

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Welsh Language Scheme 2011 - 2014

REVISED SCHEME
April 2011

Prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993



Welsh Language Scheme

Revised scheme – April 2011

Prepared under the Welsh Language Act 1993 this scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under section 16 (1) of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on May 2011

Further information on this revised Welsh Language Scheme or any other issue relating to the Welsh Language can be obtained from:-

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Or you can download a copy from the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council website: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk where general information on the Council's work in terms of Welsh Language is outlined under the Equalities Section.

This document is available in other formats on request.

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Foreword

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's first Welsh Language Scheme was agreed by the Welsh Language Board on the 23rd January 1998. Its aim was to provide a Welsh Language Service that met the needs of Welsh speaking people of Blaenau Gwent, whether fluent, or one of the many hundreds of adults and young people learning the Welsh Language in our Community Education Centres and Schools. Mainstreaming the Welsh Language into the Council's working practices is a major piece of work and although there has been significant progress over the last 10 years there is still much work to do on the part of the Council.

Language Equality is becoming more and more important at Welsh, UK and European levels. The British Government ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages on the 27th March 2001. In Wales, the National Assembly has set out its commitment to the Welsh Language through language strategies; 'Iaith Pawb and also the consultation strategy Iaith Fyw Iaith Byw". Language strategies are the National Action Plan of the Government and set out a vigorous strategy to ensure that the Welsh Language is not only supported but also has the right environment to flourish. Furthermore, the new Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 which was approved by the National Assembly for Wales on 7 December 2010, and received Royal Assent on the 9th of February 2011, aims to provide greater clarity and consistency for Welsh speakers about the services they can expect to receive in Welsh.

Also in the Equality Improvement Framework for Local Government in Wales, Welsh is one of the four current equalities issues that must be considered by local authorities in undertaking their day-to-day work.

This scheme is the Authority's third and the Council is confident that this scheme will not only build upon the work started in 1998 but will further embed the Welsh Language within the Council's core values and to continue to improve service delivery through the medium of Welsh Language over the next 3 years.



Councillor D. Hillman
Leader of the Council



David Waggett
Chief Executive

The Council's vision for the Welsh Language

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has adopted the principle that in the conduct of Public Business in Wales, **it will treat the Welsh and English Languages on the basis of equality**. This Scheme sets out how Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales. The Scheme:

- Offers the public the right to choose which language to use in their dealings with the Council.
- Recognises that Members of the public can express their views and needs better in their preferred language.
- Recognises that enabling the public to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice, not a concession.
- Sets out how the Council will implement that principle in the provision of bilingual services to the public in Wales, taking account of the developing linguistic nature of the County Borough.
- Refers specifically to the Welsh Language, any other languages will be covered by the Council's Linguistic Skills Strategy and proposed Single Equality Scheme.
- Makes reference to and, where appropriate, adopt the principles and measures of national strategies for the language namely, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, Clause 32 of the Local Government Act, the National Assembly of Wales – Welsh Language Scheme, The Local Government Equality Improvement Framework, the Wales Government Language Strategy, and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

Introduction

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (called 'the Council' in this scheme) is responsible for the delivery of all local government services within the areas of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. The current Council was created under the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 and started business on 1st April 1996. The Council has 42 elected members who oversee the provision of all Council services.

The Council serves a population of around 68,600 (Mid Year Estimates 2009) and employs just over 4,000 people. The 2001 Census revealed that 9.5% of people aged 3 years and over, are able to speak Welsh (see Appendix 1 for breakdown of figures). The 2001 Census figures show a significant increase in the numbers of Welsh speakers since the last Census figures were published in 1991 when the percentage for those aged 3 and over speaking Welsh was only 2.4%. The teaching of Welsh in Schools and at Centres across Blaenau Gwent has had a positive impact on the language in Blaenau Gwent.

Welsh medium education in Blaenau Gwent is provided at primary level by the brand new Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg (opened September 2010) which currently has 290 pupils attending (including the Nursery). On completing their primary education, pupils in Welsh medium education are eligible to attend Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw which is in the neighbouring authority of Torfaen or Ysgol Cwm Rhymni which is in the neighbouring authority of Caerphilly.

The Authority has over the years made significant strides in terms of promoting the Welsh language:

- The establishment of the post of Welsh Language Officer
- The creation of a Welsh Language Officers Network
- The introduction of Welsh Language training for staff and Elected Members

- Bilingual brand and identity introduced
- All Public notices published bilingually
- All Election materials produced bilingually
- The Authority formally adopted a Linguistic Skills Strategy in 2009
- A Menter Iaith (Welsh Language initiative) was launched in conjunction with Torfaen and Monmouthshire,
- The Authority launched a bilingual website in May 2009
- The Council's Connect magazine is produced bilingually
- The Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru was held at "The Works" in Ebbw Vale in August 2010.
- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg opened in September of 2010 replacing Ysgol Gymraeg Brynmawr,

The Council has moved from a low level of Welsh language provision (eg publishing and printing public materials, advertising and publicity, or the number of bilingual staff employed) in 1996 to a level in 2010 where standard information in almost every service area is bilingual and where bilingual production of new documents, websites etc is becoming the norm.

During the next three years, the Council will continue to raise awareness amongst staff of both the Scheme and Welsh language issues in general in order to improve its delivery of Welsh medium services to the Welsh speaking public of Blaenau Gwent.

Service planning and delivery

This section explains how the Council proposes to deliver its services through the medium of Welsh. It provides staff with a legal guide as to what is expected of them in delivering their services and also spells out to service users what they should expect from the Council

Policies, Plans and Initiatives

When the Council develops new policies plans or initiatives, or up-dates existing ones, it will assess the linguistic consequences to make sure that they meet the commitments contained in this scheme, by using the Council's Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit. Where practicable, the Council will use new/updated policies and initiatives to facilitate the use of Welsh. Staff responsible for writing new or updated policies will be made aware of the requirements of the Welsh Language Act 1993, and the Council's Welsh Language Scheme.

The Council's Welsh Language Scheme will not be altered without the prior agreement of the Welsh Language Board.

Service Areas will contribute data to the Welsh Language indicators as identified under the Welsh Language Board framework.



Delivery of Services

The Council has responsibility for the delivery of the complete range of local government services in Wales. Whilst the objective of the Council is to provide a consistent bilingual service across each service area, its ability to do so is restricted by the number of bilingual staff who are currently employed by the Council. The Council's priority therefore is:

- To implement its Linguistic Skills Strategy in order to reinforce its efforts to improve interpersonal services through reviewing Welsh Language staffing levels.
- Actively promoting the mainstreaming of the Welsh Language via service based Equality Impact Assessments into the Business planning process of Council.
- To ensure that its Contact Centre and reception areas offer a systematic bilingual service
- That staff will be made aware of the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme and be provided with the relevant Welsh awareness and sensitivity training at their induction.

Services Delivered On Behalf Of the Council by Other Parties

Not all services are provided directly by the Council's service areas: some are provided on behalf of the Council by third party agencies or bodies contracted to the Council:

- Where services are provided by third parties on behalf of the Council, these services will be delivered in accordance with the Council's Welsh Language Scheme. The Council is striving to improve bilingual service provision through its arrangements with third parties..
- It will also ensure through its contracting arrangements (documentation etc) that the agencies or contractors implement relevant elements of the scheme when dealing with the public.
- Provision will be made to monitor compliance with the relevant parts of the Scheme by contractors, agents and other third parties with the current standard monitoring arrangements.

Further details are available in the Council's Equality in Procurement Policy which is available from the Corporate Procurement Team on request by e mailing: Corporate.procurement@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Partnerships

The Council works in partnership with other public bodies, voluntary organisations and other agencies in different ways and on many levels, particularly in the development and implementation of key strategic documents such as:

- Community Strategy
- Children and Young Peoples Plan
- Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy
- Local Development Plan.

Where the Council leads a partnership both strategically and financially, it will make certain that the public service provision is compliant with the Welsh Language Scheme.

Where the Council joins a partnership lead by another body, the Council's input in to the partnership will comply with the Welsh Language Scheme and the Council will encourage other parties to comply. Where the Council works as part of a consortium, it will encourage the consortium to adopt a Welsh Language Scheme of its own or agree to comply with the scheme of one of the consortium members. The Council will also encourage other partners to comply in the same way.

When the Council forms or joins a partnership, it will ask the potential partners for a copy of their language scheme, language policy or a description of how they intend to work bilingually.

As part of every partnership, the Council will supervise, encourage, enable, facilitate or support the use of Welsh by publicising its scheme and offering advice and assistance to the partner organisation.



Sponsorship and Grants

When administering funding and grants for organisations, the Council will encourage organisations, voluntary bodies or individuals that receive financial sponsorship, grants or subscription fees from the Council to provide bilingual services to the public. In some cases bilingual provision will be made a condition of a grant being allocated, and this will be determined in line with the Welsh Language Board document “Allocating Grants, Loans and Sponsorship”. Similarly, where the Council is making bids to other organisations, it will include the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme as part of that bid.

Regulatory Functions

The Council, when exercising a regulatory function such as the granting of licences and permissions, will encourage any organisation, body or individual to follow a bilingual practice and use the Welsh Language in their activities. It will do so by stating this view in any relevant application documents issued for their use and will indicate that the Council has adopted a Welsh Language Scheme.

Standards of Service

The Council places great emphasis on providing a service to the public of an equally high standard in both Welsh and English. Furthermore, in ensuring that standards of quality in Welsh are met the Council will:-

- ensure that any translators employed are suitably qualified and/or Members of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters and able to provide a high quality service.
- ensure that standards set within the Welsh Language Board’s IT strategy will be considered and, if practicable will be adopted in developing the Council’s IT strategy.

Dealing with the Welsh speaking public

Written Correspondence

The public are welcome to deal with the Council in Welsh or English. The practical demonstration of this has been the inclusion of the phrase 'Correspondence from the public is welcome in Welsh or English/Croesewir gohebiaith gan y cyhoedd yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg' on all new letterheads, compliment slips and fax sheets.

Replies to letters received in Welsh will be in Welsh, as will any accompanying forms or leaflets requested (where appropriate, the latter may be in bilingual format). All acknowledgement letters, whether generated by an individual or an automated system, will also follow this protocol.

The Corporate timescale for responding to correspondence will be the same for letters written in Welsh as it is for English.

If the Council is aware that an individual, group or organisation prefers to receive letters in Welsh, then the language of letters instigated by the Council will be Welsh.

All relevant staff are circulated the Welsh Language Translation procedure for translating correspondence into Welsh. Only approved translators named in this document must be used.

Standard letters to the public will normally be issued bilingually, except where a preference for a particular linguistic format has been expressed. Individual service areas will keep a record of language/format choice on their mailing list databases to be used in these instances.

Any correspondence that follows face-to-face or telephone communication in Welsh will also be in Welsh, unless otherwise stated by the correspondent.

Communication by email will be dealt with in the same way as other written correspondence. Auto signatures and auto-replies to emails will only be bilingual if the member of staff is bilingual or in the case of generic email addresses for specific services.

Full details of what needs to be translated or produced bilingually are available in the Council's Welsh Language Editorial Policy (appendix 3) at the end of this document.

Telephone Communications

The telephone is one of the main methods by which Welsh speaking members of the public communicate with the Council. People are welcome to use Welsh or English when dealing with the Council by telephone.

In order to facilitate this, all calls will be answered bilingually:

“Bore da – good morning, prynhawn da – good afternoon, noswaith dda -- good evening”

If a caller speaks Welsh and the officer who answers is unable to speak Welsh, the officer will explain this and transfer the call to a Welsh speaker. If there are no Welsh speakers available, the caller will be informed that a Welsh speaker will return the call as soon as possible.

On joining the Council, new members of staff undertake informal telephone training. All existing staff will be provided with guidance on handling telephone calls from Welsh speakers. Details of officers able to deal with calls in Welsh are available via the internal telephone directory. This list is updated on a regular basis.

Corporate answer-phone messages will be bilingual at all times in all offices. Direct line answer-phone messages and mobile phone answer messages will only be bilingual if the member of staff is bilingual.

The above principles of dealing with telephone enquiries will be common to every public venue owned by the Council, including depots, leisure centres, libraries and visitor centres.

Public Meetings

The Council frequently arranges public meetings for consultation or for legal or other purposes. Members of the public are welcome to use either Welsh or English.

Those attending public meetings, hearings, inquiries or legal proceedings arranged by the Council at which the public are allowed to speak, will be invited to speak in Welsh or English. The Council will require prior notice of the language preference of those proposing to attend in order to provide appropriate translation facilities.

As the date of committee meetings are not made public until 3 days prior to the meeting taking place, it would only allow a member of the public wishing to speak Welsh to give this amount of notice. Therefore, bearing in mind this length of notice, on some occasions, it might prove difficult to arrange an interpreter. If this happens, the Council will endeavour to meet the request by providing a Welsh speaking member of staff to act in a third party capacity at the meeting.

Where there is a series of public consultation meetings, every effort will be made to ensure that Welsh facilitators are available to those who have expressed an interest in speaking Welsh. The Council will require prior notice of the language preference of those proposing to attend in order to provide appropriate services.

When a public meeting is conducted bilingually, documentation attached to the meeting will be bilingual as outlined in the Council's Editorial Policy (appendix 3).

Other Meetings

The Council arranges and conducts many face-to-face meetings e.g. professional visits by the public, private interviews, group meetings, site meetings, conferences and others. Members of the public who wish to use Welsh at such meetings are welcome to do so: the Council will meet the need and provide this service by:-

- establishing in advance the preferred language of service users
- making arrangements for service users to address meetings in Welsh
- arrangements will be made for Council Offices without Welsh speakers to have access to Welsh speaking staff in order to respond to requests for meetings in Welsh.
- Making arrangements for a simultaneous translator to be provided

If a face-to-face meeting is arranged at short notice and the member of the public wishes to use Welsh, every effort will be made to ensure a Welsh speaking officer is made available. A list of all Welsh speaking staff is available on the Council's internal telephone directory.

The Council website

The Council has a bilingual website. It is recognised that there are Welsh language improvements needed for this website, and through the Council's Website Redevelopment Group appropriate incremental steps will be taken to address these issues. Through the life of this Scheme we will continually review and update the website in line with the Council's Editorial Policy (appendix 3).

Other dealings with the Public

The measures set out above will apply to other methods of dealing with the public e.g. computerised communications, televised links or public address systems. When developing its IT strategy, the Council will bear in mind and adopt, where appropriate, the measures set out in the Welsh Language Board's IT Strategy.



The Council's public image

Corporate Identity

The Council's public image and corporate identity – including its name, address, logo, visual identity and any other standard information – is bilingual. This bilingual corporate identity is used on all Council materials and goods, including letterheads, compliment slips, memorandums, fax sheets, business cards, identity badges, displays and publications, as well as on Council signs, vehicles and buildings.

Guidance on adopting and using the bilingual corporate identity is issued to staff, designers and others who reproduce the Council's corporate image.

Signs

The Council recognises that the provision of bilingual signs is a positive and visible way of demonstrating its commitment to the Welsh language. All internal and external signs on Council property providing information to the public will be bilingual. This includes temporary signs that will be displayed for more than one month.

Other signs – such as road markings and highway and public information signs – will become bilingual as new and replacement signs are provided. Temporary signage



provided by third party contractors must also be bilingual. The size, quality, legibility and prominence of text on all forms of signage will respect the principle of equality.

New and replacement signs on Council vehicles will be bilingual or in corresponding Welsh and English versions. When naming new streets/new housing developments or providing bilingual versions of existing ones, the Council recognises the importance of giving appropriate consideration to local opinion. Names adopted by the Council will therefore be consistent with the heritage and history of the area and as a part of this process the Council's Heritage Officer and the Welsh Language Board's Standardisation of Place Names Team are to be consulted.

External developers have been advised of the Council's policy in relation to the naming of streets or Housing developments.

The Council recognises its statutory duty to maintain accurate and updated lists of the names of towns, villages, communities and wards as well as new developments. The Council has ensured that its lists are of a high standard and have, in collaboration with the Welsh Language Board, recently conducted an audit of the lists that it maintains, standardising them where necessary.

Publishing and Printing Public Materials and Documents

The Council publishes and prints a significant number of public materials in a bilingual format. Officers will use the Editorial Policy (appendix 3) as a guide to determine whether or not a document should be produced bilingually.

Where separate Welsh and English versions of a document are deemed necessary, each will contain a statement that a version is available in the other language. Both versions will be of equal quality and will be made available at the same time.

If there is a charge for the document, this will be the same for all versions of the document, whether Welsh, English or bilingual.

Written guidance outlining the procedures for dealing with bilingual publications is provided to staff, consultants, designers and publishers.



Forms and Explanatory Material

The Council produces forms in hard copy and on the website for use by the public.

In cases where separate Welsh and English versions are considered appropriate, both versions will be published and distributed simultaneously, and will be equally available, normally carrying a message stating that the form is also available in the other language.

Guidance from the Welsh Language Board is available to staff and others involved in designing and producing forms by referring to its Bilingual Design Guide at: www.byig-wlb.org.uk

Examples of such forms include:-

- Invitations
- Posters
- Cheques
- Licenses
- Menus
- Receipts
- Invoices
- Maps
- Timetables
- Vouchers
- Calling Cards



Forms and explanatory materials are constantly reviewed and monitored as part of the quarterly monitoring process. Where forms/explanatory material's are currently only available in English, an action plan will be drawn up by the service area with a target date for providing the forms/explanatory material in a bilingual format.

Press Releases

Press notices and releases are one of the principal means by which the Council regularly provides information and views to the media.

Press releases to the press and media in Wales will normally be issued in English only.

A Welsh version will be issued to the Welsh language media if the subject matter is of a Welsh Language nature e.g Eisteddfod and the Act itself etc.

The Council will ensure that any events the Council plans to promote the Welsh language, i.e. St David's Day Concert, trips for Welsh speakers /learners, Welsh Discussion/Reading Groups in Libraries etc is promoted through the Welsh language media.

Arrangements will be made for bilingual officers to be available for media interviews.

Advertising and Publicity Activities

Where the Council publicises its services and activities within Wales by means of exhibitions, displays and presentations, it will do so bilingually.

Displays may, however, include items of literature which are not available in Welsh e.g. literature from third parties.

Local exhibitions, public information stands and displays will be arranged from time to time by the Council's services or agents in which case the presentation will be bilingual.

Any literature, such as brochures, booklets and leaflets designed to promote, publicise or explain schemes, policies, procedures, legislation or services, will be produced bilingually.

If the Council conducts an advertising or promotional campaign in Wales through the medium of press, television, radio, cinema, posters, hoardings, electronic messages or public address systems, it will use both languages, and decide the arrangements according to the subject, material, the means to be used and the target audience.

The Council will, where appropriate, use the Welsh language press such as Y Cymro, Golwg and the local Welsh language papers, in advertising and promotional campaigns in Wales.

Staff and others involved in planning, designing and conducting advertising, publicity or market research campaigns are made aware of the requirements of the Scheme and issued with guidance on its implementation.

The same terms and conditions will apply to the production of public surveys, with possible exception of large scale primary research projects such as resident surveys. Even so every effort will be made to ensure that citizens are given the opportunity to undertake surveys in either English or Welsh.

The exact details of what should be translated is outlined in the Council's Editorial Policy – Appendix 3



Official Public Notices and Recruitment Advertising

In order to conduct its business, the Council has to advertise in newspapers to notify the public of its legal, electoral, planning and similar requirements. Official notices and public notices which appear in Wales will be bilingual.

Notices and advertisements in Welsh language newspapers and journals will be in Welsh only and those published in the major United Kingdom newspapers and journals will normally be in English only. All adverts and public notices published in local Newspapers in relation to the Council's services will be bilingual.

When recruitment advertisements appear in English only the Council's corporate bilingual layout will apply, but posts for which Welsh is an essential/desirable requirement will be advertised in Welsh (with an English summary). The percentage of posts advertised in Welsh for posts where Welsh is an essential/desirable requirement will be reviewed over the next few years in line with the actions contained in the Council's Linguistic Skills Strategy.

The Council's external recruitment micro site is currently in English only. In the near future this will be run in-house on the Council's internet site which will automatically ensure that it will be bilingual.

Revised guidance on the implementation of these measures will be issued to staff involved in the design and production of official public notices and recruitment advertisements, bearing in mind posts which may include Welsh as an essential, desirable or non applicable skill.

The Democratic Process

Under the Council's Constitution, Members of the public are able to submit questions in advance of Council meetings, which will be responded to formally within the meeting. Members of the public wishing to put forward questions through the medium of Welsh will receive formal answers to their questions through the medium of Welsh in the meetings.

Implementing and monitoring the scheme

Staffing

In order to ensure that over a period of time the Council is able to deliver its services in Welsh to a high quality, effectively and efficiently, the Council has adopted a Linguistic Skills Strategy 2009 – 2012 (Appendix 4)

The Council's Linguistic Skills Strategy aims for alignment with the Equality Improvement Framework and will cover Recruitment and Selection, Customer Focus, People Development, Equalities, Performance Management, People Procurement and Employee Relations and will inform the Authority's Improvement Plan .

This Strategy is an integral part of implementing this scheme, and therefore carries the full authority of the Scheme and the Council's support. The Strategy is available for download from the Council's website from the Equalities section :- www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

To ensure that there are adequate numbers of Welsh-speaking staff to provide a bilingual service in workplaces which have contact with the public, the Council will take the steps outlined in the Council's Linguistic Skills Strategy as follows:-

- Departments will need to review their staffing structures and assess which posts would likely have contact or an impact on Welsh speakers.
- A further decision would need to be taken on whether proficiency in Welsh was essential or desirable within those particular posts.
- The Council have carried out an initial audit to establish the number of staff who speak Welsh or who are learning Welsh and their location within the organisation.
- The Council will then compare skills needs with existing skill resources per service area. Having identified any bilingual skills deficit, and any non-deployment/under-deployment of skills currently available, Heads of Service will then proceed to consider the range of options available for addressing the issue in accordance with the Linguistic Skills Strategy.

When the Council recruits staff at all levels, there are many skills that need to be considered. The ability to speak Welsh is one of the skills that will be considered when making appointments.

The Council is responsible for a wide range of services, many of which require specialised professional and technical skills for their operation. The aim, over time, and as opportunities arise, will be to build a complement of officers who can help the Welsh-speaking public within an integrated service – Welsh Language Services Group.

Learning Welsh - Welsh in the Workplace

The Council fully supports and encourages members of staff, and elected Members, who wish to learn or improve their Welsh Language skills and is pleased to see staff working bilingually.

The training programme has been developed by the Equalities Officer following consultation with existing learners and Coleg Gwent as our training provider.

Steps will be taken to ascertain the training needs and objectives of each service and of individual employees. Heads of Service will assess the specific needs for learning and improving Welsh language skills amongst their staff and where a need is identified, training will be offered and arranged according to the requirements of the service and the availability of resources.

Staff undertaking Welsh training will be expected to undertake assessments/examinations and work towards gaining appropriate qualifications.

The Council is aware that the speed at which officers and members are able to learn Welsh will vary and will have a direct impact on the targets given for implementing certain measures within the Scheme.

The Council also recognises the valuable contribution which existing bilingual Officers can make by helping and encouraging Welsh Learners to practice their Welsh in their working environment.

The Council will explore e-learning opportunities to encourage learners to learn Welsh by using interactive websites and the Blaenau Gwent Learning Pool.

Recruitment

Linguistic ability will be considered as one of the many relevant skills when appointing staff.

As a result of the Council's Linguistic Skills Strategy each Service area will be required to examine service needs and ascertain the areas of priority for recruiting bilingual speakers. In so doing, they will consider the situations where the recruitment of bilingual Officers is Essential or Desirable and this will be stated in job advertisements.

In circumstances where it proves difficult to appoint suitable Welsh-speaking staff to such the practice will be either:

- To make an appointment which carries an undertaking to learn Welsh to a specified standard and within a stated time-scale with the support of the Council; or
- To re-arrange the service or identify alternative arrangements within service areas to provide the skill in the workplace by using the linguistic skills of existing staff in other service areas.

Vocational Training

Where a need for vocational training is identified, and suitable training can be made available, it will be provided or supported according to the requirements of the service. Training provision may include courses in particular skills word processing, translating, media communications etc. Induction courses in certain specialist areas (such as Social Services or Registrar duties), and access to appropriate resource materials and distance-learning packages.

The need for Vocational Training will also be linked to the implementation of the Linguistic Skills Strategy, so that any staff appointed to Welsh essential posts will be able to receive specific Welsh Language training related to that post.

Responsibilities

This updated Scheme has been approved by and carries the full authority of the County Borough Council in its implementation.

The day to day operation of the Council's business is undertaken by the Corporate Management Team.

The Chief Executive will be responsible for ensuring that this Scheme is implemented throughout the Council's services. The Chief Executive will, via the Head of Policy Performance and Development, the Equalities Officer, and the Corporate Equalities Network will advise Corporate Directors on the steps needed to support and inform the Authority's Improvement Plan. This is required in order to implement the Scheme in each of the Council's service areas.

Corporate Directors and Heads of Service will therefore have responsibility for implementing this Scheme within their various service areas.

Members of staff will be made aware of the requirements of the Scheme and guidance notes will be available via the Council's intranet site.

Supplementary guidance will be produced (following full and appropriate consultation) to provide additional, detailed information and advice to staff on particular subjects relating to the implementation of this Scheme. Any such supplementary guidance will carry the full authority of this Scheme.

Statutory responsibilities – monitoring

The Council's Monitoring Officer has a statutory responsibility to ensure that the Council acts in a lawful manner and that it does not do anything that might cause maladministration or injustice to any individual.

The law makes the Monitoring Officer responsible for the operation of the Members code of conduct, the Council's Standards Committee and the Council's Constitution.

The Council's Monitoring Officer is:-

Dylan John

Chief Legal and Corporate Support Officer

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Municipal Officers

Civic Centre

Ebbw Vale

Blaenau Gwent

NP23 6XB.

Monitoring of the scheme will be a structured and continuing activity and will extend to those who provide or administer services on behalf of the Council. This will be achieved by reports to Finance, Improvement and Performance Scrutiny Committee on Service Area Improvement Plans This will ensure that developments, positive or otherwise, are noted and addressed at Member level on a regular basis. If there are any issues arising from this scheme please contact the following person:-

Alan Burkitt

Equalities Officer

Blaenau Gwent County

Borough Council

Civic Centre

Ebbw Vale

NP23 6XB

01495 355108

alan.burkitt@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

The Council will welcome and record suggestions for improvements and advise the public how they should make their views on the services provided in Welsh known.

In addition to regular internal monitoring and reporting, the Council will produce an Annual Monitoring Report in the form approved by the Welsh Language Board, which will evaluate compliance and performance in implementing the scheme across the Council's services and activities. This will be the reporting procedure for compliance with the Scheme during the three year period of the scheme and will be sent to the Welsh Language Board annually by the end of June.

The Council will summarise its findings in the form of a brief narrative (with evidence) to be submitted to the Welsh Language Board and will identify any fundamental weaknesses/risks, and draw up an action plan of corrective measures, together with a timetable. The Council will also draw attention to progress, good practice and compliance levels. Where there are weaknesses, an action plan shall be agreed with the Board.

Investigations under Section 17

Section 17 of the Welsh Language Act 1993 states "where it appears to the Board that a public body may have failed to carry out a scheme approved by the Board, the Board may conduct an investigation in order to ascertain whether there has been a failure".

If the Welsh Language Board is required to carry out an investigation under Section 17 of the Welsh Language Act 1993, the Council will be prepared to co-operate fully by providing information reports, documents or clarification to the Board.

The Council will be prepared to do this verbally and in writing and will also allow the Board to have discussions with:

- Elected Members
- Local Authority employees
- Contracted service providers and their employees
- Any individuals that assist the Council in the delivery of its services.

Dealing with complaints

Complaints received in Welsh concerning a specific service area will be dealt with by that service area in conjunction with the Complaints Officer in line with Corporate Complaints system as a complaint in English would be, with the added need for translation of all incoming and outgoing correspondence on the matter – comments concerning this scheme (in English or Welsh) will be directed to the Equalities Officer.

Monitoring of complaints will be the responsibility of each Directorate and will be reported to the Finance, Improvement and Performance Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

Complaints can be made in writing, by telephone, or via email – contact numbers for service areas are outlined in the Council’s document “Your Voice Counts”

Promoting the Scheme

The Council will comprehensively publicise its Welsh Language Scheme on a continuing basis. It will ensure that people who deal with the Council are aware of the scheme and its contents and how they are able to deal with the Council in Welsh.

The following methods of publicity will be used:

- Notices in public offices, reception areas, etc;
- Publishing a leaflet detailing the Council’s Welsh Language commitment and services;
- Press releases;
- Items in the Council newspaper and other publications;
- Circulating information and guidance to employees;
- Distributing copies of the scheme to the Council’s agents and contractors;
- Distributing copies of the scheme to other interested bodies; and
- Information published electronically on the Council’s website.

Promoting Bilingual Services

The Council will also promote its Welsh language services to the public and its employees and agents on a regular and continuing basis.

It will ensure that people who deal with the Council are aware of the services that are available in Welsh by means of both general and specific promotion campaigns.

The same methods of publicity will be used in this respect as for above and advice will be issued to relevant staff.

The Council in partnership with Torfaen and Monmouthshire have established a Menter Iaith which encourages the promotion of the language in these three areas.

Action Plan

Service planning and delivery

Policies, Plans and Initiatives

No	Action	Timetable
1	Develop and implement a new system to equality impact assess the Council's services or policies, taking into account the Welsh language as a specific characteristic.	2011/2012
2.	Ensure that Welsh Language duties are fully considered as part of the development towards the Council's Single Equality Scheme.	2011/2012

Delivery of Services

No	Action	Timetable
3.	Ensure that the Welsh Language is appropriately taken into consideration and reported as part of service business planning.	2012/13
4.	Publish a leaflet detailing the Council's Welsh Language commitment, highlighting examples of achievements.	2012/13

Services Delivered On Behalf Of the Council by Other Parties

No	Action	Timetable
5	Carry out a review of the tendering process and tendering documents provided by the Council, in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 1 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 1)	2011/12

Dealing with the Welsh speaking public

Telephone Communications

No	Action	Timetable
6	Encourage all staff to answer external phone calls bilingually.	2011/2014

Public Meetings

No	Action	Timetable
7	Ensure availability of language choice at Council meetings.	2012/13

The Council Website

No	Action	Timetable
8	Increase the percentage of web-pages on the website available through the medium of Welsh (not including downloadable documents) in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 3 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 3).	2011-14
9	Develop a bilingual recruitment section on the Council's website, in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 3 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 3).	2013-14
10	Ensure that standards set within the Welsh Language Board's IT Strategy will be considered and if practicable will be adopted in developing the Council's IT Strategy.	2011-2014

The Council's public image

Publishing and Printing Public Materials and Documents

No	Action	Timetable
11	Publicise the up-to-date Editorial Policy and Translation Guidance information across the Council.	2011-2012
12	Work with service areas on the implications of the Editorial Policy.	2011-2014
13	Issue supplementary guidance corporately or to service areas on specific areas of work to support the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme.	2011-2014

Official Public Notices and Recruitment Advertising

No	Action	Timetable
14	Develop a bilingual recruitment section on the Council's website, in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 3 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 3).	2013-14

Implementing and monitoring the scheme

Staffing

No	Action	Timetable
15	Deliver the Linguistic Skills Strategy action plan.	2011-2012
16	Work with all departments to establish a record of staff with Welsh language skills, in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 5 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 5)	2011-2014
17	Work with all departments to establish a record of fluent Welsh speaking staff across Council to be able to offer Welsh speaking citizens of Blaenau Gwent access to services in their language of choice, in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 5 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 5)	2011-2014
18	Conduct an audit looking at Recruitment and Selection in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 2 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 2)	2012-2013
19	Keep an up-to-date record of staff who have benefited from Welsh in the Workplace Training and Awareness Training, in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 2 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 4a and 4b).	2011-2014

Learning Welsh

No	Action	Timetable
20	Consider and promote options for Welsh Language Training across the Council, including vocational training.	2011-2014

Statutory responsibilities – monitoring

No	Action	Timetable
21	Produce an annual monitoring and improvement report approved by the Welsh Language Board.	2011-2014

Dealing with complaints

No	Action	Timetable
22	Monitor the number of complaints received in relation to the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme, in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 6 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 6)	2011-2014
23	Deal with Welsh language complaints in accordance with the Council's corporate standards, in-line with Welsh Language Indicator 6 from the Welsh Language Board (WLI 6)	2011-2014

Welsh Language Indicators

One of the key elements contained in the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme is the establishment of a collection, recording and monitoring procedure for Performance Indicators specified by the Welsh Language Board. These indicators need to be reported to the Welsh Language Board as part of its Annual Reporting Procedure.

The Performance Indicators are as follows:-

(WLI 1) Procurement

To monitor the number and % of the sample of third parties monitored that conform to the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme in the following areas:-

- Care services,
- Youth services,
- pre-school provision.

(WLI 2) Recruitment and Selection

Undertake an exercise with HR and Service Managers to identify posts in each service area where Welsh skills are assessed as either essential or desirable.

(WLI 3) E Government

To work towards ensuring that Welsh Language issues are an integral part of all e-government projects and web development e.g. ensuring Welsh options on all call systems, touch screens, services etc.

(WLI 4a) Welsh in the Workplace training

Staff who have received training in Welsh to a specific qualification level.

- Number
- Percentage
- Qualification (grade etc)

(WLI 4b) Welsh awareness training

Staff who have received language awareness training.

- Number
- Percentage

(WLI 5) Language ability

Staff who are able to speak Welsh

- Number
- Percentage
- level of fluency (fluent, intermediate, basic, learner)
- Service division
- Post/grade
- Workplace location.

(WLI 6) Standards of service

- Number of complaints received in relation to the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme
- the % dealt with in accordance with the Council's corporate standards.

Appendix 1- Welsh Language Statistics from the Census 2001

The table below shows the number and percentage of the population aged 3 and over that are able to speak Welsh by electoral ward.

Official Name of the Electoral Division	Age Group	NUMBER			%
		All People	Able to Speak Welsh	Not Able to Speak Welsh	Able to Speak Welsh
Abertillery	3 and over	4358	456	3902	10.5
Badminton	3 and over	3095	276	2819	8.9
Beaufort	3 and over	3751	440	3311	11.7
Blaina	3 and over	4679	483	4196	10.3
Brynmawr	3 and over	5420	511	4909	9.4
Cwm	3 and over	4188	407	3781	9.7
Cwmtillery	3 and over	4595	442	4153	9.6
Ebbw Vale North	3 and over	4588	376	4212	8.2
Ebbw Vale South	3 and over	4065	346	3719	8.5
Georgetown	3 and over	3377	329	3048	9.7
Llanhilleth	3 and over	4602	407	4195	8.8
Nantyglo	3 and over	4127	396	3731	9.6
Rassau	3 and over	3190	281	2909	8.8
Sirhowy	3 and over	5348	518	4830	9.7
Six Bells	3 and over	2562	239	2323	9.3
Tredegar Central and West	3 and over	5854	514	5340	8.8
Blaenau Gwent	3 and over	67799	6421	61378	9.49

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2001

Appendix 2 - Blaenau Gwent Welsh Language Editorial Policy

Guidance on which Documents and Publications should be Bilingual (or in Welsh and in English)

Blaenau Gwent Council eventually aims to provide full bilingual services. For the term of this Scheme we are taking a targeted approach which is needed for achievable improvement over time.

Documents will fall in to one of three categories, A, B or C. Documents in category A should be produced bilingually and those on category C may be produced in English only. For materials in category B follow the guidance set out below.

Category A: Items will always be produced in a bilingual format

Category B: Items which depending on circumstances may be:-

- i) bilingual
- ii) contain a proportion in Welsh
- iii) will be available on request in Welsh

Category C: it is generally acceptable for these items to be produced in English only:-

All separate documents must state that it is available in the alternative language. Both versions will be of equal quality and will be made available at the same time.

Considerations		
Target Audience	Members of the public where there is an established demand for Welsh Language material.	Specialists within sectors or specific sectors where demand for Welsh language is minimal.
Will the item be shared or discussions by other organisations.	Yes - Category A	No - Category C
Demand/likely – based on objective assessment and/or past exercise – or preponderance of Welsh speakers amongst those interested.	High (interest among general public or particular interest for Welsh speakers). - Category A	Low (specialist groups) - Category C
External status/profile	High external profile - Category A	Low external profile - Category C

The above description of the 3 categories will inevitably not encompass every sort of document. Staff should make a judgement in ensuring that they choose a suitable category on a comparative basis. When assessing whether items should be bilingual. If there is any uncertainty guidance should be sought from the Equalities Officer.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council aims to produce more and more material for the public in Welsh and service areas will be expected to demonstrate annually that there has been a step change in making use of Welsh with the public. By the end of the scheme all category B items will have a higher proportion of Welsh content than at the beginning of the scheme.

Welsh language skills are growing amongst children and young people in Blaenau Gwent. Many attend Welsh medium schools and all have studied Welsh in school. Bilingual materials benefit children and young people should be prioritised for production in Welsh.

If an item is currently bilingual, contains elements of Welsh or available in Welsh but the table suggests it should be English only, it will continue in its present format.

Items	A	B	C	Additional notes
Accounts			X	i.e internal financial records, not public notices etc
Advertisements	X			Bilingual
Audio Visual Links, Electronic Messages, Screens etc	X			Bilingual
Booklets	X	X		Increasingly Bilingual – audit to be undertaken
Brochures	X	X		Increasingly Bilingual – audit to be undertaken
Brand Name	X			Bilingual
Business Cards	X			Bilingual
Committee papers and related Annexes			X	These will be translated only where there is a specific reference to Welsh Language issues, Welsh Medium Education or where a request for a translation has been made.
Compliment Slips	X			Bilingual
Consultation documents and working drafts		X		English only unless there is a specific Welsh language requirement
Contract documentation			X	English Only
Council's Corporate Identity	X			Bilingual
Displays and Exhibitions	X			Displays may include items of literature that is not the responsibility of the Council. English only.
Election Stationery	X			Bilingual
Executive Summaries		X		Bilingual – Good practice
Fax Transmission Sheets	X			Bilingual
Forms for the Public	X			Bilingual unless due to their complexity separate versions would be more practical.
General correspondence with individuals or groups listed on a database,		X		Separate versions will be produced <i>only</i> where the language choice of those on the database has been noted, otherwise the correspondence will be Bilingual.
Historical/archive information			X	English only
Identity badges	X			Bilingual
Internal council information, surveys and questionnaires, guidance documents, circulars, reports etc.			X	English only
Invitations	X			Bilingual
Invoices	X			Bilingual framework
Job Advertisements – Council Microsite – Sign Post Adverts	X			Welsh only where post designated Welsh essential (with short English description),

in Papers				bilingual where Welsh desirable. English only where no language specified but 'top and tail' in Welsh. 'Top and Tail' in Welsh – Name of Post, Location, Grade and Statement at the bottom that the Council welcomes applications in both Welsh and English.
Job Application Forms	X			Bilingual
Job Application Packages	X			Bilingual
Leaflets	X			Increasingly Bilingual
Letterheads	X			Bilingual
Letters and Literature to Schools		X		Where individual letters are sent out, the language medium of the school is known therefore the letter can be written in the appropriate language.
Maps	X			Bilingual
Menus		X		Bilingual – considered good practice
Newsletters/Newspapers inc Housing reports, Connect and Communities First	X			Bilingual
Notices for Public Meetings	X			Publicity materials will state that the use of Welsh is welcome – a week's notice is required.
Passes	X			Bilingual
Permits	X			Bilingual
Posters (Internal and External)	X			Fully Bilingual with both languages on the same side.
Press releases and notices		X		In Welsh where Welsh is the subject matter – publish in the Welsh language press Golwg, Y Byd, Y Cymro etc.
Publicity Material	X	X		Increasingly Bilingual
Receipts			X	English only
Research Papers			X	English only
Questionnaires and Surveys	X			Single language versions are only allowed if the questionnaire is aimed at individuals or groups whose language choice is known.
Questionnaires and Survey Feedback		X		Executive summaries bilingual
Tickets	X	X		Increasingly Bilingual
Time sheets			X	English
Signs	X			Internal and External signs on Council owned buildings, Road Signs, Street Name Plates and road markings, New Housing Developments, Named Welsh only or bilingually.
Standard Letters and Circulars to the Public		X		Increasingly Bilingual
Stickers	X			Bilingual
Strategies/Policies/Plans		X		Headline strategies including Corporate Plan, Equalities Policies etc bilingual
Vehicle markings and Signage on Buildings	X			Standard practice is English on one side of the vehicle, Welsh on the other but this can be changed depending on the design.
Websites and Web Pages	X			Bilingual – each English page must have a Welsh equivalent when placing on the website.

Meetings Criteria

Guidelines on which language/languages to conduct meetings. This appendix refers to public meetings as opposed to small, face-to-face meetings.

The options available are to hold:-

- i) a bilingual meeting (including materials).
- ii) a meeting that is publicised in English and Welsh with translation facility if attendees request it.
- iii) a meeting held in English only.

When considering whether to hold a meeting bilingual or not the Council will consider:

- i) the target audience
- ii) the subject of the meeting
- iii) the profile of the meeting.

Meetings Matrix

	(i) Bilingual Meeting	(ii) Translation offered and requested in advance	(iii) No Translation facilities
The Target Audience	General public Blaenau Gwent/ Wales or specific sectors in which Welsh is spoken	General public Blaenau Gwent/ Wales	Specific Sector where preference for Welsh language materials is minimal.
The Subject of the Meeting	Obvious Welsh language interest	Welsh language interest not known	No specific Welsh language interest
The public profile of the meeting	High profile	Medium profile	Low profile

Note 1 : Materials associated with meetings under category (i) or (ii) will be bilingual to encourage uptake of Welsh medium services.

Note 2: Meetings held in both English and Welsh should make some formal use of both languages to encourage use.

Appendix 3
Linguistic skills strategy action plan and timetable

The Linguistic Skills Action Plan will be developed in accordance with the Linguistic Skills Strategy, the Welsh Language Scheme and the Corporate Equalities Action Plan.

The proposed timetable of the Linguistic Skills Action Plan will be implemented in line with any amendments to this draft Strategy following the consultation period.

Objective	Action	Outcome/PI	Timescale	Responsible Officer/s
To ensure that the Strategy is appropriate and achievable	Consult with internal and external partners on draft version of Linguistic Skills Strategy	Amendments made as suggested and draft sent for formal adoption	Nov/Dec 2008	Equalities Officer
Adoption of the Strategy on a formal basis	CMT/Executive/Council to approve Linguistic Skills Strategy and Action Plan	Toolkit formally adopted	Jan 2009	Equalities Officer/Head of HR
Ascertain the language skills present in the Authority	Carry out a Language Audit of Staff	A detailed picture of the language skills amongst staff	Nov 2009	Equalities Officer/ A Parker
Establish what Posts should be designated Welsh Essential or desirable within Directorates	Examine existing staffing structures and consider potential levels and type of contact with the public	A range of posts across all Directorates designated Welsh essential or desirable	Ongoing	DMT's

Objective	Action		Outcome/PI	Timescale	Responsible Officer/s
Have an up to date record of staff language skills	Develop system of recording personal language skills		Database established that can be easily updated	June 2010	Human Resources
To ensure that the Authority can deal with queries from a wide variety of languages	Establishment of a Language Services Group		List of staff available on the Intranet to deal with queries in a variety of languages	April 2010	HR/Equalities Officer
Ensure all staff are aware of the Language services Group provision (i.e leaflet/Intranet/ awareness session)	Distribute list of Language Services Group details to all Directorates		Public can be dealt with in their chosen language with the minimum of fuss	July 2010	Equalities Officer
To establish the minority language needs within the population of Blaenau Gwent	Work with VALREC to develop and monitor a database of minority groups and their language needs within the County Borough		Database established that can be easily updated	September 2010	Equalities Officer/Head of HR
To identify a list of preferred external Language providers	Tender for a language translation and interpretation provider for the County Borough		List of providers available to provide speedy language solutions	July 2010	Procurement Section

Objective	Action		Outcome/PI	Timescale	Responsible Officer/s
Ensuring front-line staff are trained in how to deal with customers with different language needs	Include language needs in the basic customer care training programme		Public can be dealt with in their chosen language with the minimum of fuss	November 2010	Service areas training programmes
Ascertain the demand or need for the provision of British Sign Language services in the County Borough	Monitor the take up across the Authority of BSL interpreters for the Deaf		To be able to provide an overall picture of the cost of providing BSL services in the County Borough	October 2010	Equality Officer/Service Areas