhat to fully supportive.
- Objective two - 80% of participants voting somewhat to fully supportive.

- Objective three - 75% of participants voting somewhat to fully supportive.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

Blaenau Gwent has had a Welsh Language Strategy since 1993 demonstrating a long-term commitment to the Welsh language. Blaenau Gwent is committed to safeguarding and promoting the Welsh language within the borough via its five-year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Meeting the requirements set by the Welsh Language Standards, which includes completing the Welsh language promotion strategy, will aim to prevent reputational and financial risk.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Blaenau Gwent will continue to work with neighbouring and regional local authorities to support the promotion of the Welsh Language. It will also work alongside the Blaenau Gwent Welsh Network which includes representation from local Welsh language organisations and community groups, and the Welsh in Education Forum which supports the delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

By considering a corporate approach to Welsh Language the Council is demonstrating it is taking an integrated approach.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

Promotion of the Welsh language and increasing local Welsh-medium education provision will provide better accessibility to Welsh language services within the borough.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

Please see 'Background Documents / Electronic Links'.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27 is presented to Cabinet and Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Draft Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27*
- *Assessment of Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2017/22*
- *Integrated Impact Assessment*