

SUBJECT: WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 18th January 2022

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of Cabinet with Monmouthshire's first ten-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-31.
- 1.2 This report presents Monmouthshire's WESP 2022-31 to Cabinet and seeks their approval to submit the plan to Welsh Ministers in line with statutory requirements.
- 1.3 Members should review the actions, targets and timescales proposed in the Monmouthshire WESP 2022-31, in relation to all aspects of the local authority corporate and strategic work. This is particularly relevant in the proposed expansion of Welsh-medium education in both primary and secondary phases, school transport arrangements, provision for Welsh medium learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and the Welsh language capacity of the workforce.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Cabinet Members:

- 2.1 Receive the Monmouthshire WESP 2017-2020 Plan
- 2.2 Agree to the actions, targets and timescales contained within Monmouthshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2031, including:
 - the expansion of Welsh medium primary in the north east of the county and the co-creation of a new secondary school
 - a School Transport Review to ensure all learners within the county have a realistic option of choosing a Welsh-medium education
 - the development of ALN Welsh-medium provision and the delivery of wider ALN services through the medium of Welsh
 - an increase in the proportion of Welsh speakers in the school and local authority workforce

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background to this WESP

- 3.1 Welsh Government's vision is to see one million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050 and to achieve this the following actions will need to happen:
- more children in Welsh-medium education.
 - better planning in relation to how people learn the language;
 - more easy-to-access opportunities for people to use the language;
 - a stronger infrastructure and a revolution to improve digital provision in Welsh; and
 - a sea change in the way we speak about it.
- 3.2 The WESP is the key strategic document where Monmouthshire sets out its ten-year plan to promote the expansion of Welsh-medium education and increase the opportunities for learners at all levels to engage with and use the language with confidence.
- 3.3 This WESP focuses on the following seven key outcomes which interface with other key areas including our next Welsh Language Strategy, the Curriculum for Wales (CfW) and the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act (ALNET) Act.
- Outcome 1: More nursery children/ three-year-olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
 - Outcome 2: More reception class children/ five-year-olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh
 - Outcome 3: More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another
 - Outcome 4: More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh
 - Outcome 5: More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school
 - Outcome 6: An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
 - Outcome 7: Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh.

Key actions in this WESP

- 3.4 During the life of the WESP we plan to establish Welsh-medium childcare provision in each of the five main towns in Monmouthshire to increase the number of accessible Welsh-medium childcare places across the county. This will support a sustainable growth in the number of children transferring to a Welsh-medium nursery and subsequently a Welsh-medium primary school.

- 3.5 The relocation of Ysgol Y Fenni in 2024 will increase the capacity of the school so that it can accommodate 420 pupils, a nursery and Welsh-medium childcare on the same site.
- The completion of building work at Ysgol Y Ffin in 2022 will increase the capacity of the school to 210, with a nursery and childcare provision on the same site.
- The proposed opening of a seedling Welsh-medium school and nursery in Monmouth in September in 2023, will provide more learners in the north east of the county with a genuine opportunity to learn through the medium of Welsh without having to travel a long distance each day.
- Taken together, these three developments will create 120 Welsh-medium primary places per cohort across the county, 840 in total when all three schools are full.
- Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil and Powys have agreed to work collaboratively to consider the delivery of a new secondary provision in Band C of the 21st Century Schools Programme (or an alternative funding route if one becomes available). Directors have commissioned the regional Planning School Places group to review the demand for the school and this will lead to a strategic outline plan being concluded in 2024 with a progression into the full business planning process aligned to the Welsh Government programme. The programme will aim to open in 2028/29 recognising the potential pressures within existing settings.
- 3.6 The development of late immersion provision to support learners joining Welsh-medium schools after Year 1 is a key strategy to open up Welsh-medium education to all learners in Monmouthshire. The current local authority funded pilot in Ysgol Y Ffin is already benefiting pupils in Caldicot and additional grant funding will enable the expansion of this provision to other areas of the county.
- 3.7 A significant factor in ensuring the success of additional capacity and late immersion provision, will be the development of a robust promotion plan. This will be developed with key partners to ensure that parents have easy access to high quality information about the benefits a Welsh-medium education, where they can get support if they are not Welsh speaking themselves and how will their children be supported as they learn the language. Alongside this, the local authority will review admission arrangements to ensure options for a Welsh-medium education are clearly promoted at each stage of the admission process.
- 3.8 Feedback from the consultation indicates that a major barrier for parents choosing Welsh-medium education is the time and distance children must travel to get there. Whilst the creation of a third primary school will address this concern for some learners, it will not result in changes for others, particularly those in secondary Welsh-medium schools outside of the county. As a result, we plan to carry out a review of our school transport policy to

address these concerns and to consider transport options for 3-year-olds and Post-16 learners.

- 3.9 Over the next ten years, current projections suggest that the school population in Monmouthshire will decline. This means that we are likely to see a decline in pupil numbers in our schools. Consequently, an increased demand for Welsh-medium education could potentially intensify the impact of reduced pupil numbers in our English medium schools, particularly in the Monmouth area where there are already a significant number of surplus places.
- 3.10 Whilst we have made good progress in supporting our Welsh-medium schools in preparing and planning for the implementation of the ALNET Act; we accept that there is an urgent need for us to understand the emerging ALN needs of our Welsh-medium learners so that we can match provision and services appropriately. At present, the provision of specialist services through the medium of Welsh is a challenge across Wales and we will need to work with regional partners and wider services to systematically address this as soon as possible.
- 3.11 We are very aware that given the proximity of Monmouthshire as a border county the number of Welsh language speakers in the county is far lower than in other parts of the country. As a result, we often struggle to secure Welsh speaking staff to work in our schools. We will continue to work with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to build the capacity of staff who teach Welsh as a second language and to increase the number of teachers participating in the Welsh sabbatical scheme and in doing so increase the number of Welsh speaking teachers and support staff in Monmouthshire. However, it is unlikely that these actions alone will secure the additional Welsh speaking staff we need to meet the increase in Welsh education we expect to see over the next ten years.
- Over the life of next WESP, the Local Authority will look to provide increased apprenticeship and employment opportunities for those that have learned the language both as residents of the county or from other areas of Wales. In support the Local Authority will maximise the opportunity to access funding available through the existing Mudiad Meithrin Apprenticeship Scheme in conjunction with the Urdd. This will be particularly important as we look to increase the number of Welsh speakers in our schools and settings to meet the increase in demand for Welsh language education within the county.

Statutory Processes

- 3.12 The Local Authority concluded the statutory eight-week consultation period for this WESP in December 2021. This included providing copies of a draft report to all statutory consultees and meeting virtually with members of the Welsh in Educations Forum (WEF), Select Committee and Headteachers. All comments and feedback from the consultation period have been considered fully and where appropriate reflected in the final WESP report presented to Cabinet.

- 3.5 The Local Authority is required to submit a version of their first ten-year WESP to Welsh Ministers for approval no later than 31st January 2022.
- 3.6 Welsh Ministers will consider this WESP between January and May 2022, including further discussions with the local authority as required, with approval before August 2022 ready for implementation from September 2022.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 Wales is a bilingual nation with a clear ambition to increase the use of Welsh across the country. We fully support and are committed to the Welsh Government's national strategy for the Welsh Language Cymraeg 2050 and recognise the role of education in achieving this vision.
- 4.2 This WESP sets out the strategic steps and actions Monmouthshire propose to take over the next ten years to contribute to achieving the Welsh Government's vision of million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050.
- 4.3 The Monmouthshire WESP has been developed to ensure that the local authority complies with statutory guidance issued by Welsh Ministers under section 87 of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to submit a WESP for approval by Welsh Government.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The Local Authority secured Welsh Government funding to establish a new school in Monmouth. The funding at the time of application covered 100% of the costs, however, since the start of the pandemic the cost of building work has increased significantly. Consequently, there is a potential resource implication for the Local Authority if Welsh Government are unable to meet any potential increase in costs.
- 5.2 The expectation is that all other costs to implement this WESP will be met through the existing revenue streams. This means that any increase to costs because of the school transport and ALN reviews will need to be considered in the context of the whole authority budget. There is a risk of increased costs whilst English and Welsh medium provisions run concurrently.
- 5.3 The cost of late immersion provision will be an additional cost to the local authority after the pilot period unless further funding as available from Welsh Government.
- 5.4 In 3.5 the prospect of the creation of a new key stage 3 &4 provision is raised. This multi-Authority approach is the most sustainable and appropriate approach to the creation of secondary provision in the north of the county. At this stage it is not possible to identify a specific financial cost be it capital or

revenue, but it should be recognised that this will be a future cost should members decide to proceed.

6. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

- 6.1 One of the main benefits of this WESP is the Council's commitment to developing and expanding Welsh-medium education in both primary and secondary phases. The increase in capacity across the county will allow our current schools to continue to grow and create additional places in areas where there is increasing demand.
- 6.2 The development of Welsh-medium ALN provision to meet emerging ALN needs will ensure that these learners are well supported in their local school and community, and they can access support and services in Welsh.
- 6.3 The Equality Impact Assessment is included in Appendix 1.

7. CONSULTEES:

- Members of the Children and Young People's Select Committee
- The Governing Bodies and Headteachers of all schools maintained by Monmouthshire County Council
- The Management Committees and Owners of all non-maintained settings registered with Monmouthshire County Council
- Torfaen County Council
- Newport County Council
- Blaenau Gwent County Council
- Coleg Gwent
- The Welsh Language Commissioner
- Relevant Trades Unions
- Estyn
- Education Achievement Service
- Diocese of Monmouth
- Childcare Providers in Monmouthshire
- Mudiad Meithrin
- Aneurin Bevan Health Board (ABHB)
- SNAP Cymru
- Yr Urdd
- School Transport Unit
- Cymraeg I Blant

- Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (RhAG) Menter Iaith Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen Mynwy
- Welsh in Education Forum/ Fforwm Addysg Gymraeg Monmouthshire Youth Council
- Children and Young People DMT

7.1 The feedback from the consultation exercise has been wide ranging and we have been able to reflect many comments and suggestions in the draft before Members for their consideration. Whilst the majority of respondents signalled their support for an ambitious WESP there were concerns raised from a number of significant stakeholders about the timeliness of delivery of the seedling school in Monmouth and the new secondary provision in the north of the County.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/guidance-welsh-in-education-strategic-plan.pdf>
- Overseeing compliance Good practice advice document (Welsh Language Commissioner)
<https://www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/media/tu5nll0x/20200901-1-overseeing-compliance.pdf>
- Producing a Welsh Language standards annual report Good practice advice document (Welsh Language Commissioner)
<https://www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/media/vfsfhdqi/20200901-5-welsh-language-standards-annual-report.pdf>
- Estyn Thematic Report Local Authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans September
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/local-authority-welsh-education-strategic-plans>
- Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers by 2050
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy.pdf>
- Draft Monmouthshire Welsh Language Strategy 2022 -2027
<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/welsh-language-strategy-2/>
- Welsh in Education Action Plan
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/welsh-in-education-action-plan-2017%E2%80%9321.pdf>

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