

# Official Languages Scheme: Annual report 2017-18

July 2018



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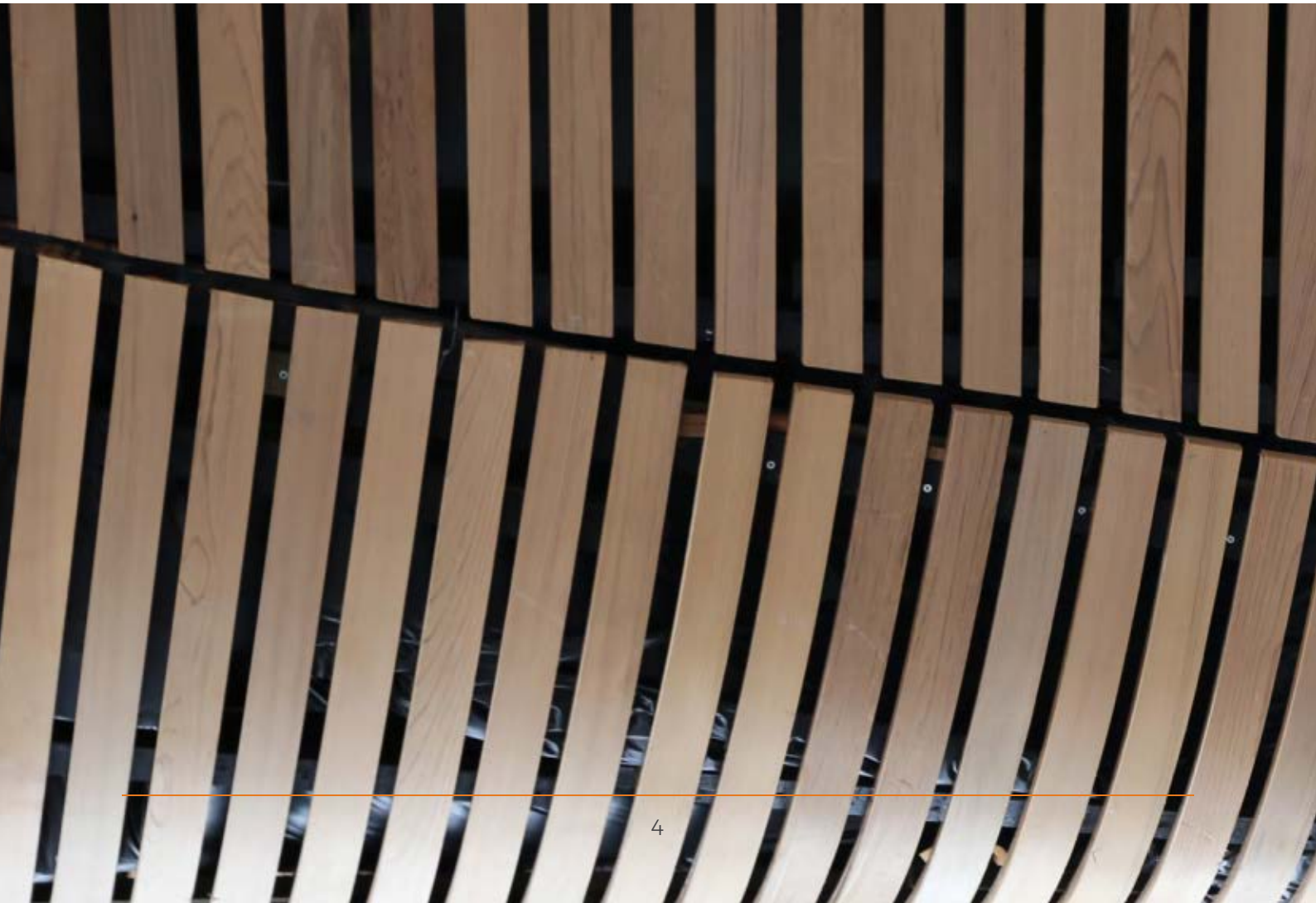
# **Official Languages Scheme:** Annual report 2017-18

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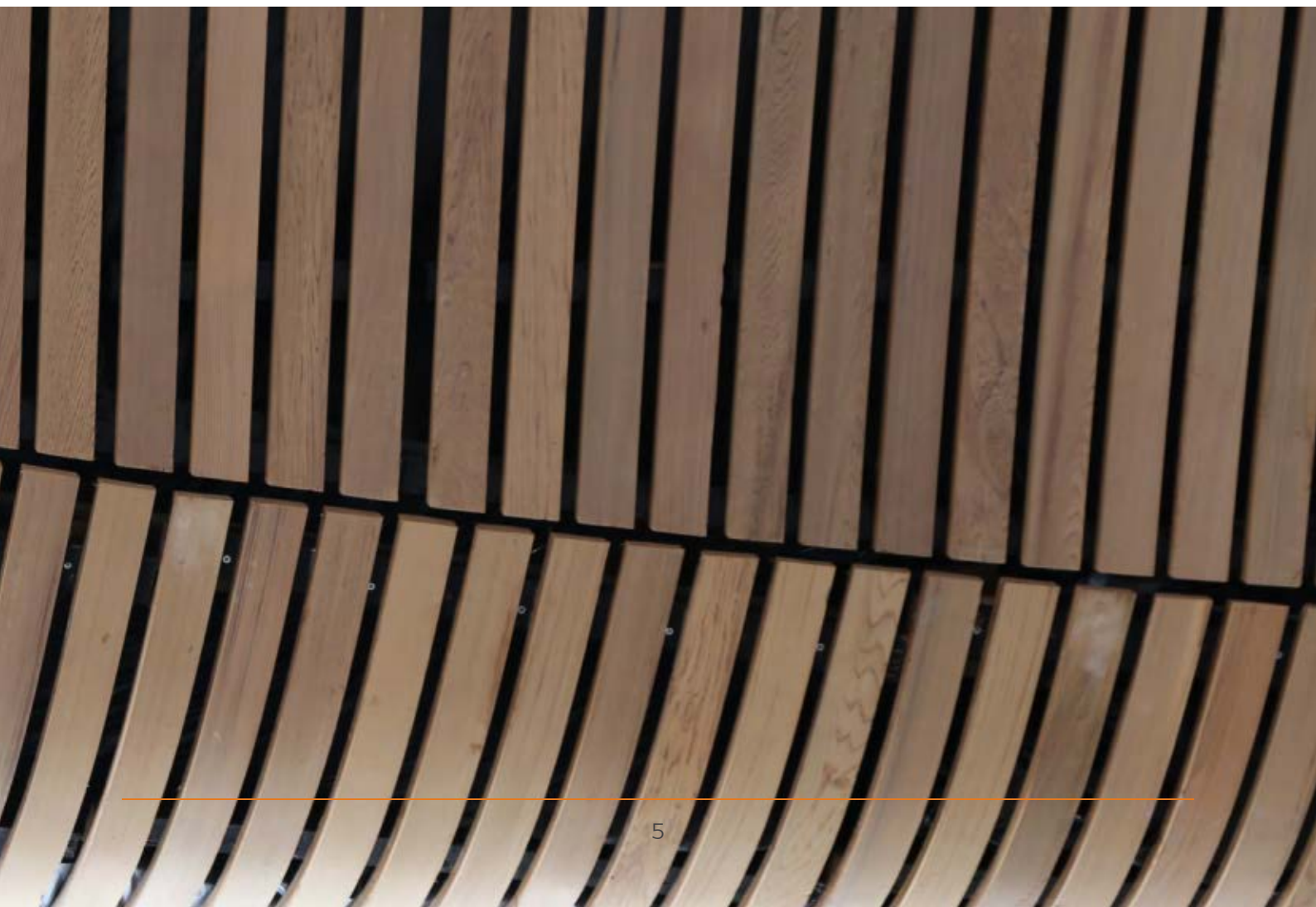
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# OUR PERFORMANCE





## Foreword



**Adam Price AM**

Commissioner with responsibility for official languages and delivery and transformation of services to Members.

I am pleased to present the first Official Languages Scheme annual report for the period April 2017 – March 2018. In drafting and implementing the Scheme, we sought ambitious and challenging targets that would enable us to realise our goal of being an organisation recognised for providing innovative and excellent bilingual services by default. Our aim is to establish a bilingual ethos and culture that permeates the organisation, and to be an exemplar to other public bodies across Wales and beyond.

The task of ensuring that we are delivering against the service standards set out in the scheme continues. Where we have not measured up to those standards, we have reflected upon those shortcomings and drawn on the experiences to improve provision.





This year, as well as upholding the service standards set out in the scheme, we have been planning and preparing further improvements. This report describes that work and, in next year's annual report, we will reflect upon the success of these new developments. We also received feedback from Assembly Members during the year. It was encouraging to see that, generally speaking, they were supportive of our work in this area, and felt that we had made continuous improvements over a period of years.

Much progress has been made over the past year. By building on the firm foundations laid in the fourth Assembly and thinking innovatively about the way we work, tangible changes have been made across the organisation. We are proud of the achievements thus far but there is more to be done. We must guard against complacency and aim higher.

Some elements of this annual report have been included for the first time. In response to the consultation on the Scheme for the fifth Assembly and comments made by the Culture, Welsh language and Communications Committee and by Members in the plenary debate, we have added some statistical information. In delivering on this annual report, we will continue to celebrate success by detailing work undertaken on its Themes and the lessons learned, whilst also comparing quantitative data. This section of the report will enable Assembly Members to map the Commission's progress and performance in several areas for the duration of the Scheme. This year's report includes initial data. Future reports will include corresponding data so that meaningful comparisons can be made over a number of years. The collation of this information will also assist the Assembly Commission in identifying trends and taking appropriate steps to provide more assistance or support, to redirect resources and skills and to modify working practices.



## Our ambition and commitment

Our ambition is to be a truly bilingual organisation where Assembly Members, the public and staff can choose to work or communicate naturally in either or both of our official languages, where the use of both languages is proactively encouraged and facilitated, and where our exemplary bilingual services are continuously improving.

The Commission's commitment to bilingualism is the basis for achieving this ambition, and our services, strategies and aspirations reflect the equal status of our official languages. We appreciate the diversity within our workforce, and the Commission is committed to ensuring diversity within the organisation through our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This report focuses on the way in which we deliver services in our official languages, the way we implement the Official Languages Scheme for the Fifth Assembly and the implications for us in terms of the National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act 2012.

We are committed to ensuring that all our stakeholders – Assembly Members and their support staff, the public and Commission staff – are aware of the scheme and of the bilingual services that are provided. To that end, information on the scheme and how bilingual working is facilitated was given to Assembly Members and their support staff as part of the induction programme for the Fifth Assembly. We continue to ensure that bilingual staff are present in public areas across the estate, that they can be easily identified and that they are confident to deal with visitors in our two official languages. The same is true for the teams involved with the public beyond the estate.

As part of the corporate induction programme all new Commission staff members receive initial official languages awareness training and meet with a member of the Official Languages Team and a member of the Language Skills Team. Bilingualism is an integral part of all elements of the work of the Commission, from public events and publications to signage across the estate and computer program interfaces. When we fail to live up to the standard, we will learn from what happened and adapt our working methods to avoid further problems.

## Service Standards

Over the past parliamentary year, since the Official Languages scheme for the Fifth Assembly was approved, the day to day work of providing bilingual services has continued.

Maintaining the exemplary standards that have been set is part of our commitment to provide the best services in all areas.

### Feedback from Assembly Members and their support staff

As part of the formal process of understanding the needs of Assembly Members and their support staff, we ask their opinion about our bilingual services and their ability to work in the language of their choice. This year, we received positive feedback with the majority of Assembly Members and their support staff stating that they are happy with the provision. The standard of the text translation and interpretation services were praised, and their comments on these services will help us to prioritise resources and investment in order to maintain these high standards. The same is true in relation to the provision for developing or improving language skills with some comments relating to additional support or flexibility. In terms of the bilingual ethos of the organisation, once again, the feedback was positive on the whole, and reflected the progress made, not only during the fifth Assembly, but continuously for several years. Over the next parliamentary year, this feedback will help us to prioritise resources and to plan our work.

### Workforce planning and language hubs

To ensure that we're doing everything possible to meet our ambition by the end of this Official Languages Scheme in 2021, we have taken additional steps to review our service area language plans this year. These are live documents that are reviewed when a vacancy arises in service areas to establish current bilingual capacity and the needs of the service to deliver its responsibilities under the Scheme. The National Assembly for Wales has two internal languages of administration – English and Welsh, our intention is to ensure that we respond proactively to the language requirements of all our customers. During the process of reviewing the service area language plans, we have seen the development of hubs where team members work completely naturally in both languages or mainly in one official language in accordance with the requirements of their



customers. This is as a result of recruitment based on the needs of the service. The Llywydd's private office, the Education team, our North Wales public information team, the team providing reception services across the estate, the Learning and Development operation team and the Members' Liaison and Professional Development are all examples of teams that work mainly through the medium of Welsh. The teams include a combination of fluent speakers and Welsh learners. There are other examples across the organisation of teams that work through the medium of English, making use of other services to provide bilingual elements as required. In addition to these hubs, there are a growing number of examples where Welsh is used more naturally in everyday situations. These include:

- Recruitment and HR procedures can be undertaken in Welsh
- Our Leadership Team meetings are undertaken bilingually
- Individual team meetings are undertaken bilingually
- Steering group and taskforce meetings undertaken bilingually.

Internal language or languages of administration have been the subject of increasing discussion in the field of language planning for several reasons over the past few years. For example the subject was discussed by the working group chaired by Rhodri Glyn Thomas in its report Language, work and bilingual services (2016), and as the Welsh language standards system came into force, organisations that have duties placed upon them are required to develop a policy on the use of Welsh in their internal administration. By reviewing our language plans on an ongoing basis we as an organisation will also develop this area of work to ensure that those who use our services or work with them, are able to do so both orally and in writing through the medium of Welsh, as they can through the medium of English.

By using these workforce planning techniques, the committee services have started to establish teams that are able to work with committee chairs in their chosen language. The integrated team approach, and ensuring that key staff have the required skills, we are moving towards a situation where we will be able to provide full support to committee chairs in the official language of their choice. This in turn will enable them to prepare for meetings in that language. Through enabling chairs to work in their language of choice, we hope that we will create a more bilingual ethos in committees which will in turn encourage Assembly Members and witnesses to contribute in their chosen language.

## Statistical Information

This section is a new addition to the annual report following feedback from Assembly Members and stakeholders. We will use the statistics to prioritise our work on the themes for the duration of the Scheme.

The new system developed for the Table Office and production of the Record of Proceedings enables us to collate statistics on business and proceedings. The process of implementing the new software began in September 2017.

### Recruitment

We will use the statistics below as a tool to monitor how the new recruitment system will be implemented. Along with the data collected by recording the language skills levels of all our staff, it will be a way to observe changes in the pattern of language skills at the organisation. This year we include details of jobs advertised according to the current description, namely 'Welsh essential'. From summer 2018 onwards, we will record the number of posts advertised at each language skills level including Courtesy Level Welsh.

*Table 1: The number of jobs advertised that stipulated a language requirement*

External		Internal		Total	
Posts advertised	Welsh essential	Posts advertised	Welsh essential	Posts advertised	Welsh essential
24	12	13	1	37	13

Percentage of posts advertised as Welsh essential – **35%**

## Assembly Business

These statistics provide an outline of the way in which business is introduced. Based on these statistics, we will look at ways to support Members and their staff to ensure they understand the systems and are confident to submit business in their official language of choice. We will also look at our systems for receiving items from a third parties to ensure that we are clear about our expectations with regard to the requirements of the Official Languages Scheme.

**Table 2: Percentage of business tabled in Welsh by item**

Oral question	Written question	Motions	Amends	Statements of opinion	Topical questions
13%	7%	2%	7%	2%	10%

**Table 3: Documents laid**

Number of documents laid	Number of documents not laid bilingually	Percentage
431	109	25%

All Assembly Commission documents are laid bilingually as a default. Our work processes ensure that documents are available bilingually before they are laid. The majority of the documents not laid bilingually are explanatory memoranda or documents relating to sub legislation. Table Office procedures include checking if bilingual versions are tabled bilingually and ensuring that documents are not laid bilingually conform to the exceptions set out in Standing Orders. The Assembly Commission expects organisations and bodies subject to Welsh language standards, or language schemes to conform to those standards. The practice of tabling monolingual documents, particularly in the context of sub legislation is not in the spirit of the Scheme. It is not possible for Assembly Members to prepare for proceedings in their language of choice without access to such important documents in both languages. The Commissioner with responsibility for Official Languages will write to the Assembly's Business Committee to draw attention to this pattern and we will continue to consider ways of addressing this lack of provision during the coming year.

We do not currently monitor the extent to which Assembly Members receive timely answers to written questions in their language of choice or bilingually. We will look at ways of recording this information in order to ensure that Assembly Members are able to use those answers in their day to day work.

## Assembly Proceedings

We are committed to ensuring that we support Assembly Members to work in their official language of choice. We will use the statistics below to guide our work on providing bespoke training to the Assembly Members. The information on committee proceedings will help us to support witnesses appearing before committees, ensuring that they are aware that they can use their language of choice. During the coming year, we will consider alternative methods of supporting Chairs who wish to work bilingually and Assembly Members who wish to prepare and make bilingual contributions. We will also look at how we can support witnesses to ensure they understand the principles of bilingual committee meetings and reinforce their right to use their language of choice when taking part in committee meetings.

**Table 4: Percentage of Welsh contributions**

<b>Contribution type</b>	<b>Percentage of Welsh contributions</b>
Plenary proceedings	20%
Committee proceedings	8%



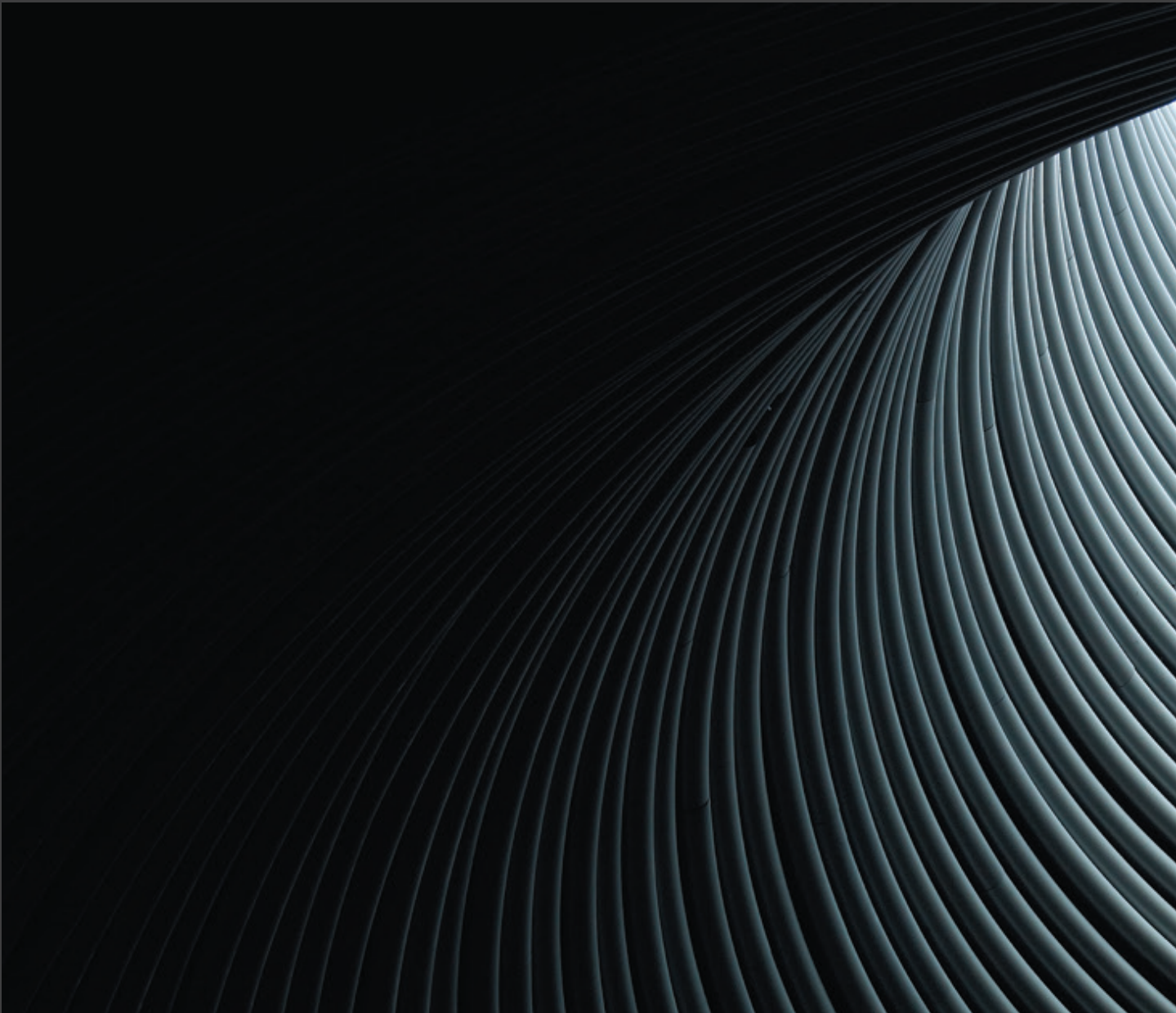
## Committees

As discussed above, an important element of ensuring that Assembly Members are able to prepare for debating and considering business in their language of choice is to ensure that we provide documentation for meetings in both languages at the same time. When they request evidence from external organisations, committee teams emphasise the need to provide documents bilingually, and remind public bodies that we expect them to conform to the requirements of their standards or language schemes. We recognise the fact that it is not always possible for individuals or voluntary organisations to provide bilingual submissions. Private briefing papers for committee members take account of the individual language requirements of Assembly Members. This means that not every briefing paper is fully bilingual, and each committee has its own unique arrangements.

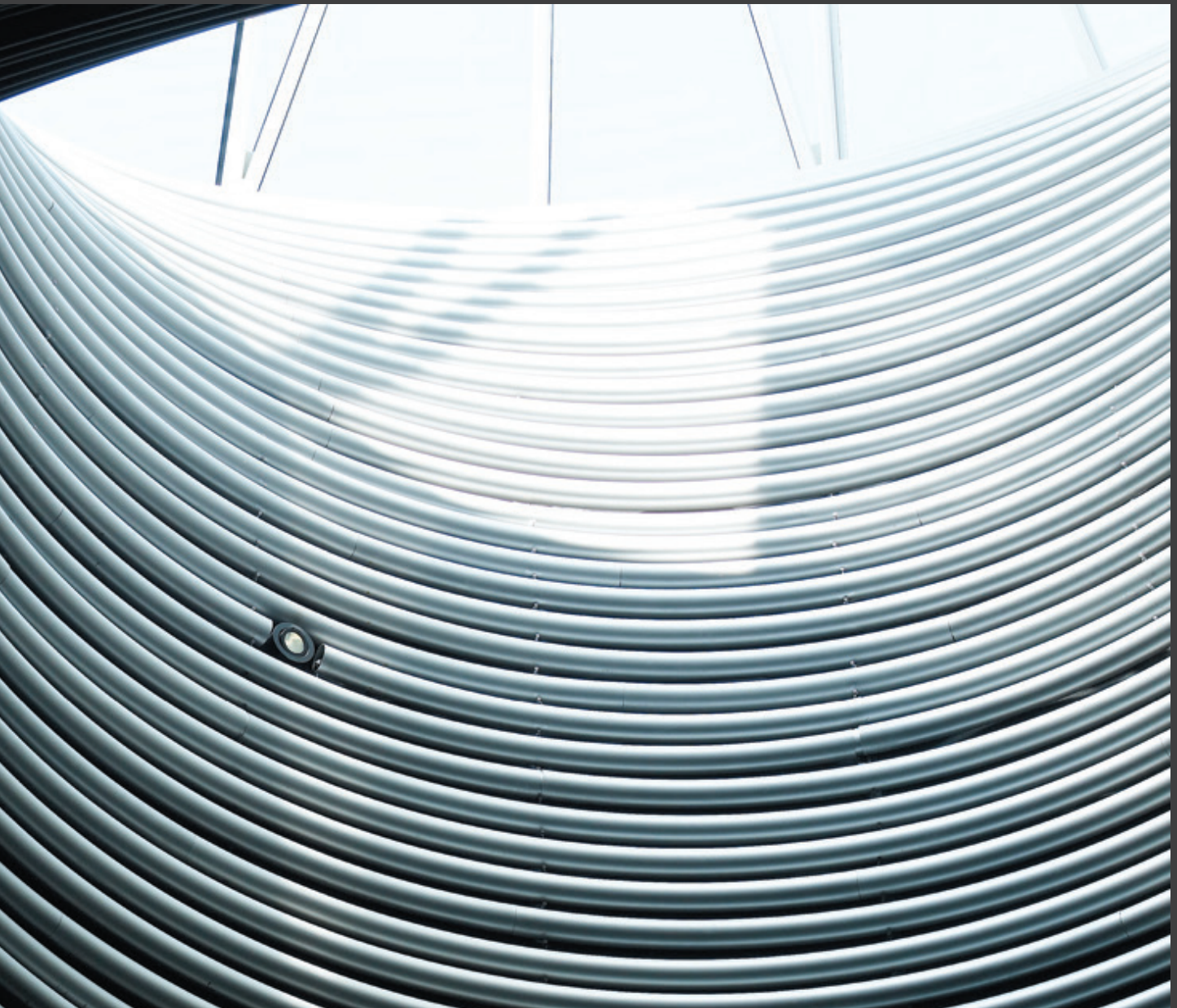
*Table 5: Committee Papers Published*

	Welsh only	English only	Bilingual
<b>Internally prepared papers</b>	0	40 <sup>1</sup>	1172
<b>Consultation responses submitted</b>	13	438	218
<b>Secretary of State for Wales or UK Government</b>	0	23	8
<b>Welsh Government</b>	0	174	580
<b>Individual AMs</b>	0	3	6
<b>External individuals or organisations</b>	9	659	337

<sup>1</sup> Direct responses to correspondence received in English. In accordance with the Scheme, any written responses to correspondence from individuals or organisations is drafted and published in the language of choice of the recipient.



# THEMES FOR THE DURATION OF THE SCHEME





## Theme 1: Recruitment

The Scheme sets out a series of objectives to be achieved by summer 2018, and in line with those objectives, a working group was established to work on the theme.

### Objectives to be achieved by summer 2018

Therefore, in order to increase the level of basic level Welsh-language skills across the organisation over time, and to build on our existing bilingual ethos, by summer 2018, we will:

- adopt an approach where all posts advertised require at least a basic level of Welsh language skills ('basic linguistic courtesy') with candidates expected to either evidence those skills on appointment, or commit to gain those skills as part of the induction process;
- provide guidance to all candidates on gaining the appropriate language skills prior to appointment if they wish to do so, including creating and providing online resources;
- provide bespoke training for all new staff members and any existing staff members who are required to gain language skills as part of the induction process;
- develop a mechanism to help determine the fluency levels required for each post and describe them in the job advertisement;
- provide guidance for recruitment managers on the appropriate wording to reflect the requirements of each post;
- ensure that the language requirement status of all posts advertised will be scrutinised by the Assembly Commission's Investment and Resource Board prior to approval;
- ensure that recruitment panels are able to accurately assess the relevant language skills of the post advertised;
- ensure that all potential candidates are aware of the bilingual ethos of the organisation before applying for a post;
- investigate alternative methods of recruiting bilingual staff to certain areas where we have not succeeded in attracting them in the past.



A working group was established to work on this theme which deals with Assembly Commission staff posts only. Members of the working group were nominated from among Commission staff including the Director with responsibility for official languages, the Official Languages Scheme Manager, representatives from the recruitment team, the diversity and inclusion team, the trade union side, and chair of the REACH workplace equality network (the race, ethnicity and cultural heritage network).

#### **Terms of reference**

- Prepare for the introduction of Theme 1 (Recruitment) of the Official Languages Scheme for the Fifth Assembly.
- Consider all aspects and relevant actions within the Equality Impact Assessment and supervising or carrying out their implementation.
- Meet at least every month as a core group to plan provision and map progress.
- Maintain a focus on communicating progress on implementing actions.
- Cross-reference other actions within the Official Languages Scheme and other corporate initiatives against the progress of this working group to ensure that delivery schedules are compatible.
- Introduction of Theme 1 by summer 2018.
- Report on progress within the Official Languages Scheme annual report.

By the end of this year's summer term, the new system will be in place. Over the past year, the working group has met on a regular basis by allocating tasks and agreeing on principles and processes to ensure that the new system is implemented smoothly and effectively.

The most important elements to be agreed from the outset were the definitions of Courtesy Level Welsh and language skills levels. Examples of skills levels frameworks of other organisations across Wales were used to benchmark and to ensure consistency in their development. Subsequently, guidance was designed for recruitment managers. The guidance is crucial in ensuring that the new system is implemented consistently and effectively throughout the organisation. They also include standard text that will appear in job descriptions.

Stemming from this work, and as a result of a project to update the recruitment team's webpages, there was an opportunity to clarify the new recruitment method and offer reassurance to those who were concerned about the change. This was done by producing resources to assist applicants in understanding

Courtesy Level Welsh and a frequently asked questions section in order to allay any concerns. The working group also regularly checked that the tasks arising from the Equality Impact Assessment drawn up when the Official Languages Scheme was published in 2017, were being undertaken.

The process of engagement with the trade union side and thereafter with the heads of services, official languages coordinators and members of the workplace equality networks has been very valuable. It offered security to the working group that no part of the work will cause the organisation to discriminate unintentionally against applicants.

Work also started on offering training and optional Courtesy Level Welsh assessments to all Assembly Commission staff. The Language Skills team is available to provide training and support to teams or individuals, and a Courtesy Level Welsh module was prepared for use as required. Regular opportunities is offered for staff to be assessed for Courtesy Level Welsh, and everyone who reaches the required level receives a certificate which is valid for two years.

In February of this year the Chief Executive and Clerk to the Assembly held an informal ceremony to acknowledge the success of the first group who were successful in the assessment. It was good to have the opportunity to celebrate staff members' commitment and to present them with their certificates.



## Theme 2: Language Skills

The Commission is committed to support all Assembly Members and their support staff, and Commission staff to develop or improve their language skills. Following up on the work that has already taken place on recruitment, there will be additional and significant elements to the work of the Language Skills team.

The team has already worked on developing and testing a package of resources and assessments for potential candidates, and the work of advising, assessing and supporting the process continues. The team will also form an integral part of the process of identifying the skills levels of learners and assisting individuals to map their skills to match the skills levels defined as part of the work on Theme 1 above.

The team has now developed a programme of dedicated and flexible language skills training for all our learners, with regular training given to 123 learners. There has been an encouraging increase in the number of regular learners, and there has also been an increase in the ad-hoc sessions given. This includes one-to-one provision, developing bespoke learning resources, and varying the learning methods according to the needs of learners. Over the past year several courses have been developed, especially tailored for specific teams within the organisation at all levels, including provision for fluent Welsh speakers who wish to refresh their written Welsh skills.

During the year the Language Skills team has also considered alternative methods of providing language skills training. The organisation has registered for Welsh Work, the e-learning taster course, and as part of the same scheme, the Assembly Commission will work with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to offer residential Welsh courses for Assembly Members, their support staff and Commission staff.

We have also worked with external training providers to ensure that the tutors have the appropriate skills to work with learners with additional learning needs, and to create appropriate learning resources as part of the teaching provision. An important element of the Language Skills team's work is to provide bespoke training for all learners, and we will continue to ensure that the team has the skills and awareness to do so.

Over the summer recess, the Language Skills team will be working with groups of learners to provide intensive training by making the best use of less busy periods in the organisation's calendar. The team has already piloted some ideas including

intensive training days for groups of learners and additional training days for learners who have enrolled for examinations. The introduction of the new recruitment system and the language skills levels descriptions has provided an opportunity for the team to consult with learners and more widely to identify any new learning needs, with the work around this beginning during the summer recess.

To better recognise the investment made by our learners, the Language Skills team will also introduce a contract system for learners. The system is intended to secure an agreement between the learner, the line manager and the tutor regarding learning targets for the coming six months, and to provide feedback on the learner's progress for the previous six months. This will give individual learners control over their progress and help them in planning their careers.

For line managers, the system will ensure that progress is recorded as part of the performance management process to allow us to celebrate success and recognise the effort of individuals. When recording targets and progress formally, heads of service will be aware of the bilingual capacity within their services and will be able to use the information to plan their bilingual provision as appropriate.

Individual service language plans will also reflect the progress of individuals as they move through the skills levels. For the duration of the Scheme, we will also look at ways of maintaining up-to-date information on language skills in a reportable format, either through our HR and payroll system or through our performance management system.





### **Case study:** Language Skills

The Language Skills team has worked closely with the ICT and Broadcasting teams to provide a comprehensive programme of language skills training. A Courtesy Level Welsh module was developed and given to non-Welsh speaking staff.

The module went a step further than the general Courtesy Level Welsh assessment, and included terminology, phrases and exercises relevant to the work of the team as well as elements around pronunciation and awareness more generally.

Having studied the module, several members of the team were keen to continue to learn, and now receive weekly lessons as a group. Welsh refresher training was also provided for bilingual speakers within the team to help them to use the skills they already have in the workplace.

This training programme has provided the opportunity for all staff to develop their skills and gain confidence, which has enabled the team to provide better bilingual services to customers.

## Theme 3: Language planning

During the last six months, the Official Languages team has met with heads of services and Official Languages Coordinators to discuss individual service area language plans. The meetings provided an opportunity to discuss how the plans will feed into the process of planning the bilingual capacity within service areas, and following the discussions, the plans were reviewed and updated. There has been a process of further scrutiny at a corporate level thereafter to ensure that our approach to language planning and bilingual capacity is applied consistently across the organisation. Each service area has received feedback on their individual plans, with suggestions for ways of adding more challenging and ambitious targets within some plans. Following the introduction of the new recruitment system and the language skills levels for new posts and vacancies, service areas will need to review their plans. This will ensure that the linguistic requirements of posts are more detailed than the existing descriptions of posts as being Welsh essential or Welsh desirable.





The plans have also given assurance to the Investment and Resources Board that recruiting managers consider the bilingual services needed, the skills within teams to do so, and the most effective way of accomplishing those aims. When considering the need to recruit for new jobs, or to fill vacancies, the Board receives information about the language skills requirement of the posts and how that is reflected within individual service areas' language plans among other things. The information provided is the basis for any determination made.

When the new Welsh language skills framework has been implemented, and the service area language plans reviewed, it will be necessary to conduct a language skills survey across the organisation. Over the next year, we will be asking all Assembly Commission Staff to undertake a self-assessment of their Welsh language skills, based on the new framework. The results of the self-assessments will be incorporated into the human resources and payroll system, and preparations are already underway to enable the system to record this information. This work will provide information regarding language skills levels in a measurable way, which will allow for any changes and increased skills levels across all Assembly Commission staff to be reported annually. The process will also be a way of recognising learners' progress and of celebrating successes.



## Theme 4: Assembly proceedings

The work on developing an understanding of individual Members' language of preference is continuing. The integrated teams are the main ways of achieving that, and the current system is working well. The Research Service and the Translation and Reporting Service will continue to work on producing glossaries for committees when they are considering legislation, with glossaries also being produced for committee inquiries as required.

The Language Skills team has developed a comprehensive training programme for the individual needs of Assembly Members. This includes individual lessons on a weekly basis, more flexible arrangements such as pronunciation sessions before a Plenary speech or a series of sessions when the diary allows. Since the establishment of the team, many Assembly Members who are Welsh learners have gained the confidence to use their skills in debates or statements on the floor of the Siambr or at public events. The team has developed a training package to assist Members to undertake media interviews through the medium of Welsh. Several more fluent Assembly Members have also helped to re-gain their confidence to use their language skills in more formal situations.

One of the key developments for the Fifth Assembly in terms of supporting Members to work bilingually has been the establishment of the Contact Buddy system. Over the summer recess of 2017, all Assembly Members received information about their individual Contact Buddy in the form of a postcard containing contact details and other useful information to the Member. The buddies are available to offer advice on any matter relating to working bilingually. Over the year the buddies have provided advice on how to translate documents, how to arrange simultaneous translation for public meetings, and how to produce publications bilingually. The buddies meet occasionally as a group to discuss any queries or problems that have arisen, to share examples of good practice and to receive information on any support or additional provision to Assembly Members.

As part of the work of supporting Assembly Members the Members Business Support has initiated a project to ensure that Members are aware of what is expected of them in terms of the Official Languages Scheme. Following discussions with Assembly Members and their support staff, the team has produced a series of pages for the Members' intranet summarising practical information including the requirements laid out in the plan and how to arrange translations. The pages will also include tips for producing posters or publications bilingually. To assist with the process, a number of templates for surgeries'

advertisements and constituency newsletters were developed. It became clear also that more needs to be done to assist with the process of producing bilingual websites. Lists of bilingual terms and expressions have been produced in order to facilitate the process of planning and designing websites and piloting different methods of creating website content. This included arranging translations of key information, the use of information already available bilingually and reproducing messages from social media. The Official Languages team also advise individual Members as they go through the process of producing their website.



When I was elected as an Assembly Member, I was unfamiliar with the principles of working in a bilingual environment. The Members Business Support team helped me to identify the parts of the Official Languages Scheme that is relevant to me in my role as an Assembly Member. The team then supported me to make the required changes including help with translation and advice on creating bilingual publications and websites. I now feel confident that my surgery notices and other publications are fully bilingual taking account of best practice and in accordance with the Official Languages Scheme. I have also updated my website with the support of the team.

Dawn Bowden AM





## Theme 5: Developing the bilingual ethos of the organisation

### Identifying bilingual staff

Assembly Commission staff are encouraged to wear lanyards or badges stating they are Welsh speakers or learners. When they start to work with the Commission we offer them an appropriate lanyard on their first day. Official Languages Coordinators of individual service areas also meet new entrants to discuss the Scheme as part of their induction training, and offer them a lanyard or badge. New learners who register for Welsh lessons receive a learners' lanyard as part of their welcome pack. Contact buddies can also provide lanyards or badges to Assembly Members and their staff as necessary. A large number of bilingual Assembly Commission are now using the Iaith Gwaith logo as part of their email signatures. Support is available to staff if they wish to include the logo as part of their electronic signature, and the contact buddies can assist Assembly Members or their support staff if they wish to do the same.

Historically, some service areas have found it difficult to recruit and retain bilingual staff. The Assembly Commission is committed to considering innovative ways to recruit new staff, and the Security Service is leading the way in trialling alternative methods of recruitment. We are hopeful that the work on the recruitment theme and the introduction of the new language skills framework will assist service areas to better describe their needs in terms of language skills. In turn, we hope that this will attract candidates who would not have applied for a job on the basis of a 'Welsh essential' job description. In the case of the Security Service, several steps were taken to try to attract candidates with appropriate skills, including the use of detailed descriptions of the language requirements of the post, and appropriate tests. The analysis of the effectiveness of different approaches used will continue, and the lessons learned will assist us in our recruitment processes in the future.



**Case study:** Identifying bilingual staff

We needed a way to identify Welsh learners who were unable to wear lanyards, including Security Service staff. This is particularly important in order to enable visitors to the estate to choose to use Welsh.

Having looked at the type of products available, it was decided to use the same idea as the Dysgwr lanyard, and to produce a simple badge to be worn by staff on uniforms and clothing as required. The badges, along with the Dysgwr lanyards and 'iaith gwaith' products, are worn by Assembly Members, their support staff and Commission staff.

This is an important element of the work to ensure that it is easier to identify bilingual staff across the Assembly estate.

## Awareness

All new staff members attend a language awareness session as part of the corporate induction training. These sessions include an introduction to the bilingual ethos of the organisation and the principles of working bilingually, along with a short taster lesson from a member of the Language Skills team. In addition, Official Languages Co-ordinators provide a presentation on the Scheme and the implications for individual service areas as well as showing the language awareness video to new staff during their first few weeks. During the parliamentary year numerous awareness raising events are held; this year, we celebrated Shwmae/Su'mae Day, St Dwynwen's Day, St David's Day and Welsh Language Music Day. Each of these events provides an opportunity to remind Members, their support staff and Commission staff of our commitments in terms of official languages, to talk about working bilingually and to highlight the services of the Language Skills team. Gloywi iaith sessions and Courtesy Level Welsh sessions were also offered as part of the learning at work week.



Things have improved substantially over the last few years. As a Welsh speaker, the ability to work bilingually is excellent and there is a good bilingual ethos. On the whole, I feel that the balance is right, and it allows people to make their own choices.

Anna Daniel, Head of the Strategic Transformation Service



## Technology

The relationship with Microsoft continues with the launch of a neural machine translation model for Welsh. The work undertaken on the system has led to an improvement in the quality of the translations which are produced by the Microsoft Translator facility.

Machine translation technology was also integrated into the new digital system to produce the Record of Proceedings and to process Table Office business. The new system was built in conjunction with Assembly Commission staff, and by now, the Record of Plenary proceedings, committee transcripts and all business laid in the Table Office are produced in the form of searchable open data. Translators are also able to use machine translation technology within the system.

During the coming year, we will continue to explore new ways of using technology to support Assembly Members, their support staff and Assembly Commission staff to work in their official language of choice, and to provide bilingual services of the highest standard.

During the past year, work has begun on investigating ways of using the language choices of Assembly Members, their support staff and Commission staff to provide ICT interfaces in Welsh by default. The ICT and HR teams have started identifying ways of transferring language preferences as part of the process of planning for the provision of ICT equipment. Work processes will be modified in order to trial the system with new bilingual Assembly Commission staff so that we can gather feedback and plan for providing support to encourage bilingual speakers to use those systems.

There was a campaign during the year to provide support to users of our ICT system which incorporates telephony systems. Easy-to-follow guidance was provided to record a personal answerphone message. As well as noting the practical steps to be taken, the guidance also contains simple messages with phonetic wording and sound files in order to encourage users to record their messages themselves. Alternatively, members of the Official Languages Team were available to record messages on behalf of users. As part of the ongoing training and awareness programme, the Language Skills team can offer sessions to Assembly Members, their support staff and Assembly Commission staff on answering the telephone and recording answerphone messages.

## Simultaneous interpretation

The Scheme notes that we will provide simultaneous interpretation into English for all proceedings and for any other official business or events. The service is also available for internal meetings and events as required. When we are unable to ensure that bilingual staff are available, we will also provide simultaneous interpretation for employment related meetings. Our work on language planning has meant that we have not been required to provide this service as yet. Over the past year, we have been considering our simultaneous interpretation policy. This includes the principle of providing simultaneous interpretation into Welsh and the changes in processes and staffing levels, and training needs.

## Sharing expertise

Following a decision by the House of Commons to allow MPs to use Welsh for some of its proceedings, the Welsh Grand Committee undertook its first bilingual meeting in February this year. Leading up to the meeting the translation and reporting teams advised on practical arrangements and also assisted the Hansard team to prepare for reporting the contributions and translations including adapting the house style and providing advice to editors who speak Welsh but who were not used to reporting Welsh contributions. Also, interpretation at the meeting was provided by members of the Assembly Commission's interpretation team. The Translation and Reporting Service will continue to maintain the relationship and provide advice as required.

Recently, the Llywydd participated in a discussion about the future of minority languages across Europe during a meeting of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies. During the day, she gave a presentation that shared the Assembly's experiences of working as a completely bilingual legislature. It was an opportunity to raise awareness of the Welsh language and of its status as an official language here at the National Assembly for Wales. The Official Languages Team has also advised several external organisations on issues ranging from language technology to recruitment. These organisations have included the University of South Wales, Gwent Police, the Independent Office for Police Conduct, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Cardiff Council. Once again this year, a member of the Official Languages team gave a number of training sessions in conjunction with the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters to demonstrate to translators how to use machine translation technology to facilitate their work. The Manager of the Official Languages Scheme is a member of the Welsh Government's Welsh Technology Board that advises the



Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning on issues relating to technology and the Welsh language.

## Monitoring and compliance

Monitoring work has continued throughout the year through the work of the Official Languages Scheme coordinators, who report cases of non-compliance with the requirements of the Scheme. The Assembly Commission also prepares monthly reports on any praise or complaints received. In terms of complaints, the report outlines broadly the details of the complaint, our response to the individual or group who made a complaint, and any action taken to remedy the situation including changing processes or redirecting resources or skills. This is an effective way of ensuring that we learn lessons from any problems, and of sharing examples of good practice across the organisation. During the meetings of the Official Languages Coordinators Forum there is an opportunity to discuss any problems and receive guidance or advice as a way of ensuring fewer cases of non-compliance.

At times during the year we have failed to live up to the high standards we have set ourselves or failed to meet the expectations of Assembly Members, their support staff or the public. A number of informal and formal complaints have been received, and can be categorized as follows:

### Information on our website

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Once again this year, there have been times when we failed to publish documents in accordance with the requirements of our Scheme because of technological issues. We have been informed of several cases of links to Welsh documents leading to the English versions, broken links, or English text appearing on Welsh pages. Feedback on such issues is extremely valuable to us as it enables us to correct mistakes or problems quickly. Following feedback on these cases, and as part of the work to refresh our website, we will look at ways to improve training for staff members who publish on the website, including reinforcing the need to check content and links before publication.

### Information on our intranet

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There have been a few examples over the past year of messages published in English only on the intranet newpage. The issues were investigated immediately, and on the whole it was possible to publish a bilingual version very quickly. On the whole, a lack of planning was the cause of the problem, with staff uncertain about

the processes for requesting urgent translations, or about the requirements of the Scheme in respect of such messages. Following discussions with Official Languages Coordinators and heads of services, it was agreed that there was a need to remind staff about the services available through the Translation and Reporting Service, and there was an opportunity to do this by going to service area team meetings and through giving a session as part of the learning at work week.

#### Papers and documents relating to Assembly business

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There have been a few examples of failures to provide Assembly business documents bilingually. Again, a lack of planning, or last minute changes to business was responsible for these cases. When it became clear that we had failed to provide a document in a bilingual format, arrangements were made immediately to ensure that a translation was available as soon as possible. The relevant Assembly Members were also informed about what had gone wrong, the actions taken to resolve the problem, and when it would be possible for them to receive the document in their language of choice.

#### Answerphone messages

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We received several complaints informally about the standard of the automated voicemail message on our telephony system. At present, there is no way to turn off the message as it is part of the system itself. It was therefore decided to draw up guidance for all system users to help them to record personal messages. In future, as part of their ICT induction, we will remind new users that they need to record a message. The ICT team and the Official Languages team are also available to help individuals or teams to record messages.

#### Broadcasting Assembly proceedings

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We broadcast live verbatim proceedings, and simultaneously interpreted proceedings on Senedd.tv and YouTube. We provide a verbatim sound feed and a simultaneously interpreted of every Plenary meeting for broadcasters. BBC Wales live streams Plenary on their website in Welsh and English. First Minister's Questions is broadcast with the interpreted feed on BBC2 Wales every Tuesday, and BBC Parliament broadcasts First Minister's Questions and some other items from Plenary each week. A number of complaints have been received, including a question to the Assembly Commission in the Siambwr, regarding the way in which broadcasters use the feeds we provide. One element of the complaints was that both languages are broadcast at the same time, and that some people,

particularly older people, find it difficult to hear either language when an Assembly Member makes a contribution in Welsh.

In addition, the current situation means that if an Assembly Member makes a contribution in Welsh, the simultaneous interpretation is broadcast rather than the contribution in the original language. Another issue raised was that the complainants would prefer to hear the contribution in the original language with subtitles for the translation.

It is essential that the people of Wales can follow their democracy in both of our official languages. The Commissioner with responsibility for Official Languages will write to the BBC to request assurances that it will be possible to understand Welsh contributions made by Members. More generally, we will continue to do everything within our means to ensure that broadcasters treat both our official languages equally and to work with them to ensure a solution to the problem.

#### Remote participation

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On occasions, witnesses or Assembly Members will take part in committee meetings through a video conference or Skype facility. It is not currently possible, due to technical restrictions, to provide bilingual sound feeds to them without having additional staff on location. This means that they can only choose to hear the proceedings in one language, rather than in their language of choice. We will continue to investigate the latest developments and consider the matter when arranging committee meetings and events.

#### Procuring software for Assembly Members and their support staff

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A project to replace the existing caseworker system is underway. An Assembly Member approached the Commission to express concern that the pricing of the replacement systems indicated that those who chose to implement a Welsh language solution would have to pay higher cost. In the spirit of the Official Languages Scheme and to uphold the principle that both languages should be treated equally, Commission officials have resolved the issue. Annual costs of the caseworker system in question will be the same for those wishing to use a bilingual system.