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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Christine Chapman AM
Chair: Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

5th March 2014

Dear Christine

I am writing in response to your correspondence dated 28 January, as Chair of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, about the Welsh language.

Your correspondence raises a number of points, and I have provided information specifically related to the headings contained therein.

As far as our progress with the Strategy *A Living Language: A Language for Living* is concerned, we will shortly be publishing an annual report, and I would be happy to discuss any issues raised in it with the Committee.

I believe that the Strategy remains appropriate. Though the 2011 Census results were disappointing, they were not unexpected. Therefore although we launched the Strategy before those results were published, it was drafted with the aim of getting to grips with the situation revealed by the Census.

Our Action Plan for 2013-14 shows how we moved on following the Census. One of the proactive steps we took, of course, was to hold the Gynhadledd Fawr, in order to gather practical ideas to support the language and our Welsh communities.

The written statement I issued on 3 February contains further details about the steps we have taken thus far.¹ In that statement I emphasise that the Strategy continues to underpin and drive our approach and that important developments are in progress, but that we cannot afford to be complacent. I also said that I would be making full policy statement in the spring, and I intend to do so before the Easter recess.

Concerning the mainstreaming of the Welsh language within the Welsh Government, we are addressing the need to analyse the Welsh Government budget's impact on the Welsh language. Specifically, work has been done to draw up a new methodology, and we will begin to assess expenditure on the Welsh language and its contribution to the aims of *A Living Language: A Language for Living* in the 2014 budgeting process.

¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2014/welshlang/?lang=en>

As we prepare to implement the new Welsh Language Standards, we are working on a new impact assessment tool for policy decisions, with the aim of mainstreaming Welsh across policy decisions.

Another issue contained in your letter is the Welsh Language Commissioner's role and budget. When I laid the Welsh Language Commissioner's budget estimate before the National Assembly for Wales on 27 January, a letter was also published which included an explanation of the basis for the 10% cut in the 2014/15 budget. A copy of that letter can be found online.²

Officials are currently working with the Welsh Language Commissioner to update and review the Joint-working Framework Agreement. Once this is agreed and signed it will be published on the Welsh Government website. I have also asked my officials to forward a copy of the agreement to you when it is published.

In the field of planning, practice guidance is currently being prepared by the Welsh Government, and we expect it will be made available to local planning authorities in the spring. We are working with representatives from local planning authorities and the Welsh Language Commissioner's office to prepare the guidance and believe it will be another useful tool, complementing Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 20, to help authorities consider the Welsh language effectively in their Local Development Plans (LDPs). The practice guidance will be useful for authorities at both the preparation and review stages of the LDP.

In relation to our response to the Welsh Communities Task and Finish Group, we are currently considering the recommendations, and this will feed into the policy statement that I will make during the spring. We will issue our response to the report at the same time.

In your letter you refer to the lack of a reference to the Welsh language in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill. There is current legislation and guidance which provides sufficient coverage and protection in relation to the provision of public services in the Welsh language (the Welsh Language Act 1993, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and *More than just words: the Strategic Framework for Welsh language services in Health, Social Services and Social Care*). There is therefore no gap in the law which would be addressed by the inclusion of an explicit reference to the Welsh language on the face of the Bill.

In addition, the approach set out in *More than just words* is being taken forward through the Well-being Statement. This Statement will guide the development of the work to implement the Bill and is a core part of the legislative framework as it sets out a duty on the Welsh Ministers in the Bill. The Statement was developed in partnership with people who use services themselves and includes direct reference to getting care through the Welsh language.

The Explanatory Memorandum published alongside the Bill also makes clear that subordinate legislation will make specific reference to the Welsh language, for example, in relation to the new assessment and commissioning arrangements for social services and social care.

² <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-laid-docs.htm?act=dis&id=253281&ds=1/2014>

The importance of having regard to a person's language of choice is specifically provided for in the Bill. A Government amendment introduced at Stage 2 and agreed by the Health and Social Care Committee in November 2013 means that under the overarching duty at section 4(3)(c), any persons exercising functions under the Act "must have regard to the characteristics, culture and beliefs of the individual (including for example, language)". This reference to language incorporates the Welsh language where this is a person's language of choice.

In addition a Government amendment tabled at Stage 3 was recently passed. This amendment captures the spirit of an amendment tabled by Elin Jones AM during Stage 2 which was to provide for linguistic need to be recorded on any register of sight-impaired, hearing impaired and other disabled people maintained in accordance with what was then section 15 and is now section 17 in the post-Stage 3 Bill.

The Bill therefore legislates clearly to give citizens a strong voice and real control over services without the need to have explicit references to the Welsh language on the face of the Bill.

In relation to the Welsh-language workforce, in November 2012 the Welsh Government launched *More than just words* its strategic framework to ensure that Welsh speakers can access health, social services and social care in the Welsh language. The strategy recognises that for many Welsh speakers receiving services in Welsh is not just a matter of choice but also a matter of language need e.g. for people with dementia, those who have suffered a stroke, and children under the age of five.

Two action plans accompany *More than just words*, one for the NHS and the other for social services and social care. These two action plans detail the practical steps needed to achieve the strategy over the next three years from April 2013 and they include a number of strategic objectives. One of the strategic objectives includes increasing the capability of the workforce to provide Welsh language services.

A monitoring system for *More than just words* and the two action plans was introduced in April 2013. An implementation manager is in post and is liaising closely with partners in the NHS and Social Services sharing good practice and support as needed. An implementation group has also been established. The implementation group is monitoring delivery progress on a 6 monthly basis and reporting through the Deputy Minister for Social Services to the Welsh Language in Health and Social Services Ministerial Task Group.

Since the implementation of *More than just words* in April 2013 some of the developments to increase the capability of the workforce to provide services in Welsh include:

- Aneurin Bevan Health Board is developing a course to raise staff confidence in using Welsh
- Hywel Dda Health Board has developed and initiated a successful language skills strategy. Workforce skills have been identified and are being used as part of staff rota plans
- Care Council for Wales has developed a through implementation plan, including work on a first draft of Welsh Language Competencies Framework, and work on developing a language skills plan for the sector
- The Care Council is also currently undertaking research to gather information regarding creating a Welsh language course for workers in the social services sector, with the intention of improving individuals' confidence in using their language skills.

In relation to sustainable development, the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty has asked the current Commissioner for Sustainable Futures, Peter Davies, to pilot a national conversation on the Wales We Want by 2050. This launched on 18th February and is intended to enhance our understanding of the long term issues that Wales may face.

Our proposals for a Future Generations Bill (the working title) will set ambitious, long term goals to reflect the Wales we want to see in the future. Putting these goals into law will set a course for public services in Wales to pull together towards a healthier and more prosperous country, by balancing the economy, the environment and society. We have developed proposed draft goals to help inform the discussion on the Wales We Want by 2050 as follows:

- Wales is prosperous and innovative;
- Wales is a more equal nation;
- Wales uses a fair share of natural resources;
- People in Wales are healthier;
- Communities across Wales are safer, cohesive and resilient;
- People in Wales participate in our shared culture, with a thriving Welsh language.

The national conversation is an opportunity for everybody to inform discussion on the Wales We Want by 2050. I understand that Peter Davies has engaged Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg and the Welsh Language Commissioner in these conversations.

Our proposals for the new Commissioner for Future Generations also include an advisory council which we intend to be made up of core members, one of which will be the Welsh Language Commissioner. This secures the Welsh language at the heart of our approach to achieving a more sustainable Wales.

The written statement issued by the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty can be viewed online.³ Further details on the pilot National Conversation can be found on the Wales We Want website.⁴

I would encourage you to get involved in the pilot national conversation. The conversation will reach out across Wales and engage with as many people as possible.

We believe that the relationship between childcare and Welsh-medium education is important. This is especially true when we consider Welsh-medium education, as children and parents' first contact with the language is through Welsh-medium childcare or playgroups. Welsh-medium provision is an integral part of Flying Start, and local authorities are asked to respond to parental choice. Local authorities are also required to state in their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans how they ensure that childcare provision, including that which is offered as part of Flying Start, contributes to the development and expansion of Welsh-medium education.

³ <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2014/futuregenerationsbill/?lang=en>

⁴ <http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/>

Targets were included in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy as a way of measuring the effectiveness of the Strategy. That said, the targets clearly show the Welsh Government's aspiration to see an increase in the number of pupils being educated through the medium of Welsh. The increase in Welsh-medium education is shown, primarily, by measuring the increase in the percentage of seven year olds who are educated through the medium of Welsh. In order to achieve this, we have introduced a new planning procedure through the School Standards and Organisation Act, in the form of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. These are a mechanism to improve planning from the pre-school stage to the end of statutory education. Therefore, by implementing them correctly, we will be able to achieve the targets in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy.

But the planning has to be done correctly and local authorities must stimulate growth as well as meeting the demand for Welsh-medium education. In 2012, the number of seven year old learners who were assessed in Welsh reached its highest level since the assessments were introduced in 1999, rising above 7,000 for the first time and registering the highest annual increase percentage-wise (7.4 per cent). However, this increase was achieved in the context of an unusually large annual increase (7.5 per cent) in the general cohort, leading to the target measure remaining unchanged. Therefore the increase in the Year 2 cohort is a consideration, as is the way local authorities work with groups such as Mudiad Meithrin to establish the all important contact point to Welsh education.

Linguistic progression is a priority for us at every educational stage. Attention is given to the number of pupils or students who continue to study Welsh as a First Language, or subjects through the medium of Welsh, as they move from one key stage to the next during their educational careers. We ask local authorities to state how they increase progression rates in their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. Consortia can use the Welsh in Education Grant to organise relevant training and activities to improve linguistic progression. Welsh Language Champions are supported in every further education college to promote linguistic progression.

The work continues to promote Welsh-medium and bilingual learning in the Work-based Learning sector. By encouraging learners to continue to use Welsh as they learn, it gives them the opportunity to maintain and develop their Welsh-language skills for use in the workplace. Recently we also conducted a survey on the need for Welsh language skills in the workplace, and the final report will be published soon. The survey's results will help us plan post-16 education to ensure that young people have appropriate Welsh-language skills as they move into the workplace. The results will also be of use to the careers sector as they advise individuals on the skills needed by employers.

In the case of encouraging the use of Welsh by young people in a social setting, Urdd Gobaith Cymru has 50,000 members across Wales, with 962 branches providing well over 200 social activities annually.

The competitive side is one element of the Urdd's work. Over 220 Eisteddfod events are held by the Urdd every year, which feed into their main Eisteddfod. At present, the main winners receive a certificate, but the Urdd intend to offer special stickers to every one taking part in order to show an appreciation of their efforts. It is also important to remember that research conducted by the Urdd has shown that the children and young people who take part in the eisteddfods participate in at least 3 other Urdd-related activities. They are therefore fostered in the Urdd's ethos, which ensures that every individual is treated fairly, with respect and is encouraged to develop as a citizen.

As well as the Urdd's work, the Government also funds several other grants and projects which support young people to use Welsh socially. These include funding music projects such as Community Music Wales, the Gwallgofiaid and the BBC Radio Cymru tour of schools, as well as support for the Young Farmers in Wales. One of the division's main youth projects is the Supporting Language Use Project. This project's aim is to give young people more opportunities to use Welsh socially in a variety of settings, with the support of school staff and pupils and community / youth partners such as the Urdd and the Mentrau Iaith. The Government is working with several partners to implement this project, including Local Authorities.

Finally, I'm grateful to you as a Committee for your comments, and appreciate your constructive feedback. I look forward to meeting with you again during the summer term in order to update you on what the Government is doing to promote the Welsh language.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carwyn Jones', written in a cursive style.

CARWYN JONES