



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Welsh Language Standards Compliance Action Plan Final Progress Report

(Investigation CS092)

Version: 2

Submission: 25/04/24

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1.1 Background and Context

The CS092 investigation (“the investigation”) was opened by the Welsh Language Commissioners Office (WLCO) in November 2021 (see appendix 1). Following concerns raised during a direct verification assessment of whether Blaenau Gwent Council was compliant with the Welsh Language Standards in terms of providing a Welsh language telephone service.

In April 2022, the Council provided an initial response to the investigation, which in turn raised further compliance concerns with regards to promoting services, assessing the language skills of staff, providing training opportunities and assessing the language needs of posts. This led to the terms of reference for the investigation being widened to include a number of additional operational standards.

In September 2022, a final determination of the investigation, in accordance with Section 77 of the Welsh Language (Wales) 2011 Measure, was provided to the Council. The determination outlined the steps required to reach compliance and expected delivery timeframes. It also requested the Council take forward an organisational approach (including clear accountability and governance framework) to develop an Action Plan, with a deadline 31 January 2023. The determination report was presented to the Council’s Corporate Leadership Team in September 2022. A written response was provided to the WLCO.

Results from the 2021 Census found that Blaenau Gwent’s population size has decreased by 4.2%, from around 69,800 in 2011 to 66,900. This is the second largest percentage reduction in population of 22 local authorities in Wales and Blaenau Gwent is one of only seven local authorities with a reduction in population. This also means that Blaenau Gwent now has the second smallest population in Wales, while in 2011 it had the third smallest population.

The 2021 Census identified 4,035 Welsh speakers living in Blaenau Gwent, which equates to 6.03% of its population.

The Council aims to help and enhance the availability of Welsh Primary school education and in Secondary schools through our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022/32 and Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022/27, which will assist in raising the number of Welsh speakers in Blaenau Gwent. Moreover, we will be actively supporting the advertising of Welsh language training courses to adults and our own staff who live and work in the locality.

1.2 Action Plan Development Approach

A decision was made by the Council's Leadership Team to establish an organisational Core Officer Group (CS092) who are responsible for preparing the Action Plan and the supplementary Advice Document.

The group are responsible for:

- Conducting a comprehensive review of how the organisation meets the Service Delivery Standards that are part of the investigation;
- Making a plan for how the organisation will achieve the Operational Standards throughout the organisation;
- Determining the staff needs for how the Council is going to ensure sufficient resources to meet the Telephone Standards;
- Improving the awareness across the organisation of what the standards relevant to the investigation require (especially regarding the language skills assessment, Welsh language training and evaluating the language needs of posts); and
- Creating, developing and then carrying out the CS092 Action Plan.

The group met several times to talk about the investigation's needs and to work on a draft Action Plan. The Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality and Welsh, Welsh Language Support Officer, and Action Leads also had individual meetings to finish the main details of the draft plan.

A Microsoft Teams Channel was set up for the Core Officer Group to regularly exchange files, information and progress reports as well as help with initial implementation work.

The final draft Action Plan was presented to the Corporate Leadership Team for review and was approved on the 26th January 2022.

The Welsh Language Commissioner approved the action plan under section 80(3) of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 on the 5th of April 2023.

1.3 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on actions taken to implement the Action Plan written in response to the investigation opened on the Council by the Welsh Language Commissioners Office. For background information on the investigation's findings and our monitoring procedures please see Appendix 1.

2. Telephone Actions

The investigation was opened due to concerns raised during the WLCO's monitoring of the Council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. The following information provides an update on the work that has taken place to improve our compliance with the standards raised during the investigation surrounding our telephone services.

Standards raised during the investigation:

Standard 8: When a person contacts you on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), or on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must greet the person in Welsh.

Standard 11: When a person contacts you on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), or on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must deal with the call in Welsh if the person so wishes –

- a) until it is necessary to transfer the call to a member of non-Welsh speaking staff who can provide service on a specific subject matter; until no Welsh speaking member of staff is available to provide service on that specific subject matter.

Standard 17: When there is no Welsh language service available on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must inform the caller (whether by means of an automated message or otherwise) when a Welsh language service will be available.

Council Action:

The staff guidance on how to use the Welsh language when answering phone calls was reviewed, which involved assessing feedback from the 'Connect to Blaenau Gwent' (C2BG) call handlers.

As an outcome of the evaluation, the guidance on the intranet for staff was made simpler and better, with sound clips of each phrase, one said slowly and one at a normal speed. These changes are meant to make the guidance easier to use, for staff who do not have any Welsh language skills. This updated guidance was used to help create more training for staff with lower levels of Welsh language ability. **(Related to action points references S8.1a, S8.2a, S17.1a)**

The revised guidance has also been incorporated within the 'Employee Induction Process' for all new members of staff. (See page 16 for more information).

The updated guidance also provides a process map for accessing a Welsh speaker in the cases where a fluent speaker is required to assist with a call **(S11.1a)**. To support this process regular reminders to staff to update their language skills as part of their staff profiles have been circulated **(see Appendix 2)**, this has helped ensure we are maximising our Welsh language skills for telephone support as part of the CS092 Communications Plan **(S8.3a, S11.1b, S11.1c, & Appendices 3, 4, 5 and 6)**. As a result, several 'Welsh Language Champions'

across different service areas have been identified **(S11.1d)**. Furthermore, it is hoped that a further increase of champions will be identified as a result of our updated recruitment process' **(S11.2d)**.

As part of the Welsh Language Communications Plan **(S8.3a)**, we have informed all staff about the updated guidance that stresses the importance of greeting callers in Welsh **(See Appendix 8)**. Customer facing staff managers have also gone to a briefing session to reinforce the importance of maintaining the standard **(S8.2b, S8.3b)**.

As the demand for Welsh language calls within our area is low it has been imperative that our staff are still having the opportunity to practice Welsh language telephone procedures with the support of our Welsh language Officer **(S11.2c, S11.3c)**.

One of the ways the Welsh Language Officer provides support is by doing internal monitoring calls. The checks have shown mostly good progress in handling Welsh Language calls and when problems have occurred it has enabled solutions, for example one occasion identified a lengthy delay in identifying a Welsh speaking member of staff. This delay was of no fault of the call centre staff who had followed the telephone procedure accordingly. Therefore, to avoid similar situations in the future a Microsoft Teams' channel was created to include all call handlers and identified Welsh Speaking Staff across the organisation **(S11.1b)** (including the Welsh Language Champions) **(see Appendix 9)**. The channel has enabled instant messaging of availability for to support Welsh Speaking callers **(See appendix 10)**. We remain in the early stages of implementation of this channel and will continue to review its functionality. We intend on sending more communications to all staff and directly to managers, to ensure all relevant staff are included within the channel, as well as considering how we can embed the action of adding customer facing staff to the channel, into the Corporate Induction process.

As part of this action plan, the Strategic Transformation Team have been conducting a comprehensive telephony review across the organisation. The review has helped us to find out which telephone numbers receive the most calls and have automated messages **(S8.1b, S8.4a, S17.1b)**. After finding out that the C2BG Contact Centre, Council Tax/Revenues and Housing numbers are the busiest lines, we have been able to examine the automated messages linked to these lines. Therefore, the automated messages have been revised to meet the standards and provide better service by being more concise and consistent. **(See Appendix 11)** The uniform greeting that we have applied across the updated lines is the one that staff should use from now on when they think about the Welsh language needs of a phone service (see slide 16 of appendix 11 for universal greeting) **(S8.1c S8.4b)**.

The service areas associated with the Telephony Review, alongside a number of staff from the Children and Adults Information Advice and Assistance teams, are currently attending weekly tutor-led virtual Welsh language training. **(S11.2a, S11.2b, S11.3a, 17.3a)** The course is a part of the Work Welsh Scheme delivered by Dysgu Cymraeg / Learn Welsh and is fully funded. The course will run for 35 weeks, meeting for two hours weekly accumulating 70 hours of training, those attending the sessions have also formed a community of practice to reflect on what they have learnt in between sessions. **(S11.1d)**

Standard 8: When a person contacts you on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), or on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must greet the person in Welsh.

S8.1 The Council must develop a standard Welsh language telephone greeting.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S8.1A	Review current guidance for telephone greeting customer-facing service areas and make necessary amends.	Mar-23	June-23	Sarah King Bernadette Elias	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships) Leanne Roberts (Customer Experience)	Policy & Partnerships / Customer Experience service area budgets	
S8.1B	Identify service areas with automated messaging service and high-call volumes via BG Council Telephony Review Project (S8.4A) and review compliance.	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	
S8.1C	Develop consistent pre-recorded Welsh greeting automated message to be used by Customer-facing services, where appropriate, including pre-recorded bi-lingual Voicemail messages (S8.4B).	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	
S8.1D	Promote amended Welsh Language telephone greeting guidance to all staff via Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications)	Communications service area budgets	

S8.2	The Council must train all Council staff dealing with telephone calls from the public on how to give the standard Welsh telephone greeting accurately and in compliance with Standard 8.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S8.2A	Use improved guidance (S8.1A) to develop mandatory Welsh language training slides on greeting accurately for all staff.	Mar-23	June-23	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S8.2B	Promote Welsh language training slides on greeting accurately via Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S8.3	The Council must raise awareness within its staff of the importance of providing a Welsh greeting and of including a Welsh greeting at the beginning of calls.						
S8.3A	Development and implementation of CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S8.3B	Management teams to proactively raise awareness of the importance of providing a Welsh greeting and at the beginning of calls via Team Meetings / 1-1s. Promotion via Managers Brief included with CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S8.4	The Council must evaluate any automated greeting messages to check that a greeting in Welsh is placed on the automated message if a greeting is given in English.						
S8.4A	Identify service areas with automated messaging service and high-call volumes via BG Council Telephony Review Project (S8.4A) and review compliance	Mar-23	Apr-24	Bernadette Elias	Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	
S8.4B	Develop consistent pre-recorded Welsh greeting automated message to be used by customer-facing services, where appropriate, including pre-recorded bi-lingual voicemail messages	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships) Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	
S8.5	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 4 have been completed.						
S8.5A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration.

Standard 11: When a person contacts you on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), or on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must deal with the call in Welsh if the person so wishes –

a) until it is necessary to transfer the call to a member of non-Welsh speaking staff who can provide service on a specific subject matter; until no Welsh speaking member of staff is available to provide service on that specific subject matter.

S11.1 The Council must put in place guidelines for all staff on how to deal with telephone calls in accordance with Standard 11.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	
S11.1A	Review current guidelines for Welsh language telephone answering procedure and make necessary amends (including development of process map)	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Leanne Roberts (Customer Experience) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Customer Experience service area budget	
S11.1B	Review and update Corporate Welsh Language Speakers Intranet Directory for handling calls on 'specific subject matters'	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.1C	Promotion of Corporate Welsh Language Speakers Intranet Directory via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S11.1D	Development of Welsh Language Community of Practice and identification of Welsh Language Champions across service areas.	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

	Those noted in the telephone book and the customer facing staff doing training to be champions						
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S11.2	The Council must ensure that it has resources to deal with all calls received in accordance with Standard 11. The Council must ensure that there are sufficient Welsh speakers in the call centre to deal with telephone calls from persons who wish to conduct the call in Welsh, in accordance with standard 11.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	
S11.2A	Establish Welsh language training budgets available across key customer-facing service areas identified via Telephone Project (S8.4A)	Mar-23	June-23	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.2B	Provide long-term programme of training for existing customer service staff (call centre) upskilling them to deal with calls in accordance with Standard 11	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.2C	Conduct regular practice sessions with customer service staff (call centre) to assess functionality of procedure continually highlighting and addressing areas for improvement	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King/ Bernadette Elias / Tanya Evans	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.2D	Improve recruitment process for Welsh language speakers in accordance with Welsh Language Standard 136 (S136.1, S136.2, S136.3, S136.4 & S136A.1, S136A.2)	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	

S11.3	The Council must provide training to all staff dealing with telephone calls on how to provide a Welsh language service in accordance with Standard 11.						
S11.3A	Delivery of long-term programme of training for staff dealing with telephone calls upskilling them to deal with calls in accordance with Standard 11 (S11.2B)	Mar-23	Apr-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S11.3B	Promotion of training to all staff dealing with telephone calls on how to provide a Welsh language service in accordance with Standard 11 via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Apr-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S11.3C	Conduct practice sessions with staff to assess functionality of procedure continually highlighting and addressing areas for improvement	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King/ Bernadette Elias / Tanya Evans	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S11.4	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 4 have been completed.						
S11.4A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

** Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration*

Standard 17: When there is no Welsh language service available on your main telephone number (or on one of your main telephone numbers), on any helpline numbers or call centre numbers, you must inform the caller (whether by means of an automated message or otherwise) when a Welsh language service will be available.

S17.1 When no Welsh language telephone service is available, the Council must inform callers when a Welsh language service will be available in accordance with standard 17.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S17.1A	Review current guidelines for Welsh language telephone answering procedure and make necessary amends (including development of process map) (S11.1A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Leanne Roberts (Customer Experience) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships / Customer Experience service area budgets	
S17.1B	Identify service areas with automated messaging service and high-call volumes via BG Council Telephony Review Project (S8.4A) and review compliance.	Mar-23	Jun-23	Bernadette Elias	Rebecca Morales-Reeves (Strategic Transformation Team)	Strategic Transformation Team service area budget	

S17.2 The Council must provide guidance to all staff dealing with relevant telephone calls on the new procedure.

S17.2A	Promote amended Welsh language telephone guidance to all staff via Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
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S17.3	The Council must provide staff with training on the new procedure.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S17.3A	Delivery of long-term programme of training for staff dealing with telephone calls upskilling them to deal with calls in accordance with Standard 11 (S11.2B)	Mar-23	Apr-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S17.4	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 3 have been completed.						
S17.4A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

** Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration.*

3. Training

Standard 130: You must provide opportunities during working hours

- a) for your employees to receive basic Welsh language lessons, and
- b) for employees who manage others to receive training on using the Welsh language in their role as managers.

Standard 131: You must provide opportunities for your employees who have completed basic Welsh language training to receive further training free of charge to develop their language skills

Standard 132: You must provide training courses so that your employees develop –

- a) awareness of the Welsh language (including awareness of the history of the language and its place in the culture of Wales);
- b) an understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh language standards;
- c) an understanding of how the Welsh language can be used in the workplace

Standard 133: When providing information to new employees (for example, by means of an induction process), you must provide information for the purpose of raising their awareness of the Welsh language.

Council Action:

The Standards noted above are in place to ensure our organisation is providing Welsh related training opportunities for all staff. While the Council has provided training opportunities to staff since the Welsh Language Standards were introduced, the following update outlines the actions we have taken to be more proactive in encouraging staff to access our training provisions.

The 'Post-Entry Training Policy' (*see Appendix 12*) provides guidance to managers and their staff around the logistics of training during working hours. This policy concerns itself with courses that lead to a formally recognised qualification. We recognise the importance for staff who consult this document for guidance to know about all the Welsh courses at different levels, because we know that Welsh skills are beneficial for all roles (**S130.1a**). Therefore, we a section has been added to the policy (*see p.3 section 1.5 of appendix 12*) that directs staff to the Welsh language training procedure (**S131.1a**) (*see appendix 13*).

This action plan developed the training procedure to meet the training needs, (**S132.1a**) which included Welsh language awareness; the obligation to follow the standards; how to apply the Welsh language in the work setting; and language courses from beginner to advanced (**S132.1a, S132.1c**) (*See appendix 14 for examples of resources on the Council's intranet*). The changes to the procedure were noted in the managers' brief (*see appendix 15*) encouraging managers to familiarize themselves with the procedure and inform their staff of the updates (**S132.1d**). Furthermore, it is standard practice to attach the procedure when responding to any queries from staff regarding Welsh language training (**S130.1b, S131.1b**).

We also send regular reminders to all staff regarding the training opportunities available to them **(S132.2b)** *(see appendix 16 and 17 for some examples)*.

The training procedure and the recruitment authorisation form (see recruitment actions) state that managers must inform the Welsh Language Support Officer when their staff start any Welsh training. **(S130.2b, S131.2b)**.

One of the actions in the plan is to provide a Welsh language training package through the new e-learning portal that is being developed, by October 2023. However, the new portal will not be accessible to staff until mid-April 2024. Therefore, while Welsh language training is included in the portal's design, this action has been delayed. As a result, the development of a stronger monitoring procedure that ensures Welsh language training is repeated regularly through the e-learning portal will start once the portal is ready for staff use **(S132.2a)**. As an interim measure, our monitoring is done via email messages sent to our Welsh Language Officer when a staff member has finished an online unit, and quarterly summary reports obtained from Dysgu Cymraeg. Managers also need to inform the Welsh Language Officer if any of their staff starts any Welsh related training. As mentioned above, this message is emphasized in our training procedure, and recruitment authorization form. This information is shared in the Welsh Language Annual Report **(see Appendix 18)** **(S130.2a, S131.2a, S131.2b)**. We are close to launching the new training portal, 'Thinqi', where the Welsh Language will have a prominent role in the induction courses for staff.

The induction programme on the Council's intranet has been updated to encourage more active compliance with the Council's Welsh language requirements. A key improvement is directing employees to the Welsh language guidance and training aspects related to the telephone procedure **(S133.1Ai, S133.1Aii, S133.2a)** **(See Appendices 19, 20, 21)**. To ensure managers are applying these changes, the revisions to our induction procedure were included in the managers brief **(S133.1b, S133.2b)** **(see Appendix 15)**.

It is important to note that at this stage not all recruitment related documents are available in Welsh, this is due to budgetary matters. Our Organisational Development team are currently undergoing a review of all policies and procedures, including moving to a modified version of 'iTrent' and training portal 'Thinqi', as such the documents will be translated when the portfolio of work is undergoing transition.

Standard 130: You must provide opportunities during working hours - (a) for your employees to receive basic Welsh language lessons, and (b) for employees who manage others to receive training on using the Welsh language in their role as managers.

S130.1 The Council must create a procedure to provide opportunities during working for its employees to have basic Welsh language lessons, and for employees who manage other people to receive training on using the Welsh language in their role as managers.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S130.1A	Review and development of Post-entry Training Policy to include procedure to provide opportunities for all staff to receive basic Welsh language training during work time.	Mar-23	June-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S130.1B	Revised Post-Entry Training Policy promoted to all staff via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	May-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	
S130.2	The Council must record how many staff are offered this training and how many staff receive this training annually.						
S130.2A	Quarterly performance information to be collated from Welsh Government, Dysgu Cymraeg and training providers re numbers of staff receiving training.	Mar-23	Oct- 23	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S130.2B	Managers and staff encouraged to inform the Welsh Language Support Officer when staff receive Welsh language training via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Communications / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S130.3	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 2 have been completed.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRSAG
S130.3A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration.

Standard 131: You must provide opportunities for your employees who have completed basic Welsh language training to receive further training free of charge to develop their language skills

S131.1 The Council must create a procedure to provide opportunities for its employees who have completed basic Welsh language training to receive further training free of charge, to develop their language skills.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S131.1A	Development of Welsh Language Training - Managers & Staff Guide to include procedure to provide opportunities for all staff to receive further Welsh language training free of charge, to develop their language skills	Mar-23	May-23	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S131.1B	Revised Welsh Language Training - Managers & Staff Guide promoted to all staff via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Jun-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S131.2	The Council must record how many staff are offered this training and how many staff receive this training annually.						
S131.2A	Quarterly performance information to be collated from training providers re numbers of staff receiving further Welsh language training.	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S131.2B	All Council managers must keep a record of staff receiving Welsh Language Training and must provide annual summary to Policy & Partnerships Team	Mar-23	Oct-23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S131.3	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 2 have been completed.						
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S131.3A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration

Standard 132: You must provide training courses so that your employees develop - (a) awareness of the Welsh language (including awareness of the history of the language and its place in the culture of Wales); (b) an understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh language standards; (c) an understanding of how the Welsh language can be used in the workplace.							
S132.1 The Council must provide training to its employees on awareness of the Welsh language, an understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards and an understanding of the way in which the Welsh language can be used in the workplace.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S132.1A	Welsh language training package to be developed in accordance with Standard 132. (S132.1D)	Mar -23	Jun-23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S132.1B	Welsh language training package to be made available to all staff via the Council's new e-learning portal (currently being commissioned).	Oct -23	Oct -23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	The e-learning portal will be made available to staff at the mid-April 2024.
S132.1C	Review and development of Welsh language awareness guidelines available to all staff via the intranet ensuring it includes required learning elements in accordance with Standard 131	Mar-23	Oct-23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S132.1D	Promotion of Welsh language training package and Welsh language awareness guidelines via CS092 Welsh Language	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

Communications Plan (S8.3A)							
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S132.2 The Council must have a procedure in place that ensures this training is repeated periodically.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S132.2A	Develop procedure for ensuring Welsh language training is repeated periodically via e-learning portal (including refresher training)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	See action S132.1b.
S132.2B	Periodic Welsh language training (e.g., refreshers) to be promoted via the CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan	Oct-23	Dec-23	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S132.2 The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 2 have been completed.							
S132.3a	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration

Standard 133 : When providing information to new employees (for example, by means of an induction process), you must provide information for the purpose of raising their awareness of the Welsh language.

S133.1 The Council must modify its induction procedures and sessions to include the provision of information to new employees for the purpose of raising their awareness of the Welsh language.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S133.1Ai	Developing and providing information to support the induction programme	Mar-23	Jun -23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S133.1Aii	Review and development of existing online / PDF induction programme to ensure it includes required learning elements in accordance with Standard 131	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S133.1B	Promotion of revised online / PDF induction programme via the Welsh language via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S133.2 The Council must prepare an information pack on the Welsh language and share this pack with all new members of staff.

S133.2A	Development of information pack on the Welsh language to be included within induction information for new staff and include in Welsh Language Guidance for staff (S133.1A)	Mar-23	June-23	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S133.2B	Promotion of revised induction procedure and sessions via the Welsh language via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A) (S133.1B)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S133.3 The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that it has carried out enforcement actions 1 and 2.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S133.3A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

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4. Recruitment

Standard 127: You must assess the Welsh language skills of your employees.

Standard 136: When assessing the requirements for a new or vacant post, you must assess the need for Welsh language skills, and categorise it as a post where one or more of the following apply:

- a) Welsh language skills are essential
- b) Welsh language skills need to be learnt when appointed to the post;
- c) Welsh language skills are desirable; or
- d) Welsh language skills are not necessary

Standard 136A: If you have categorised a post as one in which Welsh language skills are essential, desirable or need to be learnt, you must:

- a) specify that when advertising the post, and
- b) advertise the post in Welsh

Council Action:

The staff profiles on the 'iTrent' system allow the council to monitor the language abilities of the staff. The data is published as part of our Welsh Language Annual Report (***see Appendix 18***). The data also helps us with our service delivery, for example when we undertake Welsh Language monitoring calls (***S127.2a***).

The Council follow the Association of Language Testers in Europe's (ALTE) framework to evaluate the skills of staff, based on staff self-assessments on 'iTrent'. When considering the Welsh Language Skills Assessment Procedure, we had given thought using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). However, after undertaking an initial trial with Managers, we identified that staff felt that the standards in the CEFR's beginner levels were too high and could make staff who would normally think they have the basic skills in the ALTE framework to lower their levels to a level 0. As a result, we continue to use the familiar ALTE framework but have amalgamated the Senedd's 'Courtesy' level and the ALTE frameworks level 1, (***see Appendix 22***) as we hope to break the stigma surrounding Welsh language abilities we have encountered when talking with our staff and learning from our Welsh language networks (***S136A.1b***). A copy of the framework is available to staff on the 'iTrent' system to make it a more simple and quicker for all staff to keep their language skill levels up to date. (***S127.1a, S127.2b***) (***see Appendix 23***).

The introduction of 'Courtesy Level' has helped staff to understand their own abilities and how they contribute to our organisation, as well as making them more aware of training opportunities available. We created an internal and external communication campaign that showed the benefit we as an employer get from this 'Courtesy Level' Welsh (***S127.1c, S127.2c, S136a.1c***). We were happy to see that this campaign was used as an example of good practice at a Regional Welsh in Education Network Meeting that discussed the Draft Engagement and Marketing Strategy in October 2023. (***see Appendices 24 and 25***)

The recruitment process has been updated and improved to include a check of the language skill requirements for each role before posting new vacancies. The Recruitment Authorisation Form has been changed (*see Appendix 26*) to include a flowchart that will decide the level of skills needed on the job advert and the training the successful applicant will have to complete (*S136.2a, 136a.1a*). The form now accounts for the Welsh language capacity of the existing staff in the group and the department's ability to offer services in Welsh (*see Appendix 26*). The form also considers how often the role needs to interact with customers to provide the right level and amount of mandatory training. The expected outcomes of these changes are to raise the number of roles that are advertised as requiring Welsh language and increase the number of staff who take training.

These pivotal updates have been promoted to managers through all manager correspondence (*see Appendix 27*), presentations at Departmental Management Team meetings, and is included within the Welsh at Work Guidance sessions being provided across the organisation via the Welsh Language Officer. (*S136.1a, S136.3a*)

We have trialled the use of online platforms to recruit Welsh speakers, for example when we posted the vacancy for our new Welsh Language Officer (*S127.1b*), and we anticipate that these platforms will be used more often now that more positions will require Welsh skills. However, given the current financial situation that we and most Councils face and the cost per advert between £100-£150, it is likely that the positions advertised through these platforms will be those that need the higher-level skills. Nevertheless, we will keep using our networks to share our vacancies that require Welsh language skills at any level to help us recruit more Welsh speaking staff. Also, in the last weeks of this action plan, we have revised the job advert template that managers use for internal and external roles, to include a statement that we welcome applications in Welsh and a link to the Welsh language application form. This statement is visible on the advert without having to click on the job description to find out if one can submit their application in Welsh. (*see Appendices 28 and 29*)

Standard 127: You must assess the Welsh language skills of your employees.							
S127.1 The Council must ensure that it has a procedure in place to assess the Welsh language skills of its employees.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S127.1A	Review and development of existing Welsh Language Skills Assessment Procedure, including iTrent system, and update in accordance with Standard 127	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development) Jane Thomas (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S127.1B	Scope and test use of online recruitment platforms for Welsh-speakers, particularly for new or existing posts requiring Welsh as an essential skill	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S127.1C	Promote amended Welsh Language Skills Assessment Procedure guidance to Managers and Staff via Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Sept-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S127.2 The Council must ensure that those skills are assessed annually.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S127.2A	Annual assessment of staff Welsh language skills via iTrent system reporting and analysis to inform human resource plan to ensure adequate resources for Welsh language telephone services.	Mar-23	Oct - 23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development) Jane Thomas (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S127.2B	Quarterly reminders for staff to update their personal information on iTrent via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development)	Organisational Development service area budget	
S127.2C	Promotion to staff explaining Welsh language skills levels (e.g., 'a little' versus 'moderately') via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration

Standard 136: When assessing the requirements for a new or vacant post, you must assess the need for Welsh language skills, and categorise it as a post where one or more of the following apply:

- (a) Welsh language skills are essential;**
- (b) Welsh language skills need to be learnt when appointed to the post;**
- (c) Welsh language skills are desirable; or**
- (d) Welsh language skills are not necessary.**

S136.1 The Council must provide training to staff who assess the language skills needs for a new or vacant post on how to carry out assessments that comply with the requirements of Standard 136.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S136.1A	Support, information, and training provided to staff assessing language skills in-line with revised Welsh Language Skills Assessment procedure promotion via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A) (S127.1A) (S127.1C)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Organisational Development /Communications / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S136.2 The Council must prepare guidelines for staff on how to carry out an assessment of the linguistic skills needs of a post.							
S136.2A	Guidelines on assessing linguistic needs of a post, embedded within relevant documentation, to be promoted via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A) (S127.1A) (S127.1C)	Mar-23	Oct-23	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Organisational Development /Communications / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S136.3	In carrying out assessments under Standard 136, the Council must, on all occasions, consider capacity within the post's area of work to provide a Welsh language service in accordance with the Standards and consider whether the post should be advertised as a post where Welsh language skills are essential.							
Ref.	Action	Start		Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S136.3A	Revise Welsh language skills assessment procedure to include consideration of providing a Welsh language service and the advertisement of Welsh language skills as essential (S127.1) (S127.2A), and monitoring implementation.	Mar-23		Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay (Organisational Development) Lee McDonald (Organisational Development) Jane Thomas (Organisational Development) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Organisational Development / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

S136.4	The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 3 have been completed.							
S136.4A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget		

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Standard 136A: If you have categorised a post as one in which Welsh language skills are essential, desirable or need to be learnt, you must:

(a) specify that when advertising the post, and

(b) advertise the post in Welsh.

S136A.1 The Council must change its procedures so that when the Council categorises a post as one where Welsh language skills are essential, desirable or need to be learnt, the body must specify that when advertising the post and advertise the post in Welsh in accordance with standard 136A.							
Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments	BRAG
S136A.1A	Revise Welsh Language Skills Assessment procedure to consider Welsh language skills post categorisation (S127.1) (S127.2)	Mar-23	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Ceri Gay, Lee McDonald, Jane Thomas (Organisational Development) Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Organisational Development / Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S136A.1B	Undertake research to understand the barriers of hiring Welsh language speakers into posts	Mar-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
S136A.1C	Develop proactive engagement and communications campaign which promotes the value of Welsh language skills for employers and use within the workplace	Sep-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Katherine Watkins-Hughes (Policy & Partnerships) Carolyn Jenkins (Communications)	Policy & Partnerships / Communications service area budget	You're more skilled
S136A.2 The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement actions 1 - 3 have been completed.							
S136A.2A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	

5. Promotion of improved Welsh language service

Standard 81: You must promote any Welsh language service you provide and advertise that service in Welsh.

Council Action:

As part of concluding the CS092 Action Plan, we feel as a Council that we are in a better position in delivering our services bilingually we have started rolling our campaign created in accordance with Standard 81. We have mirrored Carmarthenshire County Council's '[Pa bynnag ffordd... / Whichever way...](#)' campaign as noted by the Welsh Language Commissioners Office as an example of good practice. We hope this will encourage our residents to utilize our Welsh language services, not only to increase their abilities and opportunities to use the language but also to use the practice as a tool to monitor the functioning of said services (***see Appendix 30***).

Standard 81: You must promote any Welsh language service you provide and advertise that service in Welsh.

S81.1 For specific promotion campaign about the Welsh language telephone services would be advantageous. Such a campaign should be carried out when the body is confident that its Welsh language telephone services comply with the service delivery Standards.

Ref.	Action	Start	Finish	Corporate Leadership Team Lead	Action Lead(s) / staffing commitments	Budgetary Commitments *	BRAG
S81.1A	Delivery of specific promotion campaign via CS092 Welsh Language Communications Plan (S8.3A)	Feb-24	Mar-24	Bernadette Elias	Carolyn Jenkins (Communications) Louise Bishop (Communications)	Communications service area budget	

S81.2 The Council must provide written evidence that satisfies the Welsh Language Commissioner that enforcement action 1 have been completed.

S81.2A	CS092 Action Plan Progress Report	Dec-23	Mar-24	Sarah King	Andrew Parker (Policy & Partnerships)	Policy & Partnerships service area budget	
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* Additional costs association with budgetary pressures will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team for consideration.

6. Next Steps

- Revise Core Group Membership
- Welsh Language incorporated within Corporate Business Plans
- Funding Developments for 2024-25
- Communication and Engagement Plans

Overview of Key Steps

As we conclude the Action Plan we would like to note the planning and dedication shown during its implementation. As a Council we feel the Action Plan has created positive change not only with the actions themselves but also in terms of staff's awareness of the Council's duty to work in line with the Welsh Language requirements.

The 'core group' has played a crucial role in the plans delivery of each action, serving as a consultation group to showcase progress and offer input. Therefore, we are proposing that going forward the group is re-named and revised to become focus group to assist, implement and review our Welsh Language requirements which will aim support our continuous improvement.

Furthermore, the increased awareness of the Welsh language requirements has supported the work to strengthen the inclusion of the Welsh language into our business plans. Working closely with the Corporate Performance Management Team we have developed internal monitoring/accountability arrangements, to ensure quarterly feedback from a range of departments on how their work has contributed to the aims set out in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy.

Building on the progress made during this plan, we have been successful in securing Shared Prosperity Funding, which we are using to increase the visibility of the language and culture in the area. Part of this funding is being used to enhance the Welsh language capacity within the Council which is already receiving positive feedback through the delivery of Welsh language guidance support sessions throughout the organisations. The sessions help staff understand how to work in accordance with the Councils Welsh language policies, how to access the guidance and what opportunities there are for Welsh language training.

The funding is also being used to work closely with our Corporate Communications Team to deploy a Welsh language Communications Plan that educates and raises the profile of the language and its place in Blaenau Gwent culture. The Communications Plan has been endorsed at a corporate level with agreement from our Education department to support us in our endeavour to make Blaenau Gwent an actively Welsh area. We will also be using part of this funding to support the planning and delivery of local Welsh activities that will contribute to the increase in number of Welsh learners and speakers across the borough. We look forward to expanding on Welsh language work completed outside of the action detailed in the CS092 Action Plan in our forthcoming Welsh Language Annual Report.

