



Board Meeting: 26 October 2012

AGENDA ITEM: 3

Title of paper:	Welsh Language Task and Finish Group Report
Purpose of paper:	To improve performance across the Welsh Government with regard to the Welsh language, and to help ensure that the WG will be able to comply with the forthcoming Welsh language standards.
Action required by the Board:	The Board is asked to: approve the Welsh Language Task and Finish Group's final report; approve the table of recommendations at Annex A of that report.
Official presenting the paper:	Dr Emyr Roberts Director General, DfES
Paper prepared by:	Huw Onllwyn Jones Head of Welsh Language Unit

1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2011, the Board considered an initial paper setting out recommendations to improve our performance with regard to our Welsh language commitments, partly in preparation for the forthcoming Welsh Language Standards.
- 1.2 As a result, the Board approved the recommendation that a Welsh Language Task and Finish Group be established, chaired by Emyr Roberts, Director General DfES, with membership consisting of representatives from each Directorate General. The Board asked that the Task and Finish Group should consider our internal use of Welsh, as well as identifying ways to improve our external Welsh language services, in line with our Welsh language scheme and strategy.
- 1.3 An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Board in June this year. In response, the Board requested that some changes be made to the paper, including more detail regarding the implementation of some of its recommendations. The Board also asked that an action plan be prepared, based on the Group's recommendations, to include an indication of likely timescales and costs. The Board also asked the Task and Finish Group Chair to meet with individual DGs to discuss the action plan and agree ownership of each action point. All but one of those meetings has taken place.

2. Issues for consideration

- 2.1 The Welsh Language Task and Finish Group identified 6 main themes, namely: Welsh language awareness; our bilingual 'look and feel'; Welsh in the workplace; bilingual skills, workforce planning and Welsh for Adults courses; Welsh language scheme compliance, and; ownership, monitoring and reporting.
- 2.2 The report, including 51 recommendations is enclosed at Annex 1.

3. Resource implications

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group agreed that it would be important to ensure that the costs associated with implementing the recommendations represent value for money. The cumulative total of the known costs identified for implementing the recommendations is £211,900. This includes:
 - £200,000 that has already been allocated from the PSMW budget to fund Welsh for Adults provision.
 - £7,000 from the PSMW budget for the development of an online Welsh language awareness module (which has already been committed and the work is underway);

£4,900 will come from the PPCS corporate training budget for the development and implementation of intensive language awareness courses for key members of staff.

Other costs will not be known until individual projects are developed (for instance, the cost of ensuring that future ICT developments will provide a Welsh language option). In each case, however, it will be necessary to consider whether the costs are reasonable and proportionate.

Implications for staff

- 3.2 The recommendations will lead to more opportunities for staff to develop and use their Welsh language skills in the workplace. Doing so could also increase their confidence in using the language at work - and enable them to better contribute to the task of ensuring that the WG can provide consistent and high standard Welsh language services to the public. Great emphasis has been placed in the paper, however, on the need to ensure that Welsh-speaking and non Welsh-speaking members of staff are equally valued and fully understand that they enjoy equal status and opportunities whilst working for the Welsh Government.

4. Risks

- 4.1 Reputational risk. The Welsh Language Commissioner will look to the Welsh Government as an exemplar bilingual workplace in terms of leadership and commitment with regard to the Welsh language. Risks include:
- Non-compliance with our current Welsh language scheme and its associated policies.
 - Failure to implement the new Welsh language strategy.
 - Failure to comply with Welsh language standards.
- 4.2 The recommendations included in the report will help ensure that the WG will be able to comply with the forthcoming Welsh language standards, as part of a programme of continuous improvement with regard to the Welsh language. It is likely, however, that more work will be required in order to comply fully with the standards, in due course. The situation will need to be reviewed once the nature of those standards becomes clearer.
- 4.3 Welsh language standards will be specific duties imposed under the Welsh Language Measure. Standards will be developed under five headings: service delivery standards; policy making standards; operational standards; promotion standards; and record keeping standards. Standards are in the process of being developed by the Welsh Language Commissioner, and in due course the Commissioner will recommend standards to Welsh Ministers, which will be made via subordinate legislation.

- 4.4 Any lack of capability and capacity is detrimental to our ability to provide a bilingual service to the public.

5. Communication

- 5.1 A communications strategy will be developed to draw this report and its action plan to the attention of all WG staff.

6. General Compliance Issues

- 6.1 The Welsh Government needs to ensure that it fulfils its current Welsh language scheme commitments as set out in the scheme and the associated corporate action plan, as well as future-proofing its systems and capability for the onset of the new standards. It also needs to ensure that it delivers its Welsh Language Strategy.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Board is asked to:
- approve** the Welsh Language Task and Finish Group's final report;
 - approve** the table of recommendations at Annex A of that report.

Publication

This paper should be published in full as none of the exemptions in the Code of Practice on Public Access to Information apply.

Date submitted to Secretariat: 18 October 2012