

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 9 February 2017
Report Subject	Welsh Language Standards
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to advise members of the outcome of negotiating a new set of Welsh Language Standards for the Council with the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Following a series of consultations, County Councils received Notices on 30 September 2015 from the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC) on compliance with the new Welsh Language Standards. The Standards will replace the Council's Welsh Language Scheme.

The Notices are unique to each organisation and specify what the organisations are expected to do and deliver in Welsh and by when they are required to comply. The WLC has the powers to investigate and take action against those designated organisations who fail to comply with the Standards. This includes imposing financial penalties for non-compliance. The Compliance Notice for Flintshire County Council is attached in Appendix 1. The majority of the Standards are consistent with the commitments set out in the Council's Welsh Language Scheme and should not pose any significant problems for services. Some of the Standards were considered to be more challenging – being disproportionate and unreasonable. The Council has had positive and constructive discussions with the WLC which have resulted in amendments, exemptions and deferred implementation dates to the Standards we considered to be problematic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Note and endorse the successful outcome for Flintshire County Council on negotiated Standards within the final Compliance Notice.
2	To fully support the Welsh Language Standards.
3	To invite a further report on the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, which is a requirement of the Standards and will raise the profile and strengthen the Welsh language in Flintshire.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS
1.01	<p>The Welsh Language Measure (Wales) Measure 2011 enables the Welsh Ministers to specify Standards relating to the Welsh language. These Standards replace Welsh Language Schemes. The Council set out its commitment to treat English and Welsh on the basis of equality in the delivery of services. The aim of the Standards is to continue and develop the work of Welsh Language Schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• improving the services Welsh-speakers can expect to receive from organisations in Welsh• increasing the use people make of Welsh-language services• making it clear to organisations what they need to do in terms of the Welsh language• ensuring that there is an appropriate degree of consistency in terms of the duties placed on bodies in the same sectors.
1.02	<p>In September 2015 the WLC served Compliance Notices on each of the 22 local authorities in Wales identifying the Welsh Language Standards to which they must comply and the time frame for compliance for each Standard. The Notices are unique to each organisation and reflect local demography and organisational capacity. The Standards for each local authority across North Wales differ, with authorities in North West Wales being required to comply with more stringent standards than those set for Flintshire County Council.</p>
1.03	<p>The Compliance Notice for Flintshire County Council sets out 171 Standards: (i) 146 to be achieved by 30 March 2016; and (ii) 25 to be achieved by 30 September 2016. The majority of the Standards are consistent with the commitments set out in the Council's Welsh Language Scheme and should not pose any significant issues for services. They also support the progress being made by Social Services who have been recognised by the First Minister for their work in promoting Welsh language services as part of the Welsh Government's "More Than Words" framework.</p>
1.04	<p>The Standards cover the following areas:</p>

	<p>Service Delivery Standards Set out the standards that must be met when providing services to the public in Welsh.</p> <p>Policy Making Standards Assessment of the impact of policies and decisions, and grants, on opportunities to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.</p> <p>Operational Standards Cover the use of Welsh at work and in employment procedures.</p> <p>Promotion Standards Require the Council to produce and publish a five year strategy outlining how the Council will promote the Welsh language and facilitate its use more widely in the county.</p> <p>Record Keeping Standards Specify the records that must be kept by the Council.</p>
1.05	<p>The Council is committed to the Welsh language and meeting the Standards set out in the Compliance Notice. There were a small number of individual Standards we considered to be unreasonable or disproportionate.</p> <p>The main themes of these Standards included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infonet • public address system messages (Welsh first) • service-specific meetings with the public • Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings (agendas and minutes) • Signage
1.06	<p>The Council has taken a partnership approach to successfully resolving concerns about implementing specific Standards and met with officers of the WLC in December 2016 to discuss these. This was a constructive and positive dialogue, with the WLC agreeing to the Council's request to defer implementation or make amendments to specific Standards. The full list of amendments agreed with the WLC are attached as Appendix 2.</p>
1.07	<p>To ensure employees and managers comply with the Standards a series of workforce news items have been circulated during the past 12 months through the intranet and Change Exchange. Further workforce news items will be shared throughout the next 12 months as a reminder. Supporting documentation and guidance is also available on the intranet. In addition, each portfolio has nominated a delegated lead who is responsible for sharing information about the Standards across their areas.</p>
1.08	<p>Standard 145 of the Compliance Notice requires the Council to produce and publish a five year strategy which sets out how the Council will promote the use of the Welsh language more widely in the county and to set a target to maintain or increase the number of Welsh speakers. This work is in progress and will build upon the legacy of the Urdd's Eisteddfod held in Flint in 2016. It will also support the commitments in the Council's</p>

	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and Social Services' action plan for the "More than Words" framework. We will work with our partners, Coleg Cambria, Menter Iaith and the Urdd to maximise the impact of this strategy.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are potentially significant financial implications in delivering the Standards as there will be an increased use of interpretation and translation services. The full cost is not yet known. This will depend upon the demand from Welsh speaking customers and employees who wish to exercise their rights to receive Welsh language services as set out in the Standards. The actual costs of implementing these Standards will be known following implementation. Funding has been set aside to pay for the translation of agendas and minutes of committee meetings.
2.02	There are training implications for employees. Both Welsh language skills training and Welsh language awareness training is currently provided. The numbers accessing this training will need to be increased and monitored. All employees will need to be aware of the Standards and what this means for their role. Similarly, our suppliers and partners may need to comply with certain Standards.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The Council has responded to a number of WLC and Welsh Government consultations on the Standards.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The Performance Management System, CAMMS, will help us to monitor compliance where appropriate.
4.02	Implementation of the Standards will enhance the profile of Welsh language within the Council and within the county and strengthen the commitments which were set out in the Welsh Language Scheme.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 Flintshire County Council Compliance Notice.
5.02	Appendix 2 Standards where variations have been agreed by the WLC.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Fiona Mocko, Policy Advisor Equality and Cohesion Telephone: 01352 702122 E-mail: fiona.mocko@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Compliance Notice: specifies the exact standards with which each organisation should comply and also the date by which they are required to comply with a standard.</p> <p>More Than Words Framework: A Welsh Government strategic framework to strengthen Welsh language services in health, social services and social care. It includes the principle of the “Active Offer” where customers are offered services in Welsh as opposed to having to request them.</p> <p>Welsh Language Measure: Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 confirms the official status of Welsh, creates a new system of placing duties on bodies to provide services through the medium of Welsh and creating the post of Language Commissioner with enforcement powers.</p> <p>Welsh Language Standards: specify standards of conduct in relation to the Welsh language.</p>