

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

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Date: 15th March 2006

Venue: National Assembly for Wales

Title: Iaith Pawb: 'How the Department for Social Justice and Regeneration is Promoting the Welsh Language'

Purpose

To update the Committee on progress on the implementation of 'Iaith Pawb' within the SJR portfolio.

Background

Iaith Pawb (2003) is the national action plan for a bilingual Wales. Structured in three parts, Iaith Pawb contains over 60 action points. All Assembly Government Ministers and their officials share responsibility for these actions and for identifying and addressing Welsh language issues in their policy areas.

In 2004-05 the Welsh language Unit (WLU) monitored progress and performance against the action points in Iaith Pawb and the commitments in the Welsh Language Scheme.

Update

Department Wide Policies

The Department for Social Justice and Regeneration's commitment is to support and promote bilingualism and give equal status to both Welsh and English in all our work. Mainstreaming of the language will become second nature in everything we do with all aspects of the Scheme becoming totally ingrained into our work. We are demonstrating this in the following ways:

Welsh language considerations are mainstreamed into our policy development work.

Answering all correspondence received in Welsh by replying in Welsh.

Staff have bilingual auto signatures.

Staff have bilingual out-of-office replies.

All letter headed paper is bilingual.

Ensuring that all Notices, Orders and Forms when published in local press or served on individuals are done so bilingually.

Encouraging all staff to give bilingual greetings in our offices in Wales.

Providing all promotional leaflets and videos application forms, booklets, signage etc and promotional material at stands at public exhibitions and events in Welsh.

All our web sites are bilingual, including English and Welsh domains.

Providing secretariat services to meetings in line with the commitments in the Scheme.

The Department has a draft Departmental plan for 2006-07 and through this is currently ensuring that:

Welsh language issues are factored into policy development and delivery of services across the Department.

The requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme are included as a standard item when new projects are initiated so that these can be identified at the start and built into project plans/timetables.

Whitehall Departments and other outside organisations with which the Department deals will be reminded when appropriate of their responsibilities and requirements under the Welsh Language Act.

Progress against the Department's commitments in respect of Iaith Pawb will be monitored as part of mid and end year monitoring reviews.

SJR currently has 50 Welsh speaking officials out of a total of 420 staff members across 24 offices in Wales; with several staff currently learning the language and others on a waiting list to learn.

A paper detailing how the principles expressed in 'Iaith Pawb' are integrated into the SJR ministerial portfolio, particularly around increasing the 'number and percentage of the people being able to speak Welsh' was presented to the Minister's meeting with the voluntary sector in May 2005.

Communities Directorate

In 2004-5 Communities Directorate were singled out to be closely monitored by Iaith Pawb in order to evaluate the Division's compliance with Iaith Pawb action points. Communities Directorate were

required to provide extensive evidence of their commitment to the action points and underwent detailed interviews and examination by Iaith Pawb. The four key areas Iaith Pawb assessed were strategy, service, staff and systems. The Division was graded on each of these key areas. The exercise was useful in pinpointing the specific strengths and weaknesses of Communities Directorate's approach to Iaith Pawb action points. Iaith Pawb concluded that the Division had demonstrated a number of strengths in their implementation of the action points. Some of these strengths were highlighted as:

The provision of guidance to Communities First Partnerships on the Welsh language.

An awareness of the main elements of the scheme relevant to the Division (provision on bilingual documentation).

The inclusion of the Welsh language in the assessment criteria of the Community Facilities and Activities Programme and the Physical Regeneration Fund.

The routine use of the Welsh language in dealing with telephone calls and correspondence (without reliance of translators) in the Carmarthen and Caernarfon offices.

As well as identifying numerous strengths, Iaith Pawb also highlighted some areas that required further work. It was suggested that including references to Welsh language issues / Iaith Pawb in the Social Enterprise Strategy and producing a Welsh Language Action Plan for the Division would improve the Division's record of compliance. A further recommendation was the co-ordination of an audit to ensure that the Welsh language is mainstreamed in all grant schemes, core funding and the Communities @ One scheme. Combined with the Division's considerable existing strengths in meeting Iaith Pawb action points, these improvements would raise the performance of Communities Directorate to a very high standard.

Voluntary Sector

Officials in Voluntary Sector Unit are currently working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector to develop a Strategic Action Plan for taking forward the Voluntary Sector Scheme. The Welsh language will form a fundamental part of this.

Application forms for voluntary sector grants are bilingual and include criteria in compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme requirements. One of the three main eligibility criteria is equality and this includes the Welsh language. The rest of the application is only scored if the Welsh language eligibility criteria are met. Successful grant recipients are encouraged to set themselves performance indicators on bilingual publicity materials, websites, posters etc. Additionally if an organisation was seeking to extend its project into a mainly Welsh speaking area it would be essential that they recruited a Welsh speaking co-ordinator.

Voluntary Sector Unit provides funding to the County Voluntary Councils via its Infrastructure Fund.

This enables those organisations that wish to carry out their activities through the medium of Welsh, e.g. Mantell Gwynedd, to do so.

Voluntary Sector Unit ensures that correspondence is answered in the language of the correspondent and that all advertisements, application packs, forms and other supporting literature are all provided in both English and Welsh. Additionally arrangements are also in place to deal with Welsh language telephone enquires. Likewise simultaneous translation facilities are always provided at Voluntary Sector Partnership Council meetings.

Housing Directorate

The issue of the Welsh language being lost from rural areas of Wales is one that is being considered within the Directorate in the context of Affordable Housing. The problem arises from the out migration of young people unable to find affordable housing in their home towns and villages, and the inward migration of people able to afford the rising property prices who are not Welsh speaking, are believed to contribute to the decline of the language. A useful Research report 'The Role of the Housing System in Rural Wales', which sets out the relationship between the housing system and the economy of rural Wales was published in January 2006 [Weblink in English at <http://www.housing.wales.gov.uk/rreports.asp?a=39> and in Welsh at <http://www.tai.cymru.gov.uk/rreports.asp?a=39>]. The Department has also commissioned a review of low cost home ownership, which will report in early Summer, and which will provide a better understanding of the role and potential of low cost home ownership in rural areas.

The Directorate has helped fund Rural Housing Enablers across Wales to take forward particular initiatives to address the housing problems facing rural communities. The first post in Wales covers North Monmouthshire and South Powys, and is funded and managed by a number of local and national stakeholders including the Welsh Assembly Government. The significant interest in this pilot project has influenced the appointment of further enablers to cover Gwynedd, Denbighshire and Conwy, and Pembrokeshire.

In considering bids for the Social Housing Management Grant Programme for 2006/07 the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration has recently agreed to provide funding towards a project which will develop a framework for the establishment of a national network of Rural Housing Enablers serving rural communities across institutional boundaries. Assembly Ministers will give further consideration to the issue when this project reports towards the end of 2006.

The draft Affordable Housing Toolkit was consulted on in the second half of 2005. The document focussed on ways in which local authority housing and planning officials can work to maximise the affordable housing delivered in their areas through planning obligations being set out through section 106 agreements for developers. The final version of the Toolkit will be published in April/May 2006 and will reflect consultation comments provided by the Welsh Language Board.

The affordable housing issue in rural Wales affects both those who choose to rent and those who would

like to buy. In terms of the rented sector, the Directorate is working to increase the volume of social housing developed through housing associations, and trying to limit the number of properties lost through right to buy. On home ownership, home buy is increasing the number of young people in the intermediate market who are able to purchase a home in the area they grew up in and within the Welsh speaking community. The provision of support towards the development of Community Land Trust to provide affordable homes in perpetuity in rural areas will also help to address the issue.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has embraced the holistic approach of Iaith Pawb and is currently engaged in the process of embedding a bilingual culture into the organisation and mainstreaming the use of Welsh across all areas of its business. The Service operates a challenging and ambitious Welsh Language Scheme, which was approved by the Welsh Language Board in February 2005. The focus for the Service for the next two years will be to continue to improve on the quality and consistency of Welsh language services available to the communities of South Wales, and to continuously improve our management, monitoring and evaluation of the Scheme.

The Service has increased the opportunities for using Welsh in its business in the following areas:

Community Safety

- Fire safety presentations to Welsh medium primary and secondary schools and other Welsh speaking community groups.
- All fire safety information leaflets, posters and other literature issued with both Welsh and English in the same document (except for some ODPM publications which are still produced in separate Welsh and English versions).
- Home Fire Safety Risk Assessments
- Arson reduction initiatives

Advertising campaigns

Recruitment

All advertisements are bilingual (except Welsh only advertisements for Welsh essential posts).

Application packs forms and other supporting literature are bilingual.

All non-Welsh essential posts are advertised as Welsh desirable.

Monitoring data collected regarding the number of Welsh speaker/learners applying for or being appointed to posts.

Bilingual staff available at taster days and awareness days.

Bilingual staff attending public events where recruitment activity is taking place.

New recruits, both uniformed and non-uniformed receive a Welsh language awareness training session upon induction.

Training

- All Control staff receive mandatory basic Welsh language call handling session.
- Staff are encouraged to enrol on Welsh language skills courses.
- Staff are able to learn in work time on in-house training courses or are financially supported to enrol on courses outside the workplace.
- Mentoring system for Welsh learners.
- Impact assessment training delivered to managers.
- Vocational training for fire-fighters to enable them to deliver fire safety presentations in schools.
- Welsh Language Officer on WLGA working party to develop resources for Welsh language awareness training.

Internal organisation

- Welsh Language Skills Support Team formed to assist in delivery of Welsh language services to the public – a skills sharing initiative across departments.

Partnerships

- The service actively promotes the use and inclusion of the Welsh language in partnership working arrangements.

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service is fully committed to the

principle of conducting public business in both the English and Welsh

languages and seeks to implement this principle enthusiastically within the

communities it serves. This Service also shares the Assembly Government's vision for the Welsh Language as set out in "Iaith Pawb" and actively seeks to promote

the language by adopting a variety of approaches which include raising

awareness, taking proactive steps to offer the public a genuine language

choice and mainstreaming the Welsh language into the Service's policies.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

The North Wales Fire and Rescue Service supports the aims of Iaith Pawb's framework by producing its respective Welsh Language Scheme, which represents an important contribution towards the realisation of that broader national strategy.

According to the 2001 census, the number of people with Welsh Language skills is increasing, particularly within the 3 – 15 year age groups. As a Service, therefore they need to anticipate the increased demand for bilingual services.

A meeting has been held with Service representatives from across the region to establish closer links and to begin to share best practice. A programme of future meetings has also been arranged. As soon as aims and objectives have been more clearly defined it may be appropriate to meet with Alun Pugh AM Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language to explore opportunities for raising the Fire and Rescue Service's profile in addressing Welsh Language issues. A meeting will also be convened with the Chief Executive of the Welsh Language Board to discuss possible harmonisation of Welsh Language Schemes and the development of linguistic strategies.

The Service aims to harmonise and add vigour to Welsh language issues by concentrating on the main themes of Policies, Service Delivery, Public Image and Workforce Issues. By acknowledging the moral and legal duties to meet public expectation and to protect the cultural heritage of the area, the Service acknowledges that there are positive service benefits to be had from conducting public business in both languages. Saving lives and reducing risk is at the heart of the Fire and Rescue Authorities objectives – the language issue is vital to its success.

The Service also recognises its duty towards its own staff too, the majority of whom are residents of Wales, and who themselves reflect the linguistic and cultural make-up of their communities.

Community Safety Division

The Community Safety Division (CSD) ensures that strategies, consultation letters and guidance are provided in both English and Welsh. Advertisements, application packs, forms and other supporting literature are all bilingual and staff are encouraged to attend Welsh language courses.

Arrangements are in place to deal with enquiries, both written and oral, from individuals and groups who prefer to converse in Welsh (there are 3 Welsh speakers within the Division). All correspondence received in Welsh is answered in Welsh and bilingual speakers are available within the Division to assist with routine enquiries. CSD also ascertains before hand the language preferences of attendees at conferences arranged by the Division and for major events always provides simultaneous translation services.

There are occasions where CSD will translate technical publications aimed at a narrow professional audience, even though the policy would allow an exemption from translation. This is to ensure that documents are posed in the right context in the Welsh language and produce work that fully supports use through the medium of Welsh.

CAFCASS CYMRU

Allowing people to use the language in which they are most comfortable is ultimately vital to the quality and to the success of the services offered. Effective communication is at the core of the day to day work of CAFCASS CYMRU and it is important to bear in mind that people's use of language is not an 'either/or' issue. Choice will vary according to the circumstances, the nature of what is being discussed or who they are talking to.

In situations that are emotionally charged, the language of the home may be the language in which people feel best able to express themselves. The choice of using Welsh or English may also depend on whether an individual is speaking, reading or writing. Bilingual written material provides an opportunity for individuals to choose at the point of reading the preferred language and in the case of families provides choice within the home.

Therefore, ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Act 1993, the Welsh Assembly Government's Welsh Language Scheme and Iaith Pawb are especially relevant and important to CAFCASS CYMRU and the services that are provided.

Arrangements are in place to deal with enquiries, both written and oral, from individuals and groups who prefer to converse in Welsh. All correspondence received in Welsh is answered in Welsh. When we already know that an individual or group prefer to converse in Welsh, we will contact them in Welsh/bilingually.

The need for Welsh speaking staff and bilingual services is probably greater in CAFCASS CYMRU

than in other Divisions, therefore CAFCASS CYMRU has its own Welsh translator (Welsh Language and Diversity Manager) for all types of documents, to provide a quality bilingual service.

Where Welsh language skills are applicable to the work of a post, staff performance management plans will identify objectives which tie in an individual's performance to the requirements of the Divisional Welsh Language Action Plan.

How CAFCASS CYMRU mainstreams the Welsh language

New policies and initiatives – CAFCASS CYMRU will ensure that the Welsh language aspects of policy are mainstreamed in the work of the Division.

Partnerships – when working with partners, CAFCASS CYMRU will ensure that materials aimed at the public are bilingual, e.g. the Family Dispute Resolution Pilot Project in Caernarfon Court.

Guidance and circulars – all circulars and guidance will draw attention to any relevant Welsh language considerations, and will be produced and published bilingually, including the CAFCASS CYMRU monthly staff newsletter.

Meetings/conferences/seminars – CAFCASS CYMRU will ascertain beforehand the language preference of attendees and abide by the guidance of the Welsh Language Scheme.

Invitations and advertisements for such events will be bilingual and will note that simultaneous translation will be available, if required.

The Welsh Language and Diversity Manager is undertaking training to enable her to provide simultaneous translation at such events.

Complaints are dealt with in accordance with CAFCASS CYMRU's Complaints and Representations Policy, and Section 9 of the Assembly Government's Welsh Language Scheme.

Financial Implications

There are no financial issues associated with this paper.

Action for Subject Committee

The Committee is asked to note the progression of work.

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