

SUBJECT: Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report 2021-22

MEETING: Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 7th July 2022

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the council's performance in ensuring compliance with the Welsh Language Standards, in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 The Annual Monitoring Report records the council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards and has been sent to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office for their oversight and approval. Members are invited to scrutinise performance and make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Monmouthshire is the gateway to Wales. The Welsh language is an important part of the culture and heritage of our place. The Council's Welsh Language Strategy sets our commitment to ensure that Monmouthshire is having a positive impact on achieving the Welsh Government's ambitious strategy of having a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Alongside that Strategy sit the Welsh Language Standards which promote the language and ensure that it is treated no less favourably than English.
- 3.2 The standards applying to each public body can differ. The annual monitoring report details information relation to specific areas of the Welsh Language Standards allocated to this council. The Welsh Language Commissioner requests this information annually to measure our progress in terms of compliance with the Standards.
- 3.3 Overall, the Council is doing well in terms of compliance with these standards. For example:
- 99.8% of job vacancies had specific criteria relating to Welsh language skills

- There was a 25% increase in the number of employees who are fluent Welsh speakers over the past year
- Regular monitoring is ensuring that Welsh is treated equally on the council's website and in published documents. This is evidenced by a significant increase in the amount of translations being done and the decision by council to increase the translation budget by £22,000 in 21-22.

3.4 The monitoring report highlights a number of challenges:

- Although the number of Welsh speaking staff is growing, we are not attracting Welsh speaking applicants in sufficient numbers and do not have enough bilingual staff in customer facing roles.
- We have received two complaints which led the Commissioner to investigate whether the council is fully compliant with standards 88-90 relating to policy making. Changes have been made to the council's Integrated Impact Assessment to address this.
- The number of staff attending training courses has declined. While this is largely attributed to the pandemic it will be important to ensure more staff learn and develop their Welsh skills to increase the number of opportunities for the public to interact with public services delivered through the medium of Welsh – one of the objectives of the five-year strategy.

3.5 The monitoring report will be forwarded to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. Officers then meet with the Commissioners' staff to discuss any areas of good practice and any areas of concern that require improvement. The report will be made available on the council's website to ensure transparency and accountability.

4. REASONS:

4.1 To ensure accountability and compliance with the requirements of The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no additional financial or human resource implications arising out of this monitoring report.

5.2 The scheme will be published, on approval, on the Council's website as required under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

6. FUTURE GENERATIONS AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 As this is a monitoring report, there is no need to produce an impact assessment.

7. CONSULTEES:

Members of the Policy and Overview Scrutiny Committee may recommend changes to the content of the Monitoring Report prior to the final version being published.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Monmouthshire County Council's Welsh Language Standards - <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2021/06/Monmouthshire-Welsh-Language-Standards.pdf>

9. AUTHORS:

Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy Performance and Scrutiny
Nia Roberts, Welsh Language Officer

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

e-mail: matthewgatehouse@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01633 644397 / 0778 555 6727

e-mail: niaroberts@monmouthshire.gov.uk