

Report to the Democratic Services Committee

Establishing a New Panel to Promote the Welsh Language and Provide Oversight for Welsh Language Provision within Powys County Council

Background

During the last few years, there have been many changes to the way the Council is required to provide services through the medium of Welsh, to promote the Welsh language through its work, to consider the impact of its decisions on the Welsh language, and how the impact can be mitigated, and to increase the use of the Welsh language and number of Welsh speakers within the county.

The Welsh Government's legislation and strategies which relate to the way Local Authorities must operate through the medium of Welsh, develop the use of the Welsh language and increase the number of Welsh speakers include;

- The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards – providing services, developing policies, internal use, record keeping and duties to promote
- Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy, to achieve a Million Welsh Speakers by 2050
- More than Just Words: Welsh Government's Strategic Framework for providing services in Welsh within Health and Social Care.

Currently, although there are several partnership forums that the Council is part of which discuss the Welsh language, there isn't an internal forum to discuss these aspects specifically within Powys County Council, to enable open and detailed discussions to ensure these issues are considered sufficiently within the Council's political structures, strategies and decisions, and to ensure sufficient consideration to the Council's impact and influence on the Welsh language within the County.

It is therefore proposed that a new Panel is established, under the Democratic Services Committee's structure, and which will report to that committee, to look at the Council's services and plans within a Welsh language context.

The Purpose of the Panel

The purpose of the new Panel, if approved, will be to;

- Oversee the work of other groups considering Welsh language issues within the Council, e.g. Welsh Language Support, Promotion and Challenge Group; Welsh Language Education Forum; Officers Group* (yet to be established) by receiving reports and setting a direction for the work of those groups
- Consider the Council's main strategies and plans, to ensure the Welsh language is sufficiently considered, and proposing ways in which the Welsh language can be promoted within those plans and strategies
- Consider samples of Welsh Language Impact Assessments, which are required under the Welsh Language Standards, to ensure sufficient attention is given to the impact of the Council's decisions on the Welsh language, to look at how our considerations could be strengthened to achieve a better impact, and that appropriate mitigation is proposed if any adverse impacts are identified
- Recommend ways in which the Council's strategies and plans could contribute towards the Welsh Government's goal of achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050
- Consider how we can increase the use of the Welsh language internally within the Council

- Receive reports on Powys County Council’s compliance with the Welsh Language Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- The Panel will meet every quarter, with meetings arranged to fit with the Democratic Services Committee timetable
- The Panel’s meetings will be held through the medium of Welsh, with simultaneous translation provided when required to enable non-Welsh speaking members and officers to participate in the discussion

Reporting

This new Panel, if approved, will report to Powys County Council’s Democratic Services Committee, with meetings arranged to ensure an appropriate timetable to consider aspects of the Council’s work relating to the Welsh language, to fit with the Democratic Services Committee’s timetable.

Membership

It is proposed that the new Panel, if approved, is chaired by the Chairperson / Member of Powys County Council’s Democratic Services Committee.

It is proposed that the Panel’s membership includes;

- The Welsh Language Portfolio Holder
- One member from each political group represented on the Council, to ensure cross-party input and support to the discussions

Appropriate officers will also attend and support the Panel’s work.

Implementation

To support the work and direction of the Panel more widely within the Council, it is also proposed that a Welsh Language Promotion Officer’s Group is established, with at least one representative from each service area, which will be responsible for promoting the Welsh language and supporting the implementation on the Welsh Language Standards within their service.

Members of the group should be influential officers within their service, to ensure that sufficient attention is given to the issues discussed.

This group will be co-ordinated by Powys County Council’s Welsh Language Officer, and will report to the Welsh Language Promotion and Supervision Panel.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
That the Democratic Services Committee recommends to Full Council that a new Panel be established to Promote the Welsh Language and Oversee Welsh Language Provision within Powys County Council	To ensure sufficient consideration is given to the Welsh language within Powys County Council’s plans and strategies, to promote the use of the Welsh language and increase the number of Welsh speakers, and ensure Council services operate according to the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards