

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Annual Monitoring Report 2008
to the Welsh Language Board

Every year the 22 Local Authorities in Wales are required by the Welsh Language Board under the Welsh Language Act of 1993 to provide a monitoring report on action taken within areas of the Scheme specified by the Board **(A)**

The Welsh Language Board has responded to our comments and has asked some specific questions in return. **(B)**

Finally the Authority has given their response to those questions asked by the Welsh Language Board highlighting what action they are proposing to take. **(C)**

Alan Burkitt
Equalities
Officer

(A) Bilingual Youth Support Services

The Welsh Language Strategic Network first met on the 20th June 2007 with the remit being to provide a properly managed and monitored approach to the provision of the Welsh Language and Cultural Awareness in the Youth Service in Blaenau Gwent. The Network is by now a well- established group meeting bi-monthly under the Chairmanship of Mr Byron Jones, Community Learning Manager. The other members of the Network are;

The Head of Youth Service, Leisure Business Manager, Equalities Officer, Senior School Improvement Officer, Children's Entitlement Partnership Coordinator, Head of Learner Support Coleg Gwent, and the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), Head Boy and Girl from Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw Pont y Pŵl, Development Officer for the Urdd, Divisional Manager Careers Wales.

The following is a list of what has been set up, carried out or offered in the last 12 months as a result of the work and influence of the Network

A **Menter Iaith** covering the three areas of Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Monmouthshire was established in October 2007, with the Equalities Officer being a representative on the committee. The Menter will work to promote and support the use of Welsh in the community. By creating opportunities for local Welsh speakers and learners to use the language, it aims to raise the profile of the language in the area and support its use among children, young people and families and adults. Website address - www.menterbqtm.org

Coleg Gwent have identified the Welsh speakers in the college and put them in two categories: Fluent and not fluent. At Ebbw Vale Campus in Blaenau-Gwent there are 40 fluent speakers and 247 non fluent speakers. A bilingual "Welsh Language Services" questionnaire was sent to the 40 fluent speakers to discover:

If they are interested in Welsh Language events, clubs/societies and extra activities would they like to study through the medium of Welsh

Are there any support services they would like available in Welsh e.g. specialist Careers advice about bilingual jobs

The next stage is to go through the same process with the 247 non fluent speakers.

Activities offered by the **Urdd** to the young people of Blaenau Gwent

National Netball, Rugby, and Football Competitions

Local and National Swimming Gala

Gymnastic Competitions

Training Opportunities e.g. leaders awards

Athletics Festival for Welsh medium comprehensive schools

5 day residential course for year 8 pupils

Weekend residential course for year 7 and Year 9 – 10 pupils

4 day residential course for year 11 pupils studying AS Welsh

An opportunity to take part in the local Eisteddfod – stage competitions, art and craft. On offer to all schools.

Youth Mayor Inauguration Event – Youth Mayor acceptance speech will be delivered bilingually. A performance will be conducted through the medium of Welsh

Youth Forum members have taken part in Radio Cymru interviews

The **Learning Action Centre** are working in partnership with Abertyleri Comprehensive School to develop Welsh classes for parents

(B) Welsh Language Board response

The Welsh Language Strategic Network is a very positive step especially in terms of mapping and providing activities for young people in the County through joint working.

We are pleased that the group has succeeded in undertaking research into the language needs of Welsh learners and Welsh speakers at Coleg Gwent. The analysis shows clearly the support shown by the County's young people towards the language. We therefore suggest that the County widens this practice and asks young people under the age of 16 about their opinion and needs in the same way.

There is no mention of development in terms of the County's youth support service. We would like to enquire as to the County's objectives in terms of dealing with young Welsh speakers and whether there are any plans in place to improve the current provision in

addition to the work undertaken by the Menter Laith and the Urdd as voluntary organisations?

We welcome the idea of including young people in the network's discussions, it is very supportive, and we look forward to hearing about their input in future reports.

(C) Blaenau Gwent Further response

- It is proposed to disband the current Welsh Language Strategic Network and integrate the actions from this group into one of the 7 Core Aim groups of the Authority's Single Plan -Core Aim Group 4.
- The statutory Youth Service Team have recently held a Youth Support Services Steering Group Meeting, which involved the attendance of 30 organisations from across the Youth Support Services sector. The purpose of this workshop was to share good practice, learn from other and explore the development of shared projects.
- Following the appointment of the Menter laith Officer in Blaenau Gwent, it has been agreed that this officer will be invited to forthcoming workshops to update officers on potential developments that could improve access to Welsh Language and Culture activities across the borough.
- A Youth Statutory Service Mapping and Auditing Exercise will identify the level of Welsh Language and Bilingualism policies implemented across the Youth Support services sector. This exercise will be completed by November 2008.
- The level of current programmes across the Youth Support Services Sector through the medium of Welsh will be monitored and challenged by the Youth Support Services Steering Group on a quarterly basis. The level of provision will depend on the demand from young people. The Lead Menter laith Officer will also be involved in this process.

(A) WL12 Welsh Language Front Line Services

Receptions

Reception

We have one main reception at the Civic Centre that employs two staff and one relief and all answer bilingually as per our Welsh Language Scheme. One member of staff completed year one Cwrs Mynediad having previously undertaken a two-day Welsh Language taster course with Coleg Gwent. Having decided not to attend year 2 this particular member of staff still studied Welsh in her own time in order to improve her spoken skills and has this academic Year enrolled once more for Cwrs Mynediad. The other two members of staff have also attended the taster course. If a caller requests a service through the medium of Welsh, we have a list of our 43 Welsh speakers who can be contacted to either deal with the query or act as a third party. As part of the Authority's proposed Linguistic Skills Strategy posts will be identified as Welsh essential / desirable to ensure a quality face to face service for the Welsh speaking public.

C2BG Contact Centre

We have a Contact Centre based in Brynmawr (C2BG) that has one fluent Welsh speaker (Ex- Learner funded by the Authority) employed. The fluent Welsh speaker is in regular contact with Welsh Speakers within the Authority to keep up her skills, and continues to attend Welsh Language day schools.

The phones are answered bilingually and the list of 43 Welsh speakers is known to all staff. Some other staff have commenced and not completed Welsh courses, and several have attended the 2 day taster course arranged through Grŵp Deddf and provided by Coleg Gwent.

(B) Welsh Language Board response

Reception:

Surely posts in the reception should, in the first instance, state that the ability to speak Welsh is essential, in order to ensure a Welsh language face-to-face service? We look forward to receiving a copy of the Council's Language Skills Strategy this Autumn.

Contact Centre:

We are pleased to note the success of the Council's training which can be seen clearly from the member of staff who is fluent in Welsh thanks to the support of the Council. However, one member of staff with Welsh skills is a very small number for such a Centre, where contact with the public is a core part of its function. What happens during those periods when this member of staff is not available?

(C) Blaenau Gwent Further response

Receptions:

In terms of all reception posts the forthcoming Linguistic Skills Strategy will incorporate a Linguistic skills audit that will reveal the language skills that exist within the Authority. Also departments will be required to look at their staffing structures and consider where they will need Welsh speaking staff and designate posts as Welsh desirable / essential upon vacancies occurring.

The draft Linguistic Skills Strategy is in place and is going before Management Team on 4th November 2008. As it currently stands all staff carrying out reception duties across the County Borough answer the phone bilingually as per the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme

Contact Centre:

It is accepted that the present levels of bilingual staff are not adequate. It is, therefore, proposed that as and when vacancies come up at C2BG they will be designated Welsh Essential. The Contact Centre will set aside the appropriate

training funds to ensure that staff can undertake Welsh language courses for 2009/10.

(A) WLI6 Complaints

The Authority is fortunate in that it gets very few complaints in respect of compliance or otherwise with its Welsh Language Scheme. Complaints are dealt with in line with our corporate standards process in Blaenau Gwent Council; complaints arrive from three different sources -

- Contact Centre (C2BG)
- Complaints Officer
- Internet (Communications Dept)

The Corporate Complaints Officer liaises with the Equalities officer to assess what the issue is and then advises departments as to the appropriate course of action to remedy the complaint. The department or Equalities Officer liaise with the complainant through the medium of Welsh (if appropriate) to ensure that the complaint is dealt with satisfactorily.

(B) Welsh Language Board response

We are pleased to note that there are arrangements in place to deal with complaints relating to the Welsh Language but as this is a performance indicator, and as requested in our response last year, where is the quantitative data? Exactly how many complaints were received, and were these dealt with in accordance with the corporate procedure?

We look forward to working with you in conducting our Risk Assessment in 2009 which will consider the corporate complaints procedure. A methodology will be ready late in the year for consideration

(C) Blaenau Gwent Further response

The complaints procedure is in place with Complaints Co-ordinators in each division that receive, log and investigate complaints, and these are collected on a

six monthly basis by the Corporate Support Manager and reported to CMT and FIP Scrutiny. There also have a corporate deadline for the investigation of complaints which is 10 working days, and this is also monitored.

In the collection of data about complaints it states the nature of the complaint, and outcome. The Welsh Language Adviser will be informed if there is a complaint relating to the Welsh Language and he will determine the legality of the complaint in relation to the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Council's Welsh Language Scheme.

This year we received 2 complaints re the Welsh Language – English only signage in 2 places – they were dealt with through the formal process and were resolved within a fortnight – English only signs being replaced by bilingual ones.

(A) WLI1 Contracted out Services

The Authority has a comprehensive procurement strategy in which there is a section on Equalities. All contractors, potential and actual must demonstrate that they have policies on all of the Equality Strands and must sign the accompanying documentation in confirmation. Companies will not be awarded contracts without evidencing compliance with the equalities element of the procurement process.

Unfortunately departments are still not monitoring compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme in relation to 3rd parties!

The Equalities Officer has arranged a meeting to discuss this issue and has asked the Council's Procurement officer, Health and Safety Manager, and Property Services Manager to attend in order to set up a monitoring process.

(B) Welsh Language Board response

In stating that all contractors and prospective contractors must show that they have policies relating to all equality strands and that they must sign documentation to confirm this, do you refer to the following clauses quoted in your response to our feedback last year:

“As an employer and service provider BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL taken a proactive approach to its duties in accordance with the following Equality legislation:”

“BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL therefore considers that it is essential that every organisation wishing to provide services on behalf of the council is able to show that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure equal access and equal treatment for all in terms of employment and the provision of services.”

Or is there an amended procedure in place?

We appreciate your honesty in admitting that not all departments are monitoring their compliance with the Language Scheme, and that steps are being taken to establish a robust monitoring process. Would it be possible for you to provide a timetable for the work, giving a summary of how you intent establishing a more robust monitoring process? For example, will you be considering the use of contract specification to be more specific about service requirements?

(C) Blaenau Gwent Further response

The Authority is currently evaluating Constructionline, which is UK register of pre-qualified local and national construction contractors and suppliers to provide and maintain their database of approved companies. The organisation whilst managed by a private company is supported by Government and is used by large central government departments, Local Authorities, Housing Associations, etc. and covers a range of service area disciplines additional to the more traditional construction type categories (this will cover the 3rd Party contractors within Blaenau Gwent).

The appraisal documentation completed by the applicants contains a section on Equality legislation, requiring companies to state their compliance with the legislation. As Constructionline covers the whole of the UK, there is no specific reference to compliance with the Welsh Language Act. This matter has been discussed with Constructionline and they have confirmed that it should be considered as a supplementary issue to be raised specifically by the Welsh Local Authorities and other Welsh public organisations. Where organisations require specific questions to be answered these should be raised as supplementary questions to the applicants. Therefore compliance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 will be dealt with as a supplementary question put to the company at application stage.

Following successful appraisal of the applicant's submitted questionnaire, and at tender invitation stage the Contractor will be informed of the requirement for compliance with the Welsh Language Act 1993 as an express provision within the tender documents.

At contract appointment stage the Contractor will be informed in the preconstruction meeting the necessity to comply with the Act and agree the necessary provisions to be implemented for the specific project.

At construction site stage of the project the Contractor's performance will be monitored in regard to compliance with the Act and recorded in the minutes of the site meetings e.g. bilingual signage to be in place where public access needs to be controlled.

(A) WLI4 Linguistic Skills: - Comparing Services Needs and Capacity

The Authority has 41 fluent Welsh speakers out of approximately 4,000 staff (not including school based staff). These people have all agreed to deal with Welsh Language queries in their own departments and for other departments. This information is kept on the Council's Internet site within the internal telephone directory.

The process of how to deal with a Welsh Language phone call is included in the Induction process and is passed on by colleagues to new staff as is the need to answer switchboards bilingually

All Welsh speaking staff are made aware by e mail of any new staff who speak welsh and are regularly encouraged to communicate with each other through the medium of welsh in order to maintain skill levels.

Over the last 10 years some 260 members of staff have commenced either Cwrs Mynediad, WLPAN or Dosbarth Nos Classes, both in work time or evening. Unfortunately, for the usual reasons, the completion rate to GCSE or A Level is low.

The Training Unit based in the VITCC in Tredegar has recently taken over the provision of Welsh Language training and as a result of the low completion rate have introduced a contract system to the course. The contract is to be signed by the student, department (line manager) and the Training Unit. Failure to complete would mean that the Student would have to pay for the course unless there exceptional circumstances were identified.

It has also been decided to make the attendance on the Two Day taster course as obligatory before signing up to the full course.

The course is provided by Coleg Gwent and is termed 'Welsh in the Workplace'/ Cymraeg yn y Gweithle.

(B) Welsh Language Board response

We are pleased to see that there is a procedure in place to deal with Welsh language calls. The system of maintaining a list of Welsh speakers in order to deal with queries means that staff are sometimes required to deal with issues which are relevant to another department. Does this system work? Are those members of staff happy to deal with calls which do not have anything to do with their usual role?

We accept that a contract needs to be drawn up between the Council and the student when an investment is made to train the member of staff

It is good that the Council is tracking the numbers receiving training, but is the Council measuring the effect of this training on its ability to provide bilingual services?

(C) Blaenau Gwent Further response

The 41 staff were all agreeable to deal with queries from the Welsh speaking public when originally approached. When staff achieve a level of fluency then they are approached to join the list of Welsh Speakers. Even those who do not complete the courses are in possession of enhanced Welsh language skills that may be of benefit to the Authority. Unfortunately the only guaranteed way of ensuring an increase in Welsh speaking staff is to appoint Welsh speakers and the outcomes of the Linguistic skill strategy will hopefully help us achieve this. The training route is a good option and affords people the opportunity of learning Welsh, but due to the complexity relationship between training and humans there is no guarantee of success.

(A) Two Day Taster Courses

The old Greater Gwent Authorities set up a Welsh Language Network in 1999 known as Grŵp Deddf. The group was to share good practice amongst those authorities, and for the last 5 years has jointly held 2 day taster courses as a precursor to full blown Cwrs Mynediad courses. Coleg Gwent facilitates the courses and over the last 5 years approximately 80 staff from Blaenau Gwent have successfully achieved OCN's for attendance. These courses also have an element of awareness training within them.

One of the key actions within the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme is the development of a Linguistic Skills Strategy that should give a more structured and measured approach to the Welsh Language issue in terms of staffing levels and location of bilingual staff. It is anticipated that this strategy will be in place by the end of October 2008.

(B) Welsh Language Board response

We look forward to receiving a copy of the Council's Language Skills Strategy when it becomes available this Autumn.

(A) MAINSTREAMING

- The Community Plan for Blaenau Gwent has equality and diversity as one of its 5 key themes.
- In all official reports to Corporate Management Team, Executive, Scrutiny etc the Welsh Language and the other equality strands are specifically mentioned for consideration.
- There has been a cross departmental Welsh Language Network in existence since 1997 that is chaired by the Head of Cultural Services.
- In our Procurement Strategy there is a comprehensive section highlighting the requirement for potential contractors to comply with our Welsh Language scheme. The Equalities Officer has newly arranged a meeting to discuss this issue and has asked the Council's Procurement officer, Health and Safety Manager, and Property Services Manager to attend in order to set up a monitoring process
- As a result of an Estyn inspection on the Youth Entitlement Partnership (YEP), the Authority established a Welsh Language Strategic Network to look closely at the Welsh Language and Culture dimension across the Partnership. This is a dynamic group that is making a difference as evidenced in the opening part of this report
- The Authority has finalised the Generic Equality Impact Assessment toolkit to enable the impact assessing of all existing & future policies, procedures and functions across all 7 Equality strands.
- Abertyleri Comprehensive is in its second year of running a Welsh Language stream that provides immersion in the language. These children are being taught certain subjects through the medium of Welsh having been taught enhanced skills at Queen Street Primary School in Abertillery. Other Heads of Welsh in schools in Blaenau Gwent are showing an interest in this format
- A replacement school for Ysgol Gymraeg Brynmawr has been agreed and will be based between Blaina and Nantyglo.

(B) Welsh Language Board response

It's good to see that the Welsh language, as one of the equality and diversity branches, is one of the main themes of the Blaenau Gwent Community Plan. What does this mean in practical terms? Are there specific targets or aims which will stem from this?

I'd be interested in learning more about the membership of the Welsh language network and its terms of reference. Do senior officers sit on the group or officers who have both the power and ability to put things into practice within their departments? Do members take responsibility for the operation of the Network within their departments?

Reports to CMT and the equality impact assessment: Both of these are important developments. What support is available to managers or staff that undertake the work of preparing a report or undertake an impact assessment? Do they receive training which enables them to consider issues relating to the Welsh language as they go about their work?

I welcome the development with regards to an acquisitions strategy, especially the recognition that strong monitoring procedures need to be put in place.

(C) Blaenau Gwent Further response

The existing Community Plan expires in 2009 and the Council is currently undertaking the preparatory work to publish a new plan in collaboration with its' strategic partners. However, the Council have recently published the Corporate Improvement Plan 2008 – 2012 (CIP) which represents how the Council elements of the Community Plan have been or will be delivered.

Blaenau Gwent Council have adopted business planning arrangements that link directly to actions arising from the key deliverables of the CIP.

By mainstreaming Equalities & Diversity through the business planning process (and so capturing all actions arising from the CIP) the Council will seek to adopt Equalities & Diversity as a value by which all service provisions will adhere and avoid a process-driven approach. Mainstreaming will commence in 2009 and will

be underpinned by (potentially) participating in a pilot scheme run by the WLGA to develop a self assessment process for EIF.

The intention to adopt Equalities & Diversity as a value that is intrinsic to service delivery will impact upon setting specific targets and aims as in practical terms all service delivery will be continuously assessed against the 7 strands. The targets and performance measures arising from local and national policy will be/continue to be set.

The Welsh Language Network is in the process of being re-organised with membership being one of the key issues. Rather than taking a departmental representative approach which was not always effective it is agreed to establish a group of 'key' players which have the necessary authority, roles and responsibility to implement change, influence at a senior level and importantly have the enthusiasm to drive the Welsh Language Agenda.

New Terms of Reference will be established and it is intended that the Group's work will be reported to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee; in all probability the Finance and Improvement Scrutiny Committee.

In terms of Impact Assessments, the Authority has trained 130 Senior Staff in Equalities awareness and the application of its Generic Impact Assessment Toolkit. Due to financial constraints not all Report and policy authors will have had training but they will automatically be a part of their Divisional Impact Assessment team that assesses their policy etc. Being part of this Team will have the effect of raising their awareness of Equality Issues (including the Welsh Language) when writing a policy, procedure or function in the future.

(A) STAFFING

As an Authority we have slowly increased the number of Welsh speakers from around **15** in 1998 to **41** in 2008. Although the numbers are still comparatively low, in terms of our bilingual service provision we have a system in place that meets our requirements. All reception staff are aware that we have a list of Welsh speaking staff on our intranet, all of whom have willingly agreed to answer queries through the medium of Welsh for their and other departments.

All reception staff answer bilingually and if a non-Welsh speaking member of staff receives a Welsh Language phone call they offer the third party service (above) as a matter of course. All reception staff have attended a two day Welsh Language Taster course and some have gone on to Cwrs Mynediad.

The Authority has for 10 years, offered a comprehensive package of Welsh Language training to its entire staff. WLPAN, Dosbarth Nos, Cwrs Mynediad, Cwrs Sylfaen, Cwrs Gloywi, GCSE O Level / A Level, 2day taster course (OCN),

The Authority will have in place by the end of October 2008 a linguistic skills strategy that will reveal the Welsh Language skills that exist within the Authority. It will also examine the optimum locations for Welsh speaking staff and look at which posts will be designated Welsh essential/desirable.

(B) Welsh Language Board response

You acknowledge here that the number of staff with language skills are comparatively low, adding however that your current systems meet your requirements. How can you be sure of this? What measures are in place to ensure that the requirements of Welsh speakers in Blaenau Gwent are met? We refer once again to our Risk Assessment which will be held in 2009. As well as complaints, attention will be given to engagement with the public, so there will be an opportunity for you to contribute to the learning process with regards to practices relating to engagement and participation.

(C) Blaenau Gwent Further response

The current take up of the Language in communicating with the Authority is very low even though there are hundreds of learners and 6,421 or 9.49% of the

population of Blaenau Gwent are fluent Welsh speakers according to the Census of 2001. The issue of monitoring phone calls from Welsh speaking members of the public etc may need to be looked at to ascertain the levels of demand. On speaking to the Authority's Welsh speaking staff it is apparent that they are frequently conversing with Welsh speaking officers of other authorities and organisations through the medium of Welsh once the existence of Welsh language skills are recognised

With the future arrival of the Eisteddfod in 2010 and the interest and expectation that it will bring with it makes it even more important that we get to grips with the Linguistic Skills Strategy and get our bilingual staffing structure in place. In terms of dealing with the demands of the Welsh Language media, the Authority over the years has always been able to provide staff to deal with the many and varied demands of Television and Radio and the complexity of the subject matter. This duty has been taken on by some of our dedicated Welsh speaking staff as and when requested and if possible within their core areas of knowledge.

(A) POLICY

Are you able to provide further instances of the authority mainstreaming the Welsh language into policy formulation?

Children and Young Peoples Plan

This plan is one of the key plans produced by the Authority and the Welsh Language dimension is one of the themes that underpin it

Core Aim 1 - What we know

- The EYDCP recently undertook a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) to identify childcare needs across the Borough. Key needs identified include:-
- Limited numbers of day care places for babies within Blaenau Gwent.
- Limited childcare provision in the southern parts of Blaenau Gwent.
- A lot of unregistered after school care that provides a significant amount of support to working parents but this cannot be counted within the assessment, as it is ineligible for tax credit support.
- Parents who want an integrated package of early years and childcare have limited choice in Blaenau Gwent.

- The amount of Welsh-medium or bi-lingual provision in Blaenau is very low, Welsh is used widely in many childcare settings.
- Flexibility was also something that parents found missing from existing services, e.g. shift working.

The EYDCP will develop an action plan to implement the recommendations of the CSA

Core Aim 2 - What we will do

The Partnership will work with schools and further education providers to:-

- Deliver the Borough's Welsh Language Scheme

Ensure the alignment and effective use of the maximum level of resources available on improving educational attainment and achievement

- Implement School Redevelopment Strategy in order to ensure all school buildings and school grounds are fit for purpose, and ensure optimum use of resources and thereby improve outcomes for learners.
- A commitment to the replacement of the Welsh Medium Primary School
- Review structure of secondary education including the need to ensure Welsh Medium Secondary places
- Review admission arrangements and ensure parents are aware of their rights
- Continue to influence the development of the learning campus on the Corus Steelworks site.
- Continue to develop Community Focused Schools.
- Further develop support services.
- Improve performance management.
- Develop innovative approaches to the reconfiguration of post 16-education provision.

Core Aim 3 - What do we know

- The 2001 census identified a slight rise in Welsh speakers and Welsh learners within the Borough. The Estyn Inspection of the Youth Partnership identified a lack of social opportunities for young people to use the Welsh language. A significant minority of parents, children and young people also identified this

issue during the needs assessment process. A Welsh Language Strategic Network has been established to consider ways of addressing gaps in service provision, and Cymorth funding has been secured to develop and evaluate pilot projects for using the Welsh language in play and leisure settings in partnership with Urdd Gobaith Cymru. A Menter Iaith has recently been established in partnership with neighbouring authorities to help promote the Welsh language within the Borough.

Core Aim 4 - What we will do

- Development a range of play, leisure and cultural activities through the medium of Welsh.

Core Aim 5 - What we will do

- Providing opportunities for young people to participate through the medium of Welsh where necessary.

(B) Welsh Language Board response

We would be very interested in seeing the action plan noted here. What is the timetable for preparing this piece of work?

As well as a general feedback meeting following this response, we would like to discuss the work of the partnership further with yourself and a partnership officer. We will be in contact to discuss the details.

Some positive points are noted here, but the details are few and far between. For example, Core Aim 4: how, and by when will you be developing this range of activities? Or the reference to the Welsh Language Network, it is a positive development, but more details are needed here in terms of what this Network has achieved.

(c) Blaenau Gwent Further response

The Children and Young people Partnership are developing underpinning action plans to deliver the priority outcomes in the Children and Young People Plan.

The action plans will identify the 'who, how and when' in terms of delivering actions, and it will be the action plans that will identify specific actions to promote the Welsh language, develop activities and generally encourage a greater use of the Welsh language. The action plans will be completed over the next couple of months.

(A) PROMOTION

There are a number of promotional elements that are in existence within the Authority that will demonstrate the Authority's Commitment to the Welsh Language and also assist in mainstreaming the Language.

- The Authority's quarterly newspaper '**Connect / Cyswllt**' is produced bilingually.
- As from April 2007 the Authority's **website** has been subject to translation into Welsh and all new material to go on the site will also be translated.
- The Authority is in the process of advertising for a **Full time translator** and hopes to have someone in place by the beginning of August 2008. This new resource will then be targeting the re-vamp of the Website.
- **Welsh Language training** in its many forms is open to all staff and the public at our Learning Acton Centres.
- All **reception staff** answer with a bilingual greeting.
- The **Translation Policy** is reaping dividends as more bilingual adverts, posters, forms, documentation and reports are being produced. It is anticipated that an in-house translation resource will significantly increase the profile of the Welsh Language throughout the Council
- The **Menter Iaith** in Partnership with Monmouthshire and Torfaen CBC is now in existence and with its Chief Officer having been in post since January 2008. The Chief Officer will soon have office space in Blaenau Gwent allowing her to work more closely with the officers of the Council.
- The **Adult Education Service** and partners used adult learners week to provide another BG Welsh Challenge evening on Thursday 22nd May 2008 at Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre. Groups of learners, tutors and staff formed teams and performed a range of welsh songs and a trophy was presented to the best team. The event was hosted by Nia Parry of S4C.
- In 2004 and 2006 the Authority hired accommodation at the **Eisteddfodau** in Newport and Swansea. This year we are once more working in partnership with Grŵp Deddf and having a stand in Cardiff to showcase its bilingual resources, thereby demonstrating its commitment to the Welsh Language.
- The Authority has offered and been accepted as hosts of the **Eisteddfod Genedlaethol in 2010**

(B) Welsh Language Board response

We welcome the effort to appoint a translator, and the attention the jobholder will give to the website.

We have serious concerns about your website. We understand that a rolling programme is needed in order to achieve the aim of a bilingual website, but at present there does not seem to be a Welsh option or any pages in Welsh (correct 11/08/08).

We ask that you give this urgent attention, and we will certainly want to discuss this with you when we hold a feedback session.

(C) Blaenau Gwent Further response

On the 1st of September 2008 our Welsh Language Translator started work with the Authority. Her priority is to get the Website ready to go on-line as soon as is practicable – we are hoping for mid November 2008-10-28

Although not apparent, the Authority had actually committed in excess of £10,000 on translating the framework leading to the development of a bilingual website. A snapshot of the English version of the website was taken on the 1st of April 2007 and the whole of the framework was translated by the 31st of March 2008. The subsequent new material and any amendments (originally over 1,200 pages) have been reduced to 300 by our translator. The delay in the appearance of a bilingual website was deliberate on the part of the Authority as it wanted to go live with a website that only required fine-tuning rather than a site that was under construction and would not operate bilingually to a high enough standard. We would welcome discussions with your IT experts for them to cast an expert eye over the site once it is live to guide us towards bilingual best practice.

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

This report will be published bilingually on the Authority's Internet and intranet sites as soon as it is agreed by Council.

PROGRESS MADE ON ACTION PLANS 2007 - 2008

ACTION PLANS WELSH LANGUAGE

Activity	Intended Outcome	Key Milestones	Resources	Timescales	Monitoring Body & Regularity	Evaluation	Lead Officer	Achieved
REVISE STAFF WELSH LANGUAGE GUIDANCE BOOKLET	1. RAISE AWARENESS OF STAFF AND MEMBERS 2. RAISE LEVELS OF COMPLIANCE	1. CREATION OF BOOKLET 2. DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKLET	1. STAFF TIME 2. PRINTING COSTS	SEPT 2006	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK QUARTERLY	PI'S TO BE ESTABLISHED TO MONITOR COMPLIANCE BY STAFF AND DEPARTMENTS	EQUALITY OFFICER	BOOKLET COMPILED AND DISTRIBUTED JULY 2006
MONITOR COMPLIANCE WITH WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME	TO EVALUATE COMPLIANCE WITH COUNCILS WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME	1. INFORMATION ON IMPLICATIONS OF WELSH LANGUAGE ACT 2. CREATION OF MONITORING PROCESS	STAFF TIME	BEGINNING JUNE 2006 AND ANNUALLY THEREAFTER	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK MEMBERS	ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK MEMBERS	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK NEEDS TO LOOK AT INTERNAL PROCESS TO ACHIEVE THIS.
DEPARTMENTAL ACTION PLANS	TO ENCOURAGE DEPTS TO MAKE THE WELSH LANGUAGE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COUNCIL'S DAY TO DAY OPERATING	DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENTAL ACTION PLANS	STAFF TIME	OCTOBER 2006	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK	ANNUAL REPORTS	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK MEMBERS	WLGA Equality Improvement Framework being adopted by BGCBC. This will mainstream equalities through the Performance Management process.

ACTION PLAN WELSH LANGUAGE

Activity	Intended Outcome	Key Milestones	Resources	Timescales	Monitoring Body & Regularity	Evaluation	Lead Officer	Achieved
ALL STAFF ENCOURAGED TO ANSWER THE PHONE BILINGUALLY	OFFER A BETTER LANGUAGE CHOICE TO THE PUBLIC	NOTE TO ALL STAFF	1 STAFF TIME 2 PRINTING COSTS	ONGOING FROM JUL 2006	EQUALITIES OFFICER AND WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK	MONITORING BY EQUALITIES OFFICER AND WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK SEEKING COMPLIANCE	EQUALITIES OFFICER/ WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK / SENIOR OFFICER	GUIDANCE IN STAFF BOOKLET. WELSH SPEAKERS ANSWERING BILINGUALLY. MORE OFFERING GREETING THAN BEFORE. <u>WILL LOOK AT IN WELSH NETWORK</u>
A BILINGUAL COUNCIL WEBSITE	OFFERING LANGUAGE CHOICE IN DISSEMINATION OF COUNCIL INFORMATION	1 CREATION OF A BILINGUAL FORMAT 2 TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT	1 STAFF TIME 2 TRANSLATION COSTS	STARTING INCREMENTAL PROCESS JANUARY 2006 BILINGUAL BY JAN 2009	WEBSITE WORKING PARTY WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK QUARTERLY	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK	IT DEPT EQUALITIES OFFICER	Full time translator being appointed – will concentrate on completion of the Website. Not sure of timescale – hopefully end of January 2009

ACTION PLAN WELSH LANGUAGE

Activity	Intended Outcome	Key Milestones	Resources	Timescales	Monitoring Body & Regularity	Evaluation	Lead Officer	Achieved
COMPILATION OF A TRANSLATION POLICY	CONSISTENCY OF APPROACH TO BILINGUAL PRODUCTION OF MATERIAL	1.COMPILATION OF POLICY 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY	STAFF TIME	1. NOV 2005 3. JUNE 2006	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK ONGOING	MONITORING OF POLICY PI'S DEVELOPED FOR EVALUATION.	EQUALITIES OFFICER	POLICY AGREED AS COUNCIL POLICY AND IN OPERATION SINCE MARCH 2006
COMPILATION OF A LINGUISTIC SKILLS STRATEGY	WELSH SPEAKERS ALLOCATED TO POSTS WHERE LIKELY TO REQUIRE WELSH LANGUAGE SKILLS	1 COMPILATION OF POLICY 2.IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY	1 STAFF TIME 2 RESOURCES FOR WELSH LANGUAGE TRAINING 3 RESOURCES FOR STAFF RECRUITMENT	MAY 2006 SEPT 2006	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK AND STRATEGIC EQUALITY NETWORK QUARTERLY	WELSH LANGUAGE NETWORK AND STRATEGIC EQUALITY NETWORK	1 EQUALITIES OFFICER 2 CHAIR OF STRATEGIC EQUALITY NETWORK 3 HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES	<u>NOT DONE.</u> STRATEGY IN PLACE BY END OF OCTOBER 2008

