

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
22 July 2022**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Sue McNicholas
Cabinet Member for Future Generations**

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan

The 2011 Census shows that circa 19% of Powys population is fully bilingual ie in Welsh and English.

Yet in March 2022, the Language Commissioner reviewed a 4 week customer survey which showed that of 17 calls made to Powys only 1 stated that a Welsh service was available, and of the 15 calls answered by staff, only 3 were able to respond fully to the needs of the caller in Welsh.

Furthermore, employment data shows that only 7.59% of Powys staff are fully bilingual in 2021-22 with housing and community development department as low as 5.04%

Yet from April 2021 to March 2022 of the 1,271 jobs advertised, only 64, or 5% showed the need for full bilingualism.

In view of the fact that the authority does not reflect our society, let alone meet its legal obligations, and hence the need for a radical over-all of the situation, what are your proposals to correct this imbalance?

Response

The Workforce and Organisation Design service are undertaking a thorough recruitment review, and the Welsh language will be considered as part of this. The Council has good practices in place already e.g., bilingual job adverts and job descriptions, and the opportunity to apply for any role in Welsh. We carry out selection processes in Welsh and for roles where Welsh is essential we publish these adverts in Welsh only.

As part of the review we will update data on staff Welsh language skills to ensure that it is accurate, and ensure managers consider the Welsh skills needed for a particular vacancy carefully as part of the recruitment process. The Council needs to be mindful of the recruitment challenges we and other local authorities are facing in a range of sectors. It is important that the Welsh language skills of our workforce are enhanced, and that we continue to provide opportunities for future talent applying for our vacancies. We recognise too that we have experienced considerable difficulties

recruiting to posts where Welsh language skills are essential, going out to recruitment up to 4 times on occasion to secure recruitment, although New Ways of Working has eased the challenges in some areas relating to this by enabling some categories of employees to work from home.

We understand the importance of Welsh language skills across Powys and are committed to reflecting our communities and the people of Powys. As part of the review we will look at how we can actively encourage applications from Welsh speakers. We will consider how managers can identify roles that may not require Welsh language skills at the point of recruitment, but where there may be a requirement for them to learn some specific work-based Welsh as part of their role. This will make it easier for residents to use Welsh when interacting with us.

We proactively advertise Welsh language training opportunities via Aberystwyth University and encourage staff to use Welsh with one another, for example by showing they speak Welsh on their e-mail signature on their building passes and lanyards. We will introduce informal virtual coffee mornings and lunchtime sessions where staff can practise their Welsh. We have spoken to Carmarthenshire County Council about this to learn from their best practice to ensure sessions are focussed and develop practical Welsh language skills staff can use when providing services.

In the longer term, our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan will help to address the imbalance between the percentage of Welsh speakers in the county and those working for us.