

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2012**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

SUBJECT: **WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2011-12**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present to members the Council's Welsh Language Scheme Annual Monitoring Report 2011-12, for endorsement prior to formal submission of the report to the Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC).

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 Flintshire County Council has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales it will treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality. The Council's Welsh Language Scheme, which was prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993, sets out how the Council will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales, and in the conduct of its internal business. The Welsh Language Scheme is both a statutory Scheme and a corporate policy document on bilingualism.
- 2.02 The Council has made a public commitment to monitor and review the implementation of its Welsh Language Scheme and to report annually to the Council's Executive and to the Welsh Language Board (WLB) on its performance. This report covers the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.
- 2.03 For the purpose of preparing this report the Council has adhered to the reporting framework provided by the WLC's predecessor, i.e. the Welsh Language Board (WLB). The reporting framework includes monitoring the Council's performance against 5 prescribed WLB performance indicators. It should be noted that the Council has made representations to the WLB over the definitions and clarity of these indicators which do not readily allow for precise measurement of performance progress.
- 2.04 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the Scheme and for ensuring compliance with it.
- 2.05 In May 2012 the Welsh Language Commissioner published a consultation on 'Standards and the Welsh Language'. The aim of this consultation was to provide an opportunity for anyone to state their opinion on the Standards.

The standards related to:

- Service delivery
- Policy Making
- Operational activities
- Promotion
- Record keeping

2.06 The Welsh Language Commissioner will, in the autumn, publish a report providing a summary of all responses received to this consultation. The recommendations will be presented to Cabinet upon publication of the report with an overview of potential resource implications and associated actions to mitigate risk.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report 2011-12 shows that although the Council is successfully implementing many of the Scheme's commitments, some of the targets have not been met. The Council has identified a range of Scheme commitments that require prioritised attention. These have been included in a revised Welsh Language Scheme Action Plan for implementation during the period 2012-14.

3.02 In order to ensure continuous improvement, every service has assessed its compliance with Welsh Language Scheme requirements. Where improvements are required, services will include actions in their service plans. Progress against identified improvement actions in quarterly performance reports, from April 2013.

3.03 There are signs of substantial improvement in relation to integrating Welsh Language Scheme requirements within the Council's procurement arrangements. In 2010-11, monitoring of a sample of contracts revealed that only 25% complied with the requirements of the Council's Welsh Language Scheme. In 2011-12, 58% of a sample of contracts complied with the Welsh Language Scheme.

3.04 The Council continues to work to seek to meet the Welsh language needs of young people. Although the Council currently has no specific Welsh Language Youth Support provision, it has very positive partnership arrangements with Menter Iaith Sir y Flint and Urdd Gobaith Cymru who work closely with the Children and Young People's Partnership to widen opportunities. It should be noted that the Welsh Education Strategic Plan has been approved by the Cabinet, however, this falls outside the scope of the Welsh Language Scheme.

3.05 The Council received more complaints / comments in 2011-12 (9) compared to 2010-11 (3). However, the number and percentage of complaints dealt with in accordance with the corporate standards was higher in 2011-12, both in terms of type of response and overall. There are early indications that the

number of complaints is continuing to increase, with 12 complaints received during the first quarter of 2012-13. These complaints related to lack of bilingual communication or service provision, and a small number of technical issues.

- 3.06 Further work is required to increase the number of bilingual employees so that the Council can meet its statutory obligation to deliver services in Welsh to the public. The 2011-12 report shows that the Council needs to work to recruit Welsh speakers to posts that have direct contact with service users noting that our cross-border recruitment catchment area does not limit the pool of bilingual recruits which is available. The report also highlights that the Council is providing Welsh language training to a substantial number of employees (122). However, the majority of employees coming forward to learn Welsh do so because of their interest in learning Welsh, rather than as a result of an identified service need or training needs analysis.
- 3.07 There are further opportunities to take a strategic approach to Welsh language training with a commitment to targeting training more as an organisational objective. This supports the aims of our Welsh Language Skills Strategy.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 To present to members the Council's Welsh Language Scheme Annual Monitoring Report 2011-12 for endorsement prior to formal submission of the report to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The costs of implementing the Welsh Language Scheme, e.g. translation, are currently met from individual directorate budgets. There could potentially be some additional costs around the Language Awareness Training and the Monitoring Arrangements of the plan. A council wide budget risk has been identified as part of the 2013/14 budget process because of the likely impact of the Welsh Language Measure. The value of this pressure is not quantifiable at this time.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

None.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

None.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

The Welsh Language Scheme is an important element of the Council's overall commitment to the principle of equality in all aspects of its business.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct personnel implications associated with this report. However, the effective implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme is dependent on staff having an awareness of the Scheme, an understanding of how the Scheme impacts on their posts, and the relevant language skills to deliver services in Welsh and English according to customer needs/preference.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

None required.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

None required.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix A - Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report 2011-12.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Contact Officer: Caren Prys-Jones

Telephone: 01352 702426

Email: caren.prys-jones@siryfflint.gov.uk