

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 13th June 2024
Report Subject	Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2023/24
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language and Culture
Report Author	Chief Officer Education and Youth
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council is required to adhere to Welsh Language Standards, as set out in a Compliance Notice that was served on the Council in 2015.

The Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice for Flintshire County Council places a statutory duty on the Council to publish an annual report that sets out how it has met the Welsh Language Standards.

The purpose of this report is to present the Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2023/24, providing an overview of the Council's progress in complying with the Welsh Language Standards and identifying areas for further progress and improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To present the draft Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report for 2023/24 for consideration and endorsement.
2	To be assured that the Council has been making progress to meeting the statutory requirements of the Welsh Language Compliance Notice.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2023/24
1.01	Background Information The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 enables the Welsh Ministers to specify standards for the Welsh language. The aims of the Standards are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the services Welsh speakers can expect to receive from organisations in Welsh.• Increase the use people make of Welsh language services.• Make it clear to organisations what they need to do in terms of the Welsh language.• Ensure that there is an appropriate degree of consistency of the duties placed on bodies in the same sectors.
1.02	The Welsh Language Commissioner (WLC) served Compliance Notices on each of the 22 local authorities in Wales in September 2015, identifying the Standards by which they must comply. Compliance Notices are unique to each organisation and specify what each organisation is expected to implement in Welsh and the date by which to comply.
1.03	The Welsh Standards Compliance Notice for Flintshire County Council lists 171 standards for service delivery, policy making, operational matters, promotion, and record keeping. The standards also require the Council to publish an annual report setting out how the standards have been met. The WLC has set out guidance on the format and content of the annual report. The Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report provides an opportunity to show what the Council has done to meet the standards and to facilitate and promote the use of Welsh. The Council's Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2023/24 can be found at Appendix 1 of this report.
1.04	Flintshire County Council's Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2023/24 <u>Increased Initiatives</u> During 2023/24 there has been an increase in initiatives to promote the use of Welsh, including:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in Bangor University’s ARFer project, which aims to increase the use of incidental Welsh between employees. • An increase in the number of employees learning Welsh; 174 registered to learn Welsh during 2023/24 compared to 110 employees in 2022/23. • Recordings of words and phrases to support employees to use Welsh on the telephone. The recordings also contain the written word/phrase and the phonetics, this means that there are visual prompts so they can be seen as well as heard.
1.05	<p><u>Recruitment of Welsh speakers</u></p> <p>In partnership with Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam, Wrexham County Borough Council, Coleg Cambria and other organisations in North East Wales, a promotional video has been produced to show potential job applicants how organisations provide support to employees who wish to use Welsh at work.</p> <p>The aim is to reassure prospective job applicants who are unsure whether their Welsh is “good enough” of the support available to develop their skills.</p> <p>Two Flintshire County Council employees participated in this video.</p>
1.06	<p>The North Wales Public Services Boards commissioned IAITH: the Welsh centre for language planning to investigate the issues and solutions in the recruitment of Welsh speakers, as all public bodies in North Wales are facing similar difficulties recruiting Welsh speaking employees.</p> <p>This “Recruitment and Welsh Language Project” started in 2023/24. The final report and recommendations will be published during 2024/25.</p>
1.07	<p><u>Areas for further improvement</u></p> <p>Although there are positive areas of progress, some issues remain as areas in which to progress and improve. Given the challenges recruiting to vacant posts, and filling Welsh essential posts, key areas for improvement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing our employees’ Welsh language skills, particularly those in public facing posts, to support services to be delivered bilingually. This will be addressed by developing and implementing a Welsh Language Skills Strategy. • Supporting employees to use Welsh, naturally, in the workplace, to increase the audibility of the language and opportunities to use Welsh. More initiatives will take place to encourage employees to use Welsh, whatever their level of skill.

1.08	<p><u>Complaints</u></p> <p>During 2023/24, we received one complaint directly from a customer who received an English only version of a form to book the Chair of the Council to attend events. An apology was issued to the customer and a Welsh form was sent to the complainant. To prevent this happening again the form is now bilingual.</p>
1.09	<p>Five complaints were made directly to the WLC, details of the complaints are provided on page 17 of the Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report.</p> <p>Of the five complaints, the WLC decided not to undertake a full investigation into three complaints as corrective action had been taken for two complaints and the WLC was investigating similar issues raised in another complaint and did not feel another investigation was needed.</p> <p>The WLC imposed Enforcement Action for the other two complaints requiring the Council to undertake specified action to prevent recurrence.</p>
1.10	<p>Next steps</p> <p>During the next 12 months, as a Council, we aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Welsh Language Skills Strategy to increase the number of employees using Welsh to be able to deliver bilingual services. • Reduce the number of employees who report that they do not have any Welsh language skills. • Continue completing self-assessments against the Welsh language standards to ensure services continue to comply.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Human Resources: A training programme is required to ensure employees have the skills and knowledge to meet these statutory duties. A budget for Welsh language training is held by the Learning and Development Team.</p> <p>Revenue/Capital: There are no revenue / capital implications.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>A full integrated impact assessment is not required for this report, as it is a report on progress and compliance with the Welsh language standards.</p>

3.02	Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact	
	Long-term	Positive - safeguarding the Welsh language for future generations and increasing access to services through the medium of Welsh.
	Prevention	Positive - increasing the number of people using and speaking Welsh.
	Integration	No change
	Collaboration	Positive - through supporting other plans and strategies such as the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and “More than Words” Framework which aims to increase the use of Welsh in health and social care services.
	Involvement	No change
3.03	Well-being Goals Impact	
	Prosperous Wales	No impact
	Resilient Wales	No impact
	Healthier Wales	No impact
	More equal Wales	Positive - through increasing access to bilingual services and ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language.
	Cohesive Wales	No impact
	Vibrant Wales	Positive - through promoting the Welsh language
	Globally responsible Wales	No impact

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	No formal consultations were required for this report, but key officers and services have contributed to the content of the report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2023/24

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Fiona Mocko, Strategic Policy Advisor Telephone: English 01352 702122 Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: Fiona.mocko@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS These are provided corporately on the Infonet and maintained by the Executive Office
	<p>Compliance Notice: specifies the exact Welsh language standards with which each organisation should comply and the date by which they are required to comply with a standard.</p> <p>Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam: an organisation funded by Welsh Government to support and promote the Welsh language in the county.</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>