APPENDIX 1

Welsh Language Standards
Annual report 2024/25

This document is also available in Welsh.

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1. Introduction

The Welsh Language Standards require Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) to produce and publish an annual report by 30 June each year.

This 2024/25 annual report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and outlines how the council continues to be compliant during this period as well as highlighting any new developments/areas of progress.

2. How the council complies with the Welsh Language Standards

2.1 The council is not under challenge for any standards at this time.

2.2 The council is currently reliant on the Equalities, Welsh language, and Engagement manager to oversee the commissioner requirements since the post of the Welsh Language Office became vacant last October 2023. Employees continue to receive regular updates and information regarding the Welsh language in terms of compliance, access to resources such as training and raising the profile of the language and culture. In April 2023 the Welsh Language e-learning training module was made mandatory to all staff and this is regularly communicated to staff via Bridgenders to increase completion levels.

2.3 Since May 2023 a project has been ongoing to review the Welsh telephony options available to all customers calling. Work took place to provide service areas with the relevant options to ensure full compliance to the Welsh language standards. We are looking to undertake a review of this project to ensure a Welsh Language option is always available to callers, albeit a bi-lingual answer machine message with the option of a call-back from a Welsh speaker when requested.

2.4 Support to the Welsh Education Strategic Plan is ongoing in order to achieve the commitments outlined. This includes the launch, promotion, and ongoing marketing of the Welsh-medium education journey video as part of the Welsh in Education Forum. We have developed a Welsh language schedule in order to ensure that we are regularly promoting various Welsh Language resources. The communications and marketing team post at least twice a week on social media to encourage attendance of WME schools, promote adult learning – DysguCymraeg, advertise different partners and the activities they run, i.e baby yoga, promote Welsh events and important dates such as the Eisteddfod.

2.5 Significant updates have been made to the Welsh-medium education section of the BCBC Website: https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/schools-and-education/welsh-medium-education/ The pages include a list of Welsh-medium schools including additional provisions available at the school, support for non-Welsh-speaking families, early years and transition support and much more.

2.6 The Welsh Language Manager attends quarterly meetings with partners and voluntary organisations that deliver services through the medium of Welsh. These meetings are an opportunity to share information, ideas and experience whilst helping to identify Welsh language related priorities for Bridgend County Borough across partner agencies.

2.7 As part of the manager induction programme, the Equalities and Welsh Language manager delivers a presentation on the Welsh Language Standards and what this means in practice for managers. This is to ensure there is a full understanding of the council's obligations and their management responsibilities to ensuring staff are aware of the Welsh Language compliance standards. Staff intranet pages remain available to access any guidance required around the Welsh Language compliance. There is also the dedicated Welsh email inbox (WLS@bridgend.gov.uk) for staff to utilise for any Welsh Language queries or guidance required.

2.8 The council provides a range of Welsh language training and resources to staff**,** including support with community courses on Welsh language training which is regularly communicated via staff messages. There continues to be a compliance document available, which details how we will provide the relevant service delivery, operational, record-keeping, promotional and policy making standards. Our complaints procedure is also available on our website as well as previous annual reports.

2.9 We provide information to the Welsh Language Commissioner as requested, investigating complaints, and providing support to service areas to address any escalated issues. We continue to take part in audit procedures internally and externally that are carried out by the Commissioner's office to ensure that we are compliant as and when presented.

3. Service delivery

During 2024/25 the Council maintained our service delivery commitments by:

3.1 Ensuring any responses to correspondence received in Welsh are reciprocated where a reply is required. Additionally, we issue generic bilingual or separate English and Welsh versions of correspondence, treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English depending on declared language choice. All departments are required to provide a bilingual greeting over the telephone and, where relevant, conversations continue in Welsh until they are concluded or callers are passed to Welsh speaking staff (if available), or to English speaking staff if no Welsh speaker is available and the customer is agreeable to this.

The operation of a single main telephone number (01656 643643) is available for those wishing to speak to someone in Welsh or English. If a Welsh speaking member of staff is not available at the time of calling, callers are advised, in Welsh, when such a service will be available. Those wishing to speak to someone in Welsh can also leave a message in Welsh and we state on materials that advertise a BCBC telephone number that calls are welcomed in Welsh and English.

3.2 We continue to treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language on any advertising materials. When we invite attendees to a meeting, it is instilled that staff offer the Welsh language option at the meeting and put the necessary arrangements in place to facilitate this. This process is also reflected when sending bilingual invitations to BCBC public meetings/events (where relevant) and those meetings/events funded by BCBC (50% or more funding). Anyone presenting at meetings will be asked if they wish to use Welsh as well as attendees being advised that they are welcome to use the Welsh language (if we are advised in advance) at the meeting. Materials used for advertising these meeting/events or for display at the meetings/events are bilingual also.

3.3 We ensure that we produce public-facing marketing, advertising, and publicity materials (including press releases and statements) bilingually. This is also applicable to public-facing corporate documents such as policies and rules as well as consultation documentation. These documents aim to treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English. Separate English versions of documents that are available in Welsh (where they are required to be) state this on the English version. Also, any publicly available forms are bilingual or available as English and Welsh versions. If separate versions are in place, we state on the English version of the form that a Welsh form is available.

3.4 BCBC respond to Welsh language social media messages in Welsh where a reply is required. We also replace street, place and direction signs (including temporary signs where applicable) following damage or normal wear and tear, with bilingual signs with the Welsh text appearing first. In addition, we also produce official notices bilingually with the Welsh text always appearing first.

3.5 We have Welsh speaking reception staff wearing lanyards to show customers they are able to provide a Welsh language service and bilingual audio announcements are done with the Welsh announcement first at all times. We continue to produce our agenda and minutes for Cabinet and committee meetings bilingually (standard 41) and these are available on our website.

3.6 During this period we have continued to develop bilingual content and functionality on the website as required (standard 52 and 56). We post bilingually on social media and respond to Welsh queries received in Welsh, where a response is required as standard.

4. New developments

4.1 We have continued to improve and develop our online platform 'My Account', enabling subscribers to report issues such as pest control and street lighting via the platform through the medium of Welsh. Work is underway to implement a bilingual staff intranet.

4.2 By changing the Welsh Language e-learning training to a mandatory module for staff this allows Learning and Development to have access to completion figures and the ability to send out reminders to staff that have the training outstanding.

4.3 A Staff network "Iaith Gwaith" has been established which is a forum for Welsh language practice. This offers a great opportunity for staff that want to improve their Welsh skills and connect with colleagues. All proficiency levels are welcome and encouraged to participate, we currently have 16 members of the forum that meet monthly for an hour.

5. Policy-making standards

5.1 Staff are required to use our equalities impact assessment (EIA) process to ensure consideration is given to the Welsh Language when policies are revised or developed. This process ensures a thorough risk assessment is

carried out and requires evidence-gathering and investigation to ensure the Welsh language is not at detriment. This is a consideration for those taking part in any consultation, engagement and research activity the Council carries out whereby views on whether a policy decision (if applicable) could impact on the use of the Welsh language.

5.2 An Awarding Grants Protocol has been approved, which ensures that decisions on awarding grants identify the effects on the Welsh language, and then consider how negative effects can be minimised and positive effects maximised. This has been shared with officers who administer grants and published on the intranet as a guide for BCBC staff. The Protocol is in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, which must be considered.

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6. Operational standards

6.1 In February 2024 Internal Audit carried out an inspection on our Welsh Language adherence against the operational standards. During the audit a number of strengths and areas of good practice were identified as follows:

- Guidance is available to all staff members on the Welsh Language Standards via Bridgenders, which is a staff magazine produced on a quarterly basis.
- The Council have published a 5-year strategy to promote and facilitate the Welsh Language in addition to an Annual Report on the Council's compliance with the Standards.
- Step-by-step guidance is available to staff members via Bridgenders detailing how the Welsh Translation Framework must be followed.
- A record of complaints received by the public relating to the Council's compliance with the Standards is maintained.
- All internal policies sampled by the Auditor which were required to be translated in accordance with Welsh Language Standards 105-111, were available in Welsh.

6.2 Human Resources assess the Welsh language skills of our employees and staff are encouraged to update their personal development and language skills on an ongoing basis. Training is available such as 'meet and greet' and Cwrs Mynediad which are available to all staff. There are multiple e-learning packages available to staff from Welsh language awareness and culture to Welsh language standards guidance. The language preference of employees

is always captured in order to provide correspondence relating to their employment, and various employment related forms in Welsh as required.

6.4 All Council buildings have bilingual signage in place including at our main reception areas and customers can expected to be greeted bilingually with the Welsh language taking precedent. Customers and visitors are welcomed to utilise our services through the medium of Welsh and all front-line staff can greet the public in Welsh.

6.5 We provide a report on the five-year strategy at our Cabinet Equalities Committee on an annual basis. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) was implemented in September 2022. We have continued to work with Education and other members to progress with the objectives set in the 5-year plan. We have continued to make progress in the development of the Welsh Medium childcare settings across the County Borough. A steering group made up of childcare professionals and third sector colleagues has been established and meets regularly to ensure effective delivery over the next three years.

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7. Record-keeping standards

7.1 All complaints received relating to our compliance are recorded as part of our corporate complaints system. The Welsh Language officer also maintains records of any queries or initial investigations that are received by the Local Authority.

7.2 Human Resources monitor and record the number of employees accessing training courses through the medium of English and Welsh - see section 9 for further details**.** Additionally keeping a record of the Welsh language skills of employees and assessments of new and vacant posts – see section 10 for further details.

7.3 A record is kept of the number of Welsh interactions that take place over a number of channels (telephone, face to face and digital) within the customer services contact centre.

8. Complaints

8.1 A complaint was received by the commissioner on 12/04/2024 from a member of the public about a sign in the car park near the John Street toilets in Porthcawl which has an incorrect Welsh translation - 'wedi lalu' instead of 'wedi talu'. The complainant has already submitted a complaint about this to the Council on 23/03/2024 to complaints@bridgend.gov.uk and the sign was rectified therefore no further action was required.

8.2 Another complaint was received by the commissioner from a member of the public on 13th June about the fact that he did not receive a response to an e-mail which he wrote in Welsh to the Council's elections department on Sunday night 09/06/2024 about being able to vote by proxy, but he received a response in English at 8:45am on 13/06/2024. A response was sent from the legal team advising that the electoral arrangements are the responsibility of the Registration Officer and Returning Officer. The Council is not the responsible body, those functions are the responsibility of the Registration Officer and Returning Officer respectively whose roles are independent of the Council.

8.3 On the 7th December a complaint was sent directly to the communications mailbox, in relation to the Council's Welsh webpage not being updated to reflect the emergency community recycling centre closures on that weekend. The team responded to advise that, this was an exceptional circumstance/emergency situation and there were no translation services available as it was the weekend. No further action was required at this time.

8.4 A complaint was received by the commissioner from a member of the public on 23rd January, to report errors on the Welsh version of the Council's Website. The 'cashless catering' system contained a number of Welsh language errors. The system in question is provided by a 3rd party therfore took longer to resolve, but the Commisioners Office was made aware and extra time was provided to recify the errors.

9. Employee skills and training

Welsh language skills as of 31 March 2025:

	BCBC excluding Schools				Schools			
	Welsh Speaker				Welsh Speaker			
Description	Female	Male	Total	%	Female	Male	Total	%

Total Headcount	2367	747	3114		2312	521	2833	
0 - No Skills	1168	383	1551	49.81%	352	82	434	15.32%
A1 - Entry Level	548	178	726	23.31%	397	80	477	16.84%
A2 - Foundation Level	13	3	16	0.51%	13	2	15	0.53%
B1 - Intermediate Level	50	16	66	2.12%	88	13	101	3.57%
B2 - Advanced Level	3	1	4	0.13%	2	1	3	0.11%
C1 - Proficiency Level	85	22	107	3.44%	131	18	149	5.26%
C2 - Fully proficient	10	4	14	0.45%	5	3	8	0.28%
Prefer not to say	4	4	8	0.26%	10	3	13	0.46%
Not declared	486	136	622	19.97%	1314	319	1633	57.64%

	BCBC excluding Schools				Schools			
	Welsh Reader				Welsh Reader			
Description	Female	Male	Total	%	Female	Male	Total	%
Total Headcount	2367	747	3114		2312	521	2833	
0 - No Skills	1169	389	1558	50.03%	352	82	434	15.32%
A1 - Entry Level	529	167	696	22.35%	394	77	471	16.63%
A2 - Foundation Level	16	2	18	0.58%	12	4	16	0.56%
B1 - Intermediate Level	59	24	83	2.67%	94	12	106	3.74%
B2 - Advanced Level	2	2	4	0.13%	3	1	4	0.14%
C1 - Proficiency Level	89	17	106	3.40%	129	19	148	5.22%
C2 - Fully proficient	13	4	17	0.55%	5	3	8	0.28%
Prefer not to say	4	4	8	0.26%	11	3	14	0.49%
Not declared	486	138	624	20.04%	1312	320	1632	57.61%

	BCBC excluding Schools	Schools

Welsh Writer				
Description	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**	**%**
Total Headcount	**2367**	**747**	**3114**	
0 - No Skills	1295	449	1744	56.01%
A1 - Entry Level	426	112	538	17.28%
A2 - Foundation Level	14	2	16	0.51%
B1 - Intermediate Level	46	22	68	2.18%
B2 - Advanced Level	2	2	4	0.13%
C1 - Proficiency Level	86	14	100	3.21%
C2 - Fully proficient	8	4	12	0.39%
Prefer not to say	4	4	8	0.26%
Not declared	486	138	624	20.04%

Welsh Writer			
Female	**Male**	**Total**	**%**
2312	**521**	**2833**	
400	90	490	17.30%
360	70	430	15.18%
15	3	18	0.64%
81	13	94	3.32%
2	1	3	0.11%
125	17	142	5.01%
5	3	8	0.28%
10	3	13	0.46%
1314	321	1635	57.71%

	BCBC excluding Schools			
Welsh Listener				
Description	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**	**%**
Total Headcount	**2367**	**747**	**3114**	
0 - No Skills	304	98	402	12.91%
A1 - Entry Level	213	64	277	8.90%
A2 - Foundation Level	21	5	26	0.83%
B1 - Intermediate Level	12	4	16	0.51%
B2 - Advanced Level	3	1	4	0.13%
C1 - Proficiency Level	12	4	16	0.51%
C2 - Fully proficient	20	4	24	0.77%
Prefer not to say	6	4	10	0.32%
Not declared	1776	563	2339	75.11%

	Schools			
Welsh Listener				
Female	**Male**	**Total**	**%**	
2312	**521**	**2833**		
47	13	60	2.12%	
67	16	83	2.93%	
16	6	22	0.78%	
9	4	13	0.46%	
5	1	6	0.21%	
1	0	1	0.04%	
11	3	14	0.49%	
11	3	14	0.49%	
2145	475	2620	92.48%	

Please note:

- The ‘Schools’ category covers employees directly employed by governing bodies. Inclusion staff are included under the ‘BCBC excluding schools’ category.
- The ‘Not Declared’ category covers employees who have not provided details of their Welsh language skills.
- The skill levels identified are based on individual self-assessment.
- 194 employees hold a school position and an ‘All other services’ position and are counted once in their highest contracted hour position across BCBC.

Number of employees who attended training courses in Welsh between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025:

- 8 employees have attended ‘Cwrs Mynediad’ training in 2024/25, enabling them to develop their language skills further. This includes those undertaking year 1 and 2, based on four hours per week over 30 weeks.

- 11 employees have been supported to attend Welsh Language courses in the community. These courses included Foundation, Sylfaen Part 1 and Sylfaen Part 2, Sylfaen Part 3.

- 24 employees have attended ‘Welsh Language Meet and Greet’ training in 2024-25, enabling them to answer the telephone and greet customers in Welsh.

- There were no requests for face-to-face training materials to be made available in Welsh during the year.

- There have been 1015 e-learning completions for Welsh Language Awareness e-Learning (English – 1014, Welsh - 1) and 20 for Welsh Language Standards e-Learning (English - 20 Welsh - 0).

- 585 new employees completed the corporate induction e-learning module, and 100 new starters completed it via a workbook. Total completions 685. Corporate induction includes a section on the introduction to Welsh Language, the Welsh Language Standards and links to the Welsh Language E-Learning Modules and Welsh Language Training Opportunities.

- 22 new managers completed the manager induction e-learning module. Manager induction includes an introduction to Welsh Language and the Welsh Language Standards and links to the Welsh Standards E-Learning Module and the Welsh Language Awareness E-Learning Module.

New and Vacant Posts

Number of new and vacant posts advertised during 2024/25 where Welsh language skills were:

Category	Number of posts categorised	Percentage of posts categorised
Essential	15	1.60%
Desirable	464	49.57
Need to learn Welsh	0	0%
No Welsh skills required	457	48.82%

11. Reception services: contact centres and telephone contact centres

Demand for Welsh services in the Customer Contact Centre between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025:

Face to face interactions in Welsh	**0**
Total visits	11,186
Welsh requests as % of total interactions conducted	0.00%

Demand for Welsh services in the Telephone Contact Centre between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025:

Volume of calls during normal working hours (Welsh and English)	**76,582**

Volume of calls received out of hours (Welsh and English)	3,100
Total calls received (Welsh and English)	79,682
Volume of calls in Welsh	98
Welsh requests as a % of total calls	0.12%

Over the last year our demand continued to be low for our face-to-face channel, across all languages.

Telephony requests decreased from 79,146 to 76,582 (normal working hours (Welsh and English). Whilst our volume of calls received out of hours (Welsh and English) increased from 1,361 to 3,100.

Welsh requests as a % of total contacts also increased from 0.07% to 0.08%

Customer demand for the online channel continues to increase, which in turn has impacted the customer demand on both our telephone and face-to-face channels.

There are still a low number of requests to contact us in Welsh. We also have a low number of staff who can speak Welsh and whilst we do all we can when we are able to recruit, recruiting Welsh speakers continues to be very difficult.

In addition to this we will also carry out regular reviews of our Telephony system to ensure we are routing calls to the correct department, whether Welsh or English is selected. We also continue to work with front-line services to review their inbound channels to make sure the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language.

12. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

Three full EIAs were carried out and considered the impact of the policy/strategy on people's opportunity to use the Welsh language in a positive or negative way and treat both languages equally. No negative impact was identified and as a result, no amendments were made to the proposed policies/strategies assessed.

13. Promoting and raising awareness of the Welsh language and Welsh culture

The council is proud to promote, celebrate and raise awareness of the Welsh language, the culture and any events taking place locally to raise the profile of the language. Below are just some of the events and activities we have promoted between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024:

- St Dwynwen’s Day
- Welsh Language Music Day
- St David's Day
- Urdd Eisteddfod
- Cymraeg for kid’s programme
- The Urdd
- Gwyl Ogi Ogi
- Shwmae Sumae Day
- Gŵyl Ogi Ogi Ogwr 2024
- Siarter iaith awards