

Working Group on the Welsh Language in Local Government Administration and Economic Development

Terms of Reference

Background

1. Local Government has a vital role to play in the delivery of services through the medium of Welsh, in the economic development of predominantly Welsh-speaking areas and in the strengthening of the Welsh language in daily use in the workplace and the wider community.
2. The future of the Welsh Language in public administration in Local Government following mergers has been regularly raised during the passage of the Local Government (Wales) Bill. The Minister for Public Services announced in the Stage 4 debate on the Bill a plan for a task and finish group to report on best practice in respect of these matters.
3. Existing Local Authorities and those that come into being as a result of Local Government reform are and will be subject to the Welsh language standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and associated regulations. In addition, the White Paper, *Power to Local People*, noted that where merging Authorities are at different levels in relation to Welsh standards, the higher standards should apply to the new Authority. However, this does not deal with practice which exceeds the legal standards. For example, Gwynedd County Council has chosen to adopt Welsh as the language of its internal administration. As a major employer in Gwynedd, the Council's policy is likely to have helped sustain the language in that county.
4. There have been a number of reports on the Welsh language and economic development over the years. A task and finish group of the Welsh Language Partnership Council reported on *Increasing the number of communities where Welsh is the main language* in December 2013.¹ In February 2014, the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport published the report of a task and finish group on the *Welsh Language and Economic Development*.² These reports have focused in part on some functions of Local Government which can support jobs and growth in a way which helps sustain Welsh speaking communities. These functions include planning and procurement, for instance.
5. In addition to their status as major employers and spenders, Local Authorities also influence local economic development through functions such as housing, education, regeneration and cultural activities. Some of these functions are statutory, others not.

¹ <http://llyw.cymru/topics/welshlanguage/publications/welsh-speaking-communities-report-and-work-plan/?skip=1&lang=en>

² <http://gov.wales/topics/businessandeconomy/policy/wled/?lang=en>

Aims

6. The Working Group should investigate best practice in:
 - a) the use of Welsh in the administration of Local Government;
 - b) the role of Local Government as a facilitator of economic development in support of the Welsh language; and
 - c) make recommendations in relation to the above in the context of Local Government reform and the duties imposed on Local Authorities by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
7. The main focus of the working group should be on areas with a high percentage of Welsh speakers but it should take account of the opportunities in all parts of Wales.
8. The recommendations will inform the development of statutory guidance to Transition Committees under subsection 13(5) of the Local Government (Wales) Act 2015.

Functions

9. These are the functions of the Working Group in order to achieve its aims:
 - a) consult with Local Government elected members and officials;
 - b) consult with business, the third sector and other relevant stakeholders;
 - c) consult with the Public Services Staff Commission;
 - d) undertake such analysis of existing evidence as is relevant, including the reports referred to above;
 - e) identify any significant gaps in research and understanding;
 - f) identify practical steps for action that can be taken within the existing (and proposed) legislative and funding frameworks;
 - g) provide additional evidence for consideration for inclusion in the Welsh Language Impact Assessment which has been published alongside the draft Local Government (Wales) Bill;
 - h) present an interim report to the Minister for Public Services by 15 March 2016;
 - i) present a final report to the Welsh Ministers by 31 May 2016.

Membership

10. The skills, expertise and availability of members are expected to be appropriate for achieving the aims of the Working Group. The Working Group is to have a maximum of seven members:
 - a chair;
 - up to six members to be nominated by the chair.
11. The Minister for Public Services will agree the nominations and make final decisions in respect of membership.

12. Meetings may be observed by members of Local Government Democracy division of the Welsh Government. Other Welsh Government officials, such as from the Welsh Language Unit, may be invited to attend if appropriate.

Secretariat Support

13. The Welsh Government will provide appropriate secretariat support to help the Working Group achieve its aims. This will include organising meetings, providing agendas, minutes and other papers, managing correspondence, summarising evidence and providing advice and assistance.

Budget

14. Members of the Working Group will not be remunerated but reasonable travel and subsistence will be reimbursed. The Welsh Government's travel and subsistence rules will apply.