Meri Huws
Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
Welsh Language Commissioner

Bethan Jenkins AC
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales

bethan.jenkins@cynulliad.cymru

07/02/2017

Dear Chair

2016 National Assembly for Wales and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections Survey

I am writing to present my report based on the findings of a survey conducted on the National Assembly for Wales and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections held in 2016. The 2016 National Assembly for Wales and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections report presents statistical information regarding the use of the Welsh language during the elections and the availability of Welsh medium services and information. The report also discusses the use of the Welsh language during the announcements of the election results.

As you may be aware, I published a similar report in August 2015 presenting the findings of a survey addressing the availability of Welsh medium information and documents during the 2015 General Election. In addition to offering an accurate portrayal of the provisions and services available, the report also proposed a series of recommendations detailing how those involved in the arrangements and administration of the elections should improve the Welsh language services provided.

My Strategic Plan 2015-17 states my intention to implement a proactive regulatory programme, in order to measure the performance of organisations and give an independent opinion on the experiences of people as they try to access public services through the medium of Welsh. The elections for the National Assembly for Wales and

Comisiynydd y Gymraeg
Siambrau'r Farchnad
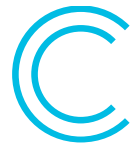5–7 Heol Eglwys Fair
Caerdydd CF10 1AT

0845 6033 221
post@comisiynyddygymraeg.org
Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg

comisiynyddygymraeg.org

Welsh Language Commissioner
Market Chambers
5–7 St Mary Street
Cardiff CF10 1AT

0845 6033 221
post@welshlanguagecommissioner.org
Correspondence welcomed in Welsh and English

welshlanguagecommissioner.org

Police and Crime Commissioners were held in May 2016. I was therefore eager to conduct a further study, concentrating on the same aspects as the 2015 report, with the aim of measuring the progress made since publishing the report in 2015.

In general, I conclude that progress has been made in relation to the availability of Welsh language electoral forms and documents, with all registration forms now available in Welsh. However, the availability and accessibility of Welsh language forms continue to be inadequate with several cases where the information had to be sought through the medium of English first. As a result, people who chose to use Welsh language services would have to go to greater lengths to access information or services than would be required if they were using the services in English. A full analysis of the findings can be found in the report along with a series of recommendations for specific organisations to consider.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the report, please contact Tesni Glyn, Compliance Officer on tesni.glyn@cyg-wlc.cymru.

Yours sincerely,
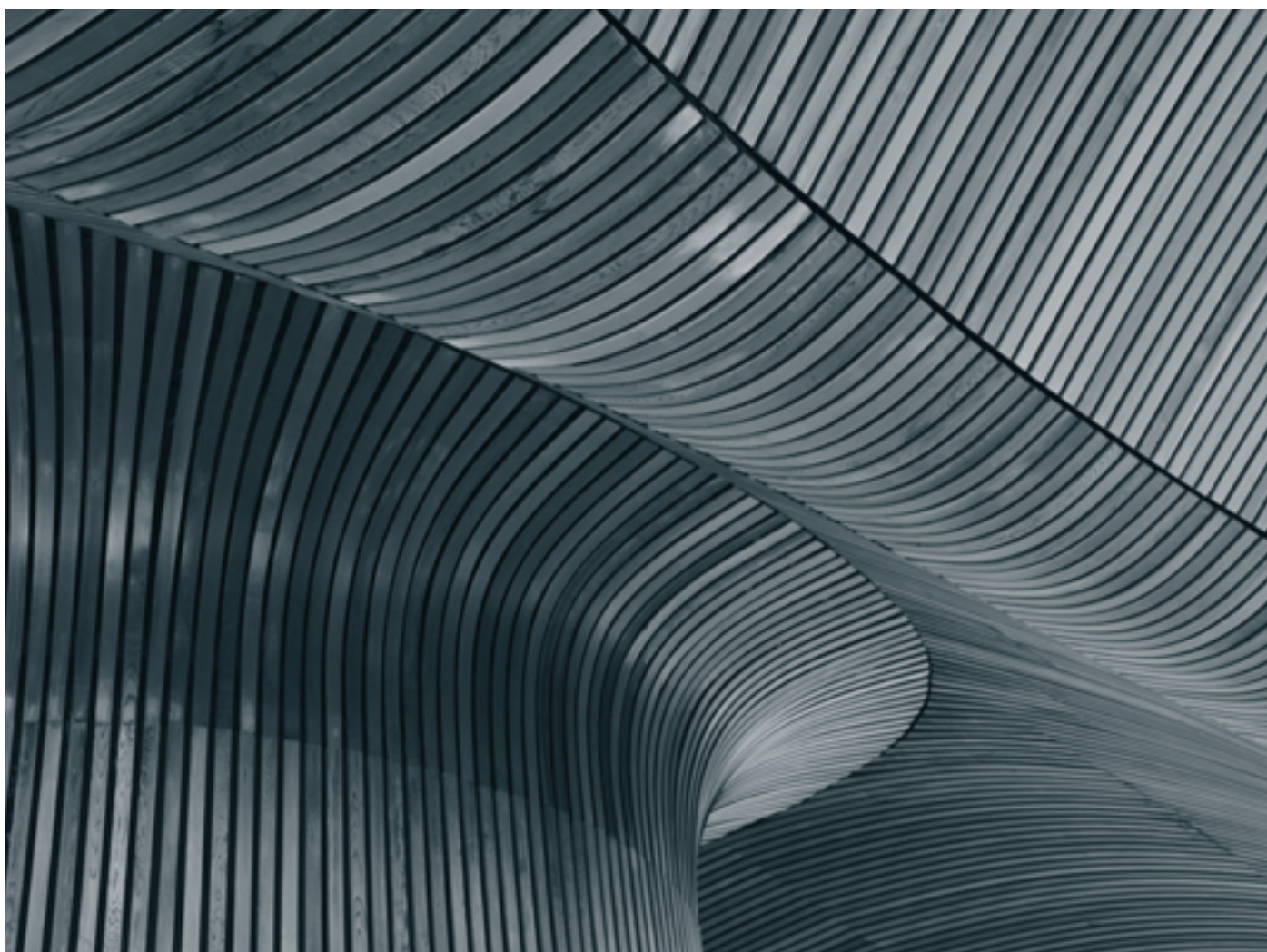
Meri Huws
Welsh Language Commissioner

c.c. Steve George, Clerk, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
      SeneddCWLC@assembly.wales

2016 National Assembly for Wales and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections

Cynnwys

1. Background

1.1   Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers are responsible for administering elections in Wales. They are independent legal entities. They are not accountable to local authorities nor subject to any linguistic statutory duties. In the same respect, local authority officers carrying out any duties on behalf of the Returning or Registration Officers are not subject to any linguistic statuatory duties. However, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 gives official status to the Welsh language in Wales, and the principle of treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English has long been established. The Commissioner, therefore, is of the opinion that the Registration Officers and Returning Officers have a moral responsibility to respect the official status of the Welsh language within democratic processes in Wales, and to do this through practical means. As they do so, Officers should also consider all relevant guidelines provided e.g. the Electoral Commission's guidance in relation to the Welsh language, and recommendations made by the Welsh Language Commissioner (as included in this report).

1.2   The Electoral Commission, an independent body created by the UK Parliament, is charged with administering and regulating elections and party funding. It provides support and guidance to Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers. In terms of its work with the public, it works to ensure that voters have access to information on election arrangements and processes and campaigns to raise citizens' awareness of forthcoming elections and referendums.

1.3   In April 2015, the Commissioner conducted a survey of the arrangements in place for providing information and relevant documentation for the 2015 General Election. The survey concentrated on the availability of information and documents on local authority websites, the Electoral Commission's website and the UK Government's services and information website, www. gov.uk, which is administered by the Government Digital Service.

1.4   Based on the survey, the Commissioner concluded that:

- the majority of local authorities had provided voting registration forms by publishing a link to the Electoral Commission's website or gov.uk. A number of them failed to include a link to the Welsh language pages on those websites.
- there was inconsistency with some Returning Officers declaring the results fully bilingually, some declaring them partly bilingually and others declaring them in English only.

Background

1.5   The survey report ['General Election 2015: Voting Forms, Related Information and Declaring Results in Welsh'](#), published in October 2015, included 15 recommendations on improving the use of Welsh before the National Assembly for Wales and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections in 2016. The recommendations dealt with ensuring that the same level of information was available in Welsh and English; that Welsh information was easy to access and equal to any English information in terms of its contents, standard and format, and that election results should be declared fully in Welsh.

1.6   This report is therefore a follow-up to the report on the 2015 General Election. It aims to provide a clear picture of the current situation following a survey of the arrangements for the National Assembly for Wales and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections in 2016. The report also comes to a conclusion regarding any progress made since the publication of the report on the 2015 General Election.

2. General Impressions

2.1   In considering the findings of this survey and comparing them to the findings of the report on the 2015 General Election survey, clear improvements can be seen in some respects whilst failings continue to be seen in others. Once again it cannot be said that the experience of Welsh speakers is equal to that of non-Welsh speakers, as individuals who wish to receive information and forms in Welsh often have to go one step further and make an extra effort than they would need to if they were accessing information in English.

2.2   There has been clear progress in terms of election documentation and forms, with all registration forms now available in Welsh. However, the availability and accessibility of those forms continue to be insufficient. Examples were found when information had to be searched in English first before accessing Welsh forms and cases where links provided on Welsh web pages would direct the reader to information and forms in English. In addition, whilst all forms were available bilingually or in Welsh, the accompanying general information or guidance would not be available in Welsh in all cases.

2.3   Progress could be seen with regards to the declaration of election results. The survey found that all declarations verified were done bilingually, however, the degree to which the Welsh declarations corresponded with the English varied significantly. Six examples were found where the result was declared in its entirety in English first before the Welsh declaration, and many cases where the Welsh declaration was less comprehensible than the English declaration.

2.4   During the 2016 Election, the Commissioner was contacted on more than one occasion by members of the public expressing their dissatisfaction with the use of Welsh in election arrangements in their constituency. The Commissioner's attention was drawn to cases where English only letters had been sent by the local electoral registration office to constituents who had registered through the medium of Welsh.

2.5   One member of the public expressed their concern after encountering a discourteous response and offensive attitude from the officer at a polling station following a request for help in Welsh.

2.6   The Commissioner has also received correspondence expressing concern about the use of the Welsh language when declaring results and the inconsistent way in which the results were declared from one constituency to another.

General Impressions

2.7   The Commissioner received five complaints through the complaints procedure relating to administrative aspects of the election. However, as a result of the independent status of the Registration and Returning Officers, the Commissioner had no power to investigate the complaints further.

2.8   Whilst the progress seen in this report is a step closer to ensuring better electoral services through the medium of Welsh, it appears that further work is still required in order to ensure that those who wish to take part in the electoral process through the medium of Welsh are treated no less favourably than those who do so in English.

3. Methodology

3.1   This exercise was designed to verify the availability and quality of Welsh language electoral information, forms and services online. As with the report on the 2015 General Election, the aim was to ensure that the survey reflected the citizen's true experience of sourcing electoral information, forms and services online. There has been a tendency for many years now to access this kind of information online, so a decision was made to once again verify the availability and quality of these services through relevant websites.

3.2   The statutory document 'Welsh Language Schemes: their preparation and approval in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993' states that language schemes should include the following:

> "a commitment to publish or print bilingually all material directed at the public in Wales . . ."

> "a Commitment to provide fully bilingual forms and explanatory material for the public in Wales"

The Commissioner considers websites and online services to be a logical extension of what is referred to above.

3.3   The exercise was conducted between February and May 2016.

3.4   The Commissioner conducted a survey of all local authority websites; websites administered by the Government Digital Service (www.gov.uk and www.choosemypcc.org.uk); the Electoral Commission's websites (www.electoralcommission.org.uk and www.aboutmyvote.co.uk); and the individual websites of Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales.

3.5   The survey involved verifying the extent to which the following were available in Welsh or bilingually:

- General information about the elections
- General information on voting and registering to vote
- Voting registration form (paper and / or electronic)
- Postal vote application form (paper and / or electronic)
- Vote by proxy application form (paper and / or electronic)
- Election notice
- Information on candidates
- Links to other useful services or websites

The survey also verified the accessibility of the above and the extent to which Welsh versions corresponded with the English in terms of content and quality.

Methodology

3.6   38 of the 44 oral public announcements made on the result of the election across Welsh constituencies and regions via BBC broadcasts were verified.

4. Results

4.1   **www.gov.uk**

Background

4.1.1   The Government Digital Service (a department within the Cabinet Office) is responsible for www.gov.uk which is operated as a central portal for all UK Government services.

Survey findings

4.1.2   The website continues to be an English only service to a large extent, with a small specific section set aside for all Welsh-medium services. A link to the section can be found at the bottom of the homepage under the title "rhestr o wasanaethau Cymraeg" ("list of Welsh language services"). In relation to this, it should be noted that the Commissioner, when responding to the annual monitoring reports of organisations who provide on-line services on gov.uk, has already identified the need for better accessibility with regard to Welsh language services and the need to move the 'Gwasanaethau Cymraeg' button to a more prominent and accessible place for visitors who wish to source information in Welsh.

4.1.3   The section of the website which is relevant to this report (namely 'Cofrestru i Bleidleisio / Register to Vote') appears under the heading 'Gwasanaethau'r Cyngor a'r Amgylchedd' (Council Services and the Environment). The corresponding English language page 'Voting' offers a list of registration services and general information on elections / referendums, who has the right to vote etc. There is also a tool which allows the citizen to search for and contact their Local Electoral Registration Office. The Welsh language section concentrates solely on registering to vote. There is an online registration service and Welsh language pdf forms to print and complete by hand. These forms include the following:

- Individual registration form
- Electoral registration form for a Civil Servant or British Council worker
- or their spouse or civil partner
- Electoral registration form for a member of Her Majesty's Armed Forces, their spouse or civil partner

Results

4.1.4   There is no other information or service available in this section. However, the following forms are available in Welsh:

- o Postal vote application form
- o Vote by proxy application forms under the following circumstances:
  - When you are away from home
  - As a result of employment
  - As a result of attending an educational course
  - As a result of disability
  - British citizen who lives abroad
  - member of Her Majesty's Armed Forces, their spouse or civil partner
  - Civil Servants, British Council workers or their spouse or civil partner

Note, however that these forms cannot be accessed through the Welsh services section. Instead, the user is required to search through the English pages where the Welsh forms have been included in a list of corresponding English forms.

4.1.5   A total of 21 out of the 22 local authorities referred the citizen to the gov. uk website. Of those 21 authorities, 15 took them to the Welsh language 'Register to Vote' page. The other six authorities took them to the English pages of the www.gov.uk website.

4.1.6   A total of 21 local authorities referred the citizen to the website in order to register to vote. 14 of these local authorities referred them to the Welsh pages whilst the link on the websites of the other seven took the citizen to the English pages.

4.1.7   Only one local authority referred the citizen to the website in order to apply for a postal vote. The link took them to the English pages of www.gov.uk.

4.1.8   None of the local authorities referred to the website in order to apply to vote by proxy.

Progress since the 2015 election

4.1.9   The Commissioner published her report on the '2015 General Election' in October 2015. The following recommendations were relevant to the Government Digital Service and the www.gov.uk website:

- o The Cabinet Office should ensure that the Welsh-medium online voting registration tool on www.gov.uk is placed in a more prominent area of the website.
- o The Cabinet Office should ensure that all pages and forms on the www. gov.uk website which provide information on the process of registering to vote and voting methods are available in Welsh.
- o The Cabinet Office should ensure that all online tools which enable citizens to register online and amend their details on the 'open' electoral register should be available in Welsh.

4.1.10   The voting registration tool can only be accessed via the English website or by clicking on the general 'Gwasanaethau Cymraeg' link (which is right at the bottom of the homepage). The Commissioner does not believe that the

heading 'Gwasanaethau'r Cyngor ac Amgylchedd' ('Council Services and the Environment') is sufficient enough to inform the visitor that this is the relevant section for information on elections and voting. The heading on the English version, namely 'Voting', is far clearer. The conclusion, therefore, is that the Welsh language information is still not accessible enough and does not correspond with the information provided in English.

4.1.11   By the time this survey was conducted, it can be reported that the forms referred to in recommendation 4 (above) were available in Welsh. However, it must be noted that the Welsh forms can only be accessed via the English pages.

4.1.12   Some online tools are still only available in English, such as the search and contact tool for local electoral registration offices.

4.1.13   Recommendations for improvement

> The Government Digital Service should ensure that the Welsh-medium voting registration tool on the www.gov.uk website is placed in an area which is as prominent as the English tool.
>
> The Government Digital Service should ensure that the 'Gwasanaethau Cymraeg' link is placed in a more accessible and prominent area so that citizens who wish to access Welsh-medium information and forms can find the information easier.
>
> The Government Digital Service should consider including a specific Welsh-medium section on elections and voting which corresponds to the 'Voting' section on the English pages. It should be ensured that all Welsh-medium information and forms pertaining to elections, registration and voting can be found together in an accessible place. A link to the specific section should be included under the 'Gwasanaethau Cymraeg' list.

Results

4.2   **The Electoral Commission's website / 'About my vote' website**

Background

4.2.1   The Electoral Commission has two websites. The Electoral Commission's corporate website (www.electoralcommission.org.uk) provides information on the Commission's work and duties along with general information on elections. The vast majority of the website is fully bilingual. It seems that the information provided in English only pertains to matters which are not relevant to Wales (such as local elections in Scotland).

4.2.2   The website includes specific sections which provide information, advice and guidance for the following:

- o voters
- o election administrators and organisers
- o parties and campaigners
- o candidates and agents

4.2.3   The Electoral Commission also maintains the website 'About My Vote' (www.aboutmyvote.co.uk) which has been specifically created to provide information to voters.

Survey findings

4.2.4   All of the information and guidance provided which are relevant to Wales and elections in Wales are bilingual.

4.2.5   The 'Voters' section on the corporate website provides information on future elections and referendums, the registration process and different ways of voting. All of the information is available in Welsh. There are also relevant links to the Welsh-medium registration page on www.gov.uk.

4.2.6   The vast majority of the 'About my Vote' website is also bilingual. All of the forms provided on the website are available in Welsh, including the following:

- o Postal vote
- o Emergency vote by proxy through disability
- o Emergency vote by proxy through vocation, service or employment

4.2.7   There are some examples on the 'About my Vote' website where a page heading or button appears in English even though the text is available in Welsh e.g. the 'Voting by Proxy' button on the Welsh homepage, the heading on the 'Contact us' page.

4.2.8   There is a tool on the homepage of 'About my Vote' website which enables the citizen to search for the contact details of their local electoral registration office. This tool is available in Welsh but the addresses of the offices verified during the survey all appeared in English only.

4.2.9   A total of 19 local authorities referred citizens to the Electoral Commission's website or the 'About My Vote' website for general information on the election

and the voting process. Of those 19, ten referred citizens to the websites' Welsh pages whilst nine authorities provided a link to the English websites.

4.2.10   A total of 13 local authorities referred citizens to the websites to obtain postal vote application forms. Of those 13, six referred citizens to the websites' Welsh pages whilst seven authorities provided a link to the English websites.

4.2.11   A total of 14 local authorities referred citizens to the websites to obtain vote by proxy application forms. Of those 14, eight referred citizens to the websites' Welsh pages whilst six authorities provided a link to the English websites.

Progress since the 2015 election

4.2.12   In the report on the 2015 General Election survey, the following recommendations were relevant to the Electoral Commission's websites:

- o The Electoral Commission should ensure that Welsh language text is available for each 'button' that appears on the www.fymhleidlaisi.co.uk website.
- o The Electoral Commission should advertise a Welsh language email address on the Welsh language pages of the www.fymhleidlaisi.co.uk website.

4.2.13   The report on the 2015 General Election survey referred to three specific examples of English only 'buttons' which appeared on the Welsh pages, namely:

- o UK general election 2015
- o Frequently asked questions
- o Can I register to vote?

These buttons are now available in Welsh.

4.2.14   In 2016, only one English only button was found on the Welsh pages during the survey, namely the 'Voting by Proxy' button. The content of the section was available in Welsh.

4.2.15   Recommendations for improvement

> The Electoral Commission should ensure that the contact details and addresses of local electoral registration offices which appear via the search tool are displayed in Welsh or bilingually on the Welsh page.
>
> The Electoral Commission should ensure that buttons and headings which appear on Welsh pages are displayed in Welsh.

Results

4.3   **'Choose my Police and Crime Commissioner' website**

Background

4.3.1   The Government Digital Service is responsible for the 'Choose my Police and Crime Commissioner' (Choose My PCC) website.

4.3.2   The aim of the website is to provide information to the citizen on Police and Crime Commissioner elections, including:

- general and concise information on the Commissioner's duties
- general information on the election
- a search tool for candidates within a specific area
- Candidate profiles and statements online and in pdf format for downloading.

Survey Findings

4.3.3   The vast majority of the website is bilingual. However, the website address is still in English only www.choosemypcc.org.uk . In addition, the survey found a few examples where not all Welsh and English services corresponded, including the following:

- a heading and part of the general information given in the section providing information on regional candidates were in English only.
- An electronic contact form to be completed to order an information booklet (and the message confirming that the form had been received) were in English only.

4.3.4   A booklet was published for each region which included candidate profiles and statements by all candidates for that region. It was possible to download Welsh or English versions of these booklets. However, it should be noted that it was the candidates themselves who were responsible for the content and language of their profiles and statements. Therefore, the language used in the profiles and statements which appeared in the booklets varied from candidate to candidate, with some profiles in Welsh and others in English only. This was also true of the profiles which appeared on the website.

Results

4.3.5   Recommendations for improvement

The Government Digital Service should adopt a Welsh web address for the website which ensures that the citizen is taken directly to the Welsh homepage.

The Government Digital Service should ensure that all of the information provided which is relevant to Wales and Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales is bilingual, including all headings and sub-headings on the website.

The Government Digital Service should ensure that any electronic forms used on the website are bilingual.

When issuing or providing any advice or guidance for candidates in the future, the Cabinet Office should encourage candidates in Wales to submit bilingual profiles or statements

Results

4.4   **Police and Crime Commissioners' websites**

Background

4.4.1   The four Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales have individual websites which provide information about their duties, work and services. The information refers specifically to those regions in which the Police and Crime Commissioners work.

Survey findings

4.4.2   All four Police and Crime Commissioners have bilingual websites, but the extent to which the Welsh and English versions correspond and are treated equally varies greatly.

4.4.3   The survey found that information on the election was available on the websites of three of the four Police and Crime Commissioners. The election information provided on these three websites was bilingual and the Welsh and English versions corresponded in terms of content and quality. The information tended to be more relevant to candidates and prospective candidates rather than voters.

4.4.4   No forms or documents about the election or relating to the election were found on any of the Commissioners' websites.

4.4.5   One of the Commissioners provided a link to the registration page on www. gov.uk. The link referred the citizen to the English website.

4.4.6   Three of the Commissioners referred citizens to the Electoral Commission's website. Of those three, one referred to the website's Welsh pages whilst two provided a link to the English website.

4.4.7   One Commissioner referred citizens to the ChoosemyPCC.org.uk website. The link took them to the website's English pages.

4.4.8   Recommendations for improvement

When providing information on future elections, Police and Crime Commissioners should ensure that any links to the Electoral Commission's website, the gov.uk website or the Choose My Police and Crime Commissioner website provided on the Welsh pages of their website lead to the Welsh pages of those websites.

Results

4.5   **Local authority websites**

(i) General information on the Election

Survey findings

4.5.1   A total of 19 local authorities provided bilingual general information on the election on their websites.

4.5.2   The Welsh and English versions corresponded fully on the websites of 15 local authorities.

4.5.3   The Welsh and English corresponded partly on the websites of four authorities. This meant that a proportion of the information was available in Welsh but it did not correspond fully with the English in terms of content or the standard of the language used. There were several instances where the information provided was far more comprehensive in English than in Welsh, with external links leading to English pages or no links at all on Welsh pages.

4.5.4   Of the four authorities whose Welsh and English content corresponded partially, it was not possible to access the information through the Welsh pages of three of them. Instead, the English website had to be accessed before changing the language to Welsh by pressing the 'Welsh' button at the top of the web page. As a result, the Welsh information provided was not accessible.

4.5.5   The general information provided on the website of three local authorities was in English only. The survey also found that, in some cases, links provided on Welsh pages didn't work.

4.5.6   Several local authorities offered a Welsh postal address for contacting them or submitting an inquiry about the election, but nine authorities offered an English only email address.

Progress since the 2015 Election

4.5.7   In the 2015 General Election survey report, the following recommendations were relevant to the general information provided by local authorities:
   o   All Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers should ensure that local authorities' Welsh language pages are equal in terms of content, standard and format to the corresponding English pages which provide general information on elections.
   o   Local authorities should adopt the same editorial policy for publishing information on elections on their websites as implemented for publishing information in other areas of the website.
   o   Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers should ensure that links provided to external websites are operational and refer citizens to the latest information.

4.5.8   The number of local authorities where bilingual general information was provided with the Welsh information corresponding fully with the English,

remained at 15. The survey did not find many cases where the standard of Welsh was poor. However, the 2015 report stated that no website offered information in English only, which means that three local authorities have changed from providing bilingual information to English only information since the 2015 Election.

4.5.9 Links to the Cabinet Office's website and the Electoral Commission's websites led to Welsh language pages in 25 cases and English language pages in 17 cases.

4.5.10 A total of 19 local authorities referred citizens to the Electoral Commission's website or the 'About My Vote' website for general information on the election and the voting process. Of those 19, ten referred citizens to the websites' Welsh pages whilst nine authorities provided a link to the English websites.

4.5.11 A total of 21 local authorities referred the citizen to the gov.uk website. Of those 21 authorities, 15 took them to the Welsh 'Register to Vote' page. The other six authorities took them to the English pages of the www.gov.uk website.

4.5.12 Recommendations for improvement

> All Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers should ensure that local authorities' Welsh language website pages which provide general information on elections are equal in terms of content, standard and format to the corresponding English pages, including any links to external websites.
>
> All Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers should ensure that information on elections and voting provided on the website is equally accessible in Welsh and English, and that it is possible to browse through all of the Welsh language information provided without having to change language when moving from one page to another.
>
> When providing guidance to Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission should emphasise the need to ensure that information on elections provided in Welsh on local authority websites is equal in terms of content, standard and format to the corresponding English pages, including any links to external websites.

Results

(ii) Voting information and registration form

Survey findings

4.5.13   A total of 13 local authorities offered information on the voting registration process in Welsh and provided a link to the Welsh 'Register to Vote' page on www.gov.uk.

4.5.14   Six authorities offered concise information on the voting registration process in Welsh but provided a link to the English 'Register to Vote' page on www.gov.uk. In the case of three of these authorities, information had to be accessed in English in the first instance and then change to Welsh by pressing the 'Welsh' button at the top of the website. As a result, the registration process was not as accessible for those wishing to register through the medium of Welsh.

4.5.15   One local authority provided all of its voting registration information as well as external links in English only. The local authority did not offer any such service in Welsh.

4.5.16   One local authority allowed the citizen to download a Welsh electronic form to complete.

4.5.17   One authority requested that citizens contact the Council directly via a Welsh language electronic enquiry form to request a voting registration form.

4.5.18   A total of 21 local authorities referred the citizen to the www.gov.uk website in order to register to vote. 14 of these local authorities referred them to the Welsh pages, whilst the link on the websites of the other seven took the citizen to the English pages.

4.5.19   A total of 19 local authorities referred citizens to the Electoral Commission's website or the 'About My Vote' website for general information on the election and the voting process. Of those 19, ten referred citizens to the websites' Welsh pages whilst nine authorities provided a link to the English websites.

4.5.20   Information regarding registering to vote provided by one local authority had not been updated since 2007, and all of the information provided was in English only.

4.5.21   During the survey, the Commissioner received correspondence from a member of the public highlighting the fact that one local authority had sent a registration confirmation letter in English only, despite the fact that they had completed the registration process in Welsh.

Results

(iii) Postal voting information and application form

Survey findings

4.5.22   Six local authorities provided a form to download from their website. Five of these forms were available in Welsh or bilingually.

4.5.23   A total of 13 local authorities referred citizens to the Electoral Commission's websites to obtain postal voting application forms. Of those 13, six referred citizens to the websites' Welsh pages whilst seven authorities provided a link to the English websites.

4.5.24   Four local authorities requested that the citizen contact them to obtain a copy of the relevant application form.

4.5.25   Once again, there were several cases where the Welsh was not as accessible as the English. In the case of three authorities, information had to be accessed via the English website and then changed to Welsh by using the 'Cymraeg' button at the top of the page. There were also several cases where authorities' English pages contained more information on postal voting than their Welsh pages.

4.5.26   One local authority provided all of its information on applying for a postal vote, as well as external links, in English only. The local authority did not offer any such service in Welsh.

(iv) Vote by proxy information and application form

Survey findings

4.5.27   Three local authorities provided a form to download from their website and the three forms were available in Welsh.

4.5.28   A total of 14 local authorities referred citizens to the Electoral Commission's websites to obtain vote by proxy application forms. Of those 14, eight referred citizens to the websites' Welsh pages whilst six authorities provided a link to the English websites.

4.5.29   Two local authorities provided all of the information on applying to vote by proxy, as well as external links, in English only. These local authorities did not offer any such service in Welsh.

4.5.30   Three local authorities requested that the citizen contact them to obtain a copy of the relevant application form. One local authority provided a Welsh language electronic enquiry form, whilst the other two local authorities provided the election officer's contact details. Two authorities' postal addresses were provided in Welsh but the email details for one authority was in English only.

4.5.31   Once again, there were cases where the Welsh information was not as accessible as the English. The information had to be accessed in English in

the first instance and then changed to Welsh on the websites of several local authorities.

4.5.32   During the survey, the Commissioner received correspondence from a member of the public highlighting the fact that one local authority had sent a letter confirming an application to vote by proxy in English only, despite the fact that the application had been submitted in Welsh.

Progress since the 2015 Election

4.5.33   In the report on the 2015 General Election survey, the following recommendations were relevant to the forms provided by local authorities:

   o When referring citizens to voting registration forms, postal vote application forms and/or vote by proxy application forms on the www. aboutmyvote.co.uk and www.gov.uk websites, Electoral Registration Officers should refer citizens to the Welsh language forms of those websites.

   o When referring citizens to voting registration forms, postal vote application forms and/or vote by proxy application forms provided on the www.aboutmyvote.co.uk and www.gov.uk websites that are only available in English, Electoral Registration Officers should provide Welsh language versions of those forms on the local authority website.

4.5.34   At the time of the 2016 survey, the registration forms, postal vote application forms and vote by proxy application forms provided on www.aboutmyvote. co.uk and www.gov.uk were available in Welsh. However, it should be noted that in order to obtain the postal vote and vote by proxy application forms the www.gov.uk website, must be accessed in English.

4.5.35   A number of local authorities continue to provide links from Welsh pages to the English pages of external websites.

Results

4.5.36   Recommendations for improvement

> When providing information on their website on how to register to vote, or how to apply for a postal vote and/or vote by proxy, Electoral Registration Officers and / or Returning Officers should ensure that all of the information is available in Welsh and is equal in terms of content, standard and accessibility to the corresponding English information.
>
> When referring citizens searching for Welsh voting registration forms, postal vote application forms and/or vote by proxy application forms on the www.aboutmyvote.co.uk and www.gov.uk websites, Electoral Registration Officers and / or Returning Officers should refer citizens to the Welsh language forms of those websites.
>
> When providing guidance to Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission should emphasise the need to ensure that any election information and electronic forms provided in Welsh on local authority websites are equal in terms of content, standard and format to the corresponding English pages, including any links to external websites.

(v) Election notices and information on candidates

Survey findings

4.5.37   The election notice and statement of persons nominated were available in Welsh on the website of all local authorities.

4.5.38   A total of 16 local authorities provided the information on the Welsh pages of their websites.

4.5.39   The information was not as accessible as the English on the websites of the other six local authorities.

4.5.40   Although general information was available in Welsh, the link to the statements of persons nominated did not work on the Welsh page of one local authority. However, the statements were available bilingually on the corresponding English page.

4.5.41   In the case of one local authority, the information had to be accessed in English in the first instance and then changed to Welsh by clicking the 'Welsh' button. The election notice and statements of persons nominated then appeared in Welsh.

Results

4.5.42   Four local authorities did not provide any information on the notice nor statements of persons nominated on their Welsh pages, but it was possible to see bilingual electronic pdf copies on their English pages. It was not possible to access the information in Welsh in these cases, despite the fact that the notices themselves were available bilingually.

Progress since the 2015 Election

4.5.43   In the report on the 2015 General Election survey, the following recommendations were relevant to local authority election notices and statements of persons nominated:

- o Returning Officers should ensure that election notices and information on candidates are available in Welsh as they are in English.
- o Where information is published bilingually rather than as separate Welsh and English versions, Returning Officers should ensure that the information is published on the Welsh language pages of local authority websites as well as the English pages.

4.5.44   The 2015 General Election survey found that three local authorities published election notices and statements of persons in English only.

4.5.45   This latest survey found that all local authorities had published bilingual election notices and statements of persons nominated.

4.5.46   Recommendations for improvement

> When publishing election notices and information on candidates (including statements of persons nominated) on the local authority's website, Electoral Registration Officers and / or Returning Officers should ensure that the information is available on the Welsh pages of the website, and is as accessible as the information which appears on the corresponding English pages.
>
> When providing guidance to Electoral Registration Officers and / or Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission should emphasise the need to ensure that information such as election notices and statements of persons nominated provided in Welsh on local authority websites is as accessible as it is in English.

Results

4.6 **Declaring the results**

Background

4.6.1 The 2015 Election survey found that the way in which Returning Officers used the Welsh language when declaring the election result in their constituencies varied significantly. Only a small proportion of Returning Officers made a completely bilingual announcement. In those cases where a bilingual announcement was made, there were inconsistencies in the way in which the result was declared in both languages, with some Returning Officers using Welsh and English alternately throughout the announcement, and others making the entire announcement in English first before repeating in Welsh.

4.6.2 The extent to which the Welsh announcement was comprehensible also varied significantly.

4.6.3 Following the publication of the Commissioner's report on the findings of the 2015 Election survey, the Electoral Commission published 'Template example scripts for National Assembly for Wales count announcements'. The resource was distributed to all Returning Officers in preparation for the 2016 election results. It included a comprehensive bilingual script for all announcements made on election night and stated the following:

> You should make all announcements in English and Welsh. The order of preference as to which language comes first is at your discretion.

> The decision on how to break up any announcements, i.e. whether you make the announcements in both languages by section or by paragraph, again, is a matter for you. However, when declaring the result, you need to ensure that there is as little delay as possible between the announcement in English and the announcement in Welsh of the total number of votes given to each candidate. The script below provides an example that will minimise the delay between the English and Welsh announcements.

> You should use fluent Welsh speakers for the Welsh language announcements to ensure they deliver the announcements accurately and they can be understood by Welsh-speakers in attendance.

Survey findings

4.6.4 A total of 45 results were declared during the 2016 election: the results of the National Assembly Elections in 40 constituencies and four regions, along with the result of one constituency by-election. 37 of the 45 result announcements were verified. It was not possible to verify six of the results as the announcement was not broadcast. Additionally, it was not possible to reach a conclusion regarding the standard of Welsh used in two other announcements as the Welsh announcement was not broadcast. However, it can be noted that the entire announcement was made in English first before the broadcast was ended. Also, as a result of sound problems, it was not possible to reach a conclusion about whether English and Welsh were used alternately in one constituency. However, it was noted that the announcement was made bilingually.

Results

4.6.5	A total of 34 of the results were declared bilingually.
4.6.6	Three of the announcements were partly bilingual. This meant that a proportion of the announcement was made bilingually, such as the opening statement or conclusion, but the returning officer declared the result in English only.
4.6.7	In declaring the results of the election, the Welsh announcement was delegated to a translator or fluent Welsh speaker for 19 constituencies, whilst the returning officer made a bilingual announcement for 17 constituencies.
4.6.8	The result was declared in Welsh first in 11 cases. Welsh was also partly used first in seven cases (this meant that the opening statement or conclusion was made in Welsh first, but the results were declared in English first and then Welsh).
4.6.9	The result was declared in English first for 20 constituencies.
4.6.10	English and Welsh were used alternately in 31 announcements whilst the entire announcement was made in English first for six constituencies.
4.6.11	In reaching a conclusion regarding the extent to which the Welsh announcement was comprehensible, the following scoring system was used: 1 = Fluent 2 = Comprehensible (a few minor errors which did not affect the declaration) 3 = Partly comprehensible (some errors which affected the declaration to a certain extent) 4 = Difficult to understand (many errors which meant that it was difficult to understand the result) 5 = Incomprehensible
4.6.12	A total of 17 of the announcements were given a score of 1. Of those 17, a translator was used for seven of the announcements.
4.6.13	A total of 11 of the announcements were given a score of 2.
4.6.14	Four of the announcements were given a score of 3.
4.6.15	Two of the announcements were given a score of 4.
4.6.16	In conclusion, 82% of the announcements made were comprehensible (scores of 1 and 2) and 11% were partly comprehensible.
4.6.17	The survey found that 6% of the announcements were difficult to understand.
4.6.18	None of the announcements were judged to be completely incomprehensible.
4.6.19	There was inconsistency in the way in which the number or total number of votes were declared. Some officers declared the total as a whole number (e.g. three thousand three hundred) whilst other officers declared it in digit form (e.g. three, three, zero, zero). The result was declared as a whole number and then in digit form in English only for three constituencies. The result was

declared as a whole number in English but in digit form in Welsh for one constituency.

4.6.20   The survey found some examples where the Welsh language was treated less favourably in those cases where the entire result was declared in English first. It also found cases where broadcasters talked over Welsh announcements or where the Welsh announcement was drowned out by applause or general noise coming from the audience who had stopped listening following the English announcement.

Progress since the 2015 Election

4.6.21   In the report on the 2015 General Election survey, the following recommendations were relevant to election result announcements:
- Returning Officers should declare the election results in full in Welsh.
- Returning Officers should declare the vote for each candidate in both languages consecutively before proceeding to the next candidate, rather than giving the whole declaration in one language, followed by the other language.
- When Returning Officers are unable to speak Welsh to a level which allows them to pronounce names, sentences and phrases within the declaration, along with the name of the constituency and number of votes, in a way which is comprehensible to Welsh speakers, the Returning Officer should delegate the Welsh declaration to a fluent Welsh speaker.

4.6.22   The survey concluded that 92% of the announcements verified were completely bilingual and the remaining 8% were partly bilingual.

4.6.23   English and Welsh were used alternately for 84% of announcements whilst the entire announcement was made in English first in the case of the other 16% of announcements verified.

4.6.24   A total of 51% of Welsh announcements were delegated to a translator / fluent Welsh speaker.

Results

4.6.25   Recommendations for improvement

Returning Officers should declare the vote for each candidate in both languages consecutively before proceeding to the next candidate, rather than giving the whole declaration in one language, followed by the other language.

Returning Officers should ensure that they declare the total number of votes in the same format in Welsh and English.

When Returning Officers are unable to speak Welsh to a level which allows them to pronounce names, sentences and phrases within the declaration, along with the name of the constituency and number of votes, in a way which is comprehensible to the listeners, or when they are not comfortable making the declaration in Welsh, the Returning Officer should delegate the Welsh declaration to a fluent Welsh speaker.

When providing guidance to Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission should emphasise the fact that the Welsh announcement should be treated no less favourably than the English.

5. Summary of recommendations

5.1 **The Government Digital Service**

1. The Government Digital Service should ensure that the Welsh-medium tool for voting registration on the www.gov.uk website is placed in an area which is as prominent as the English tool.

2. The Government Digital Service should ensure that the 'Gwasanaethau Cymraeg' link is placed in a more accessible and prominent area so that citizens who wish to access Welsh-medium information and forms can find the information easier.

3. The Government Digital Service should consider including a specific Welsh-medium section on elections and voting which corresponds to the 'Voting' section on the English pages. It should be ensured that all Welsh-medium information and forms pertaining to elections, registration and voting can be found together in an accessible place. A link to the specific section should be included under the 'Gwasanaethau Cymraeg' list.

4. The Government Digital Service should adopt a Welsh web address for the 'Choose My PCC' website which ensures that the citizen is taken directly to the Welsh homepage.

5. The Government Digital Service should ensure that all of the information provided on the 'Choose My PCC' website which is relevant to Wales and Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales is bilingual, including all headings and sub-headings on the website.

6. The Government Digital Service should ensure that any electronic forms used on the website are bilingual.

7. When issuing or providing any advice or guidance for candidates in the future, the Cabinet Office should encourage candidates in Wales to submit bilingual profiles or statements.

Summary of recommendations

5.2   **The Electoral Commission**

8.   The Electoral Commission should ensure that the contact details and addresses of local electoral offices which appear via the search tool are displayed in Welsh or bilingually on the Welsh page.

9.   The Electoral Commission should ensure that buttons and headings which appear on Welsh pages of the websites are displayed in Welsh.

10. When providing guidance to Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission should emphasise the need to ensure that election information provided in Welsh on local authority websites is equal in terms of content, standard and format to the corresponding English pages, including any links to external websites.

11. When providing guidance to Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission should emphasise the need to ensure that any election information and electronic forms provided in Welsh on local authority websites are equal in terms of content, standard and format to the corresponding English pages, including any links to external websites.

12. When providing guidance to Electoral Registration Officers and / or Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission should emphasise the need to ensure that information such as election notices and statements of persons nominated provided in Welsh on local authority websites is as accessible as it is in English.

13. When providing guidance to Returning Officers, the Electoral Commission should emphasise the fact that the Welsh announcement should be treated no less favourably than the English.

Summary of recommendations

5.3   **The Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales**

14. When providing information on future elections, Police and Crime Commissioners should ensure that any links to the Electoral Commission's website, the gov.uk website or the Choose My Police and Crime Commissioner website provided on the Welsh pages of their website lead to the Welsh pages of those websites.

5.4   **Election registration officers and returning officers / Local authorities**

15. All Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers should ensure that local authorities' Welsh language website pages are equal in terms of content, standard and format to the corresponding English pages which provide general information on elections, including any links to external websites.

16. All Electoral Registration Officers and/or Returning Officers should ensure that information on elections and voting provided on the website is equally accessible in Welsh and English, and that it is possible to browse through all of the Welsh language information provided without having to change language when moving from one page to another.

17. When providing information on their website on how to register to vote, or how to apply for a postal vote and/or a vote by proxy, Electoral Registration Officers and / or Returning Officers should ensure that all of the information is available in Welsh and is equal in terms of content, standard and accessibility to the corresponding English information.

18. When referring citizens searching for Welsh voting registration forms, postal vote application forms and/or vote by proxy application forms on the www.aboutmyvote.co.uk and www.gov.uk websites, Electoral Registration Officers and / or Returning Officers should refer citizens to the Welsh language forms of those websites.

Summary of recommendations

19. When publishing election notices and information about candidates (including statements of persons nominated) on the local authority's website, Electoral Registration Officers and / or Returning Officers should ensure that the information is available on the Welsh pages of the website, and is as accessible as the information which appears on the corresponding English pages.

20. Returning Officers should declare the vote for each candidate in both languages consecutively before proceeding to the next candidate, rather than giving the whole declaration in one language, followed by the other language.

21. Returning Officers should ensure that they declare the total number of votes in the same format in Welsh and English (e.g. the whole number or in digit form).

22. When Returning Officers are unable to speak Welsh to a level which allows them to pronounce names, sentences and phrases within the declaration, along with the name of the constituency and number of votes, in a way which is comprehensible to Welsh speakers, or when they are not comfortable making the declaration in Welsh, the Returning Officer should delegate the Welsh declaration to a fluent Welsh speaker.