

WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME: THREE-YEAR
REPORT

Disclosable

Meeting	Agenda Item	Reference No
04/07/08	8	HEFCW/08/41

1 Issue

- 1.1 The paper presents the draft three-year progress report on the Welsh Language Scheme.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 Under the Welsh Language Act 1993, HEFCW is required to have a Welsh Language Scheme in place. The Welsh Language Board approved our Welsh Language Scheme in May 2005. After three years, the Board asks for an evaluative report on the operation of the Scheme as the first stage in preparing a revised Scheme for the next three year period.
- 2.2 Our responsibility to meet the requirements of our Welsh Language Scheme is included in the Corporate Plan.

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
- i) comment on the assessment of progress and the themes identified in the draft report, including noting any issues for consideration in preparing a revised Language Scheme later in the year;
 - ii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive to submit the final version of the report to the Welsh Language Board.

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 Following consideration of the report at this meeting, a finalised version will be prepared and translated for submission to the Welsh Language Board by the end of July.

5 Council members' interests

- 5.1 No conflicts of interest have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

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7 Background

- 7.1 in accordance with the 1993 Welsh Language Act, HEFCW's Welsh Language Scheme sets out how the Council will give effect to the principle of treating the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality when providing services to the public in Wales. It also contains a section setting out our policies on promoting and supporting Welsh medium provision in the higher education sector. Since the introduction of the Scheme, we have submitted two Annual Compliance Reports to the Board in 2006 and 2007. Feedback has been positive with no major issues raised.
- 7.2 We reported to Council in May 2008 (Chief Executive's Report), the timetable that we had agreed with the Welsh Language Board for preparing a revised Scheme:
- Three-year progress report on the Scheme to be submitted to Council in July 2008 and then to the Welsh Language Board.
 - Following feedback on the progress report, discussion on the revised Scheme with the Board to begin in September.
 - Revised Scheme to be presented to the Council in December for approval for formal submission to the Board.

8 Draft Report

- 8.1 The draft three-year report is attached at Annex A. The Annual Compliance reports submitted to date have, on the whole, been fairly factual in reporting on particular actions undertaken or any problems encountered. For the three-year report, the Welsh Language Board is looking for a more evaluative, thematic approach to our experience of implementing the Scheme.
- 8.2 The main themes which we have drawn out in the report are:
- the ways in which we interact with the sector and the wider public;
 - the increase in the use of electronic communication;
 - how we ensure implementation of the Scheme and the trend towards incorporating guidance into overall procedures for particular activities, rather than relying solely on stand-alone guidance;
 - our analysis of staff surveys of Welsh language skills and Welsh language training; the increase this shows over the period in staff who have basic skills in Welsh and the range of skills at higher levels amongst a number of staff.
- 8.3 In the section of the report which deals with our policies on Welsh medium provision, the emphasis is on the progress which has been made by the sector, HEW and HEFCW working together to establish the new Welsh Medium Higher Education Network.

The Council is invited to:

- i) comment on the assessment of progress and themes identified in the draft report, including noting any issues for consideration in preparing a revised Language Scheme later in the year;***
- ii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive to submit the final version of the report to the Welsh Language Board.***

9 Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no specific financial implications to this paper. Welsh language training for staff is part of ongoing activity and is provided for within the Council's training programme and budget. Translation costs are either encompassed within running costs or appropriate programme budgets. Costs are monitored and have been within budget. When the Scheme was initially established, there was some concern about whether there would be vastly increased translation costs. This has not proved the case. For example, between August 2005 and March 2008, we have spent approximately £29,000 on the translation of documents into Welsh. Annually, this is comparable with expenditure of around £9,000 in 2004-05.

10 Communications implications

- 10.1 Once we have received feedback from the Welsh Language Board, we will publish the report on our website.

11 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 11.1 This paper has direct implications for the Council's responsibilities to support and promote the Welsh language. Supporting increased participation in Welsh medium education is also an aspect of widening access to higher education.
- 11.2 The paper has no direct implications for race, gender or disability equality. We will undertake an equality impact assessment of our revised Welsh Language Scheme before this is submitted to the Welsh Language Board for approval.

12 Risk Assessment

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
Failure to meet a statutory requirement or receiving a judgement by the Welsh Language Board that insufficient progress has been made in implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrating progress in reports to the Welsh Language Board and highlighting positive developments;• Noting to the Board particular issues which affect the operation of our Scheme, such as relatively low Welsh language contact with the public;• Ensuring that we respond positively to feedback and suggestions for improvement from the Board.