



Review of Caerphilly CBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2017-22

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.

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www.nico.cymru
post@nico.cymru

“5-year strategies have huge potential to make local authorities promotion agencies for the Welsh language within their areas, coordinating and driving efforts in areas as diverse as education, economy, planning, youth, tourism, care and so on. The strategies have led to more strategic attention to the Welsh language by a number of organisations, but it is not clear how many new activities have been put in place as a direct result of the strategies, and it seems no significant new budgets and resources have been dedicated to implement them in most cases.

There is an opportunity on the horizon to change this, with a requirement for organisations to review and formulate new strategies in 2022. Now is the time to start planning and measuring impact in order to ensure that the strategies have a real impact on the position of the Welsh language in the community during this decade.”

Welsh Language Commissioner, Narrowing the Gap, Assurance Report 2019-20

1. Introduction

This review was undertaken by Nia Davies from Nico and was commissioned by the Council to assess the delivery of the Caerphilly CBC Five Year Welsh language Strategy at the end of its five years in line with the statutory requirements under the Welsh Language Standards. The review also gathered qualitative feedback to inform the progress of the second strategy for 2022-2027.

The review took place in March 2022, and was based on desk top research, a review of internal documentation regarding the Council's strategy, interview with key officers and a snapshot survey of key internal and external stakeholders. The research also included consideration of the Language Profile produced by Menter Caerffili in 2021, the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance documents; the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy, together with Government WESP guidance and the Caerphilly CBC draft WESP.

This review looks at the strategy in its statutory and policy context; the extent to which the objectives of standards 145 and 146 have been achieved; and provides comments for consideration by the Council with its next five year strategy.

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2. Summary

The aim of this review is to assess the extent to which the Council has met the requirements of Welsh Language Standards number 145 and 146.

The publication of a Welsh Language Promotion Strategy is a specific statutory requirement, but the Strategy itself is the culmination of a wide range of strategic action by the Council and its partners providing a focus for those activities.

The Strategy acknowledges its relevance in the context of the objectives of the Welsh Government's national strategy, Cymraeg 2050, and its role within a wider policy context with education at the forefront.

Until the 2021 Census figures are available, according to the evidence seen in the figures of the Annual Population Survey we can see an encouraging trend in the right direction, and Caerphilly looks to have managed a consistent percentage of Welsh speakers as the population has grown.

This review concludes that the Council has met its requirements under standards 145 and 146 by setting a target in terms of the percentage of Welsh speakers in the area, together with outlining in the strategy how it aims to achieve that target in the form of an action plan and targets for the Council and partners. With Covid-19, the achievement of targets originally set has been difficult in some areas of provision, but officers have stressed that the positive lessons learnt provide a firm foundation for the next strategy. The activities undertaken and their achievement are reported by the Council in appendix 1.

This review is a response to the requirement in standard 146 to assess the extent to which the Council has followed the strategy and met the target set, and in addition, this report and the survey undertaken provide useful feedback for the delivery of a revised and ambitious 5-year strategy to be published in due course. As we are awaiting the 2021 Census results, it should be noted that current, accurate data on the number and ages of Welsh speakers in the area is not available at the time of compiling this report to meet the full requirements of standard 146 to the extent that the Council would wish.

Feedback from partners and stakeholders highlights a number of practical suggestions and points to new opportunities for the Council to strengthen the delivery of the next strategy. The conclusions in this report therefore seek to reflect these practical findings on page 28.

3. Context

The Caerphilly CBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy is a specific statutory requirement arising from the Welsh Language Standards Regulations, but it also exists in a wider policy and legislative context. The Strategy acknowledges its relationship with the objectives of the Welsh Government's strategy for the language, and its role alongside the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan as well as the wider objectives of areas of well-being and equalities. The strategic context continues to evolve and brings new considerations for the 2022-27 strategy.

Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework to impose duties on certain organisations to comply with standards in relation to the Welsh language through regulations (The Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015).

The standards that refer specifically to the five year Strategy are standards 145 and 146 and require Caerphilly CBC to:

- produce and publish a 5-year strategy setting out how it intends to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of Welsh more widely in the area;
- include a target for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the area by the end of the five-year period;
- include a statement explaining how the Council intends to reach that target;
- review the strategy and publish a revised version of it on the website within 5 years of the date of publication of the strategy (or the date of publication of a revised version of it);
- after 5 years, assess the extent to which the Council has followed that strategy and met the target it has set;
- publish the assessment on the website, showing the number of Welsh speakers in the area, and the age of those speakers;
- note in the assessment a list of activities arranged or funded by the Council to promote the Welsh language during the previous five years.

The Welsh Language Commissioner published an advice document in 2021 on assessing the delivery of the 5-year strategies which provides information on methodologies and data sources and suggestions on the best methods to monitor progress.

Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers

Cymraeg 2050 sets out the Government's long-term aim towards a million Welsh speakers by 2050. It is based on three strategic themes:

1. Increasing the number of Welsh speakers
2. Increasing the use of Welsh
3. Creating favourable conditions – Infrastructure and context

The Cymraeg 2050 targets are:

- Number of Welsh speakers to reach one million by 2050.
- The percentage of the population that speaks Welsh daily, and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh, to increase from 10 per cent (in 2013-15) to 20 per cent by 2050.

The Caerphilly County Borough strategy is therefore a vital contribution to both national targets.

Cymraeg 2050 update (July 2021)

In July 2021, the Government published the Cymraeg 2050 Work Programme 2021-2026, outlining the route map for the next five years. Here are a few examples referencing areas relevant to the Welsh language promotion strategy:

- reviewing Welsh language transmission rates in families following the 2021 Census results
- the importance of education and the education workforce

- building on skills acquired within statutory education to provide free access to 16-25 year olds to Welsh for adults courses and ensuring parents have access to learning the language
- supporting community groups to expand activities following the pandemic with emphasis on community development and empowerment
- the 'Cymraeg – it belongs to us all' initiative and the importance of that narrative
- the importance of mainstreaming the Welsh language across the equality agenda

Government Response to the Impact of Covid-19 on the Welsh Language

The Government published its response to the impact of Covid-19 on the Welsh language in July 2021, and a number of recommendations included some relating to local authority promotion strategies:

"Local Authorities should give Welsh-speaking community organisations a strong voice in planning and implementing their language promotion strategies. Welsh Language Promotion Strategies, Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Mentrau Iaith County Forums should be interwoven with the Welsh-speaking community organisations."

Among the recommendations were:

- *"ensuring a strong voice for community groups within the Promotional Strategies, Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and County Forums of the Mentrau Iaith*
- *ensuring that the language forums meet regularly and develop work programs in conjunction with other partners and the community and support the Promotion Strategies and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans*
- *we'll support the work of the local authority in developing and realising their Promotional Strategy by providing them with data and evidence. This will also be very useful for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans*

- *work with relevant partners to ensure that work on the implementation of county Promotion Strategies reflects this recommendation*
- *emphasise that local authorities need to ensure that all organisations who play a part in the implementation of the strategy have a clear role, and that all those organisations have timely access to proposed plans to ensure strategic and specialist input"*

It will therefore be important to consider this national strategic context with the delivery of the next strategy for 2022-27 together with any opportunities that may arise.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans Regulations came into force in December 2020 and the strategic plans cycle (10 years) was changed from 1 September 2021 to 1 September 2022. Guidance was issued by the Government in 2021 to set out its vision and strategic direction. Trajectory data was provided to all local authorities in August 2021.

The Council has drafted its WESP for 2022-2032. The Council acknowledges that the education system and the WESP will play a key role in ensuring the growth of the language in the borough and outlines its targets:

" Our 10year target over the lifespan of this plan is to increase the places in year 1 to between 26% (520) and 30% (600) of children in Welsh medium education by 2030/31. The Welsh Government guidance document, outlines the methodology in calculating the target, shows that in 2019/20 our percentage was 17.9% "

There is significant overlap between the aims of the new WESP and new five year promotion strategy and with better strategic alignment, it will be vital that the new strategy complements and drives the WESP forward particularly in terms of the aims of Outcomes 1 and 5.

Well-being – The Caerphilly We Want

One of the well-being goals under the Well-being of Future Generations Act is 'Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'. However, it is important to acknowledge that the language is very closely linked to all the well-being goals (economy, health and care etc.) which emphasises the importance of wider partnerships and frameworks.

Also relevant is the fact that Public Service Boards are required to examine all data available to produce population needs assessments to inform service planning. These assessments must set out the steps that must be taken to provide services that should be provided through the medium of Welsh.

The guidance issued in March 2021 for the next round of assessments (to be drafted by April 2022) states: *"Feedback ... indicated the need for better profiling of the need for care and support provided in Welsh, and for a more robust assessment of the range and level of services that RPBs will need to provide in order to meet that need. This includes identifying where there are gaps in provision."*

Hopefully, the new assessments will provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of the needs of Welsh speakers so that it is possible to plan progress in provision. This in turn will provide a richer context for the Five Year Strategy with clearer links to well-being activities.

Equalities

The Caerphilly CBC Strategic Equality Plan is intended to demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports 4 of the 7 aims of Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'. It also outlines how the Council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Objective 5 of the Council's Equality Plan is '*To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements*' and is monitored and reported on annually.

4. Targets and performance measures

As noted above each county council's strategy (standard 145) must include:

- a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in their area) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the area by the end of the 5-year period concerned, and
- a statement explaining how they intend to meet the target.

An assessment of the strategy (standard 146) must include:

- information on the number and ages of Welsh speakers in the area
- a list of activities organised or funded during the five years to promote the use of the Welsh language

Linked to standard 146 is the need to ensure that monitoring arrangements and performance measures are in place to assess the delivery of the strategy.

The 2017-2022 strategy proposed the following target:

“a minimum 3% target increase in the number of Welsh speakers between 2017 and 2022. This target therefore means that by the 2021 Census, Caerphilly county borough will have a minimum 14.2% Welsh speaking population*.

(* - no target population figure is proposed as population numbers change with inward and outward migration)”

The strategy explained that this target was based on the expected Welsh language capabilities of the population by 2022 and the number of Welsh speakers leaving Welsh medium education.

Apart from the Census data, the Council's own main sources of data in terms of the number of Welsh speakers among its population are its **education** and **workforce** data which allows the Council to identify any trends and progress towards the target each year.

The Census

According to the 2011 Census **11.2%** of the population of the county borough of Caerphilly were fluent Welsh speakers with **16.1%** of the borough’s population having some knowledge of Welsh i.e. understanding, speaking, reading or writing or a combination of these. In 2011, the age group with the highest percentage of people able to speak Welsh was **10-14 (38.8%)**. It will be important to track this cohort in the 2021 Census.

2011	Able to speak Welsh <i>Number</i>	Able to speak Welsh <i>% of population</i>
Caerphilly	19,251	11.2
Wales	562,016	19.0

The 2021 Census was carried out on 21/03/2021 and the first results are expected within 12 months and the remainder within 24 months. Therefore, current specific and accurate data on the number and ages of Welsh speakers in the area is not available at the time of compiling this report to meet the requirements of standard 146 to the extent that the Council would wish, as this data is over 10 years old.

What other evidence is there?

The Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance document on assessing the achievement of the 5-year strategies points us to other methods of tracking patterns or trends that could provide useful insight on the delivery of the strategy.

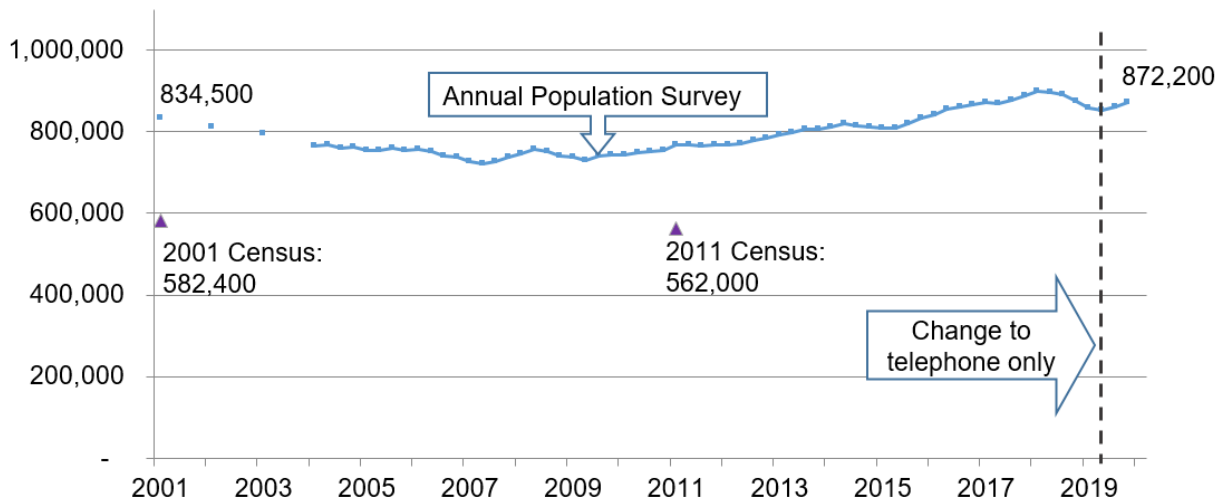
Annual Population Survey

The Office for National Statistics conducts a quarterly survey and provides data on the number of people able to speak Welsh at county council level to demonstrate Welsh language trends between each census. However, the Commissioner's guidance document states that 'the annual survey results should not be used to measure progress towards the target of a million Welsh speakers'.

Nevertheless, the advantage with this is that it produces results more often and can be a useful indicator. It provides results according to broad age groups to give us a general idea of progress. Looking at the figures during the period of the five year strategy we can see a positive trend emerging for the borough.

At an all-Wales level the trend is as follows:

Number of people aged 3 or over able to speak Welsh, 2001 to September 2020



Source: Annual Population Survey and Census of Population

And at the Caerphilly county borough level:

Year	Able to speak Welsh	All	Percentage of population
30 Sept 2017	40,000	173,100	23.1
30 Sept 2019	39,000	174,000	22.4
30 Sept 2021*	44,100	175,900	25.1

(Source Annual Population Survey – January 2022)

*The Government website states that this increase should be treated with care due to a change in how the survey was conducted from mid March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

National Survey for Wales

Another indicator is the National Survey for Wales which gathers information on the ability of adults aged 16 and over to speak Welsh in accordance with national indicators 36 and 37 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

National indicator 37 is outlined below to provide an idea of how people in the borough identify with the language.

Year		% of adults who speak Welsh	% of adults that have some Welsh speaking ability
2016-17	Wales	20%	9%
	Caerphilly	10%	10%
2017-18	Wales	19%	12%
	Caerphilly	9%	14%
2018-19	Wales	18%	15%
	Caerphilly	9%	20%

(Source: statswales.gov.wales)

Until the 2021 Census figures are available, according to the evidence shown in the figures of the Annual Population Survey and the National Survey for Wales there is an encouraging trend with the borough having roughly maintained its percentage of Welsh speakers as its population grows together with the fact that more and more people are recording that they have some Welsh speaking ability.

Language Use Survey

The language use surveys do not gather information on numbers of Welsh speakers, they collect more detailed information on fluency and use. Due to Covid-19 the 2019-21 Language Use Survey had to be discontinued early but the data collected during the first nine months of the survey, when released, will provide an insight into how people use the Welsh language at a national (and possibly regional) level.

The previous language use survey, in 2013-15, showed that there had been a significant increase in the number of those stating that they were fluent. However those who indicated that they used Welsh every day fell from 46% in 2004-06 to 38% in 2013-15. This is also a key indicator to track in future surveys as the Welsh language promotion strategy (together with the Welsh language standards) should be providing opportunities to increase this number.

Language transmission

According to the 2011 Census figures, in Wales, the rate of transmission of Welsh to children in households where two parents can speak Welsh was 82%. In the borough of Caerphilly the percentage was lower at 73%.

The majority of 3-4 year olds in the borough live in a household where no adult speaks Welsh. Therefore there is considerable reliance on nursery and education provision to transfer the language to children and increase the numbers of Welsh speakers in the borough.

The Council should pay close attention to the corresponding figure from the 2021 Census to ensure it is implementing appropriate interventions alongside the work of its Welsh language partners.

Education

Figures show an increase in the percentage of pupils in Welsh education:

2001	2011	2019/20
11%	17%	17.9% (PLASC; although the target set by previous WESP was 18.9% by 2017)

Together with its target to increase this number further as noted above, the Council has outlined in its draft WESP for 2022-32:

It is clearly understood that to increase the number of children accessing Welsh medium education provision we need to focus on increasing opportunities for children and their families in the early years. Increasing the number of places in

childcare and nursery education with a follow through to allow 100% transition throughout Welsh medium education will increase the numbers of Welsh speakers leaving school and entering employment, education, and training opportunities. There is a high demand across all roles in the workforce for Welsh speakers, so it is critical to increase the number of young people leaving school who speak Welsh as well as increasing the opportunities for adult learners.

This shows the clear relationship between both strategies. The work that was undertaken with the 2017-22 strategy targets, particularly by the Welsh language partners, will provide a firm basis for more targeted efforts over the next five years.

Workforce

County councils are required to assess the Welsh language skills of the workforce and publish the information annually. While increasing the Welsh language skills of the workforce is covered by the requirements of other standards, it is fair to say that this aspect and the associated targets in the promotion strategy support the core aims of increasing the number of speakers and the use of Welsh and raising awareness of its importance among the workforce.

The table below summarises the figures over the period:

Council staff – Welsh language skills (figures do not include staff working in schools)	Percentage
2016-2017	4.97%
2017-2018	4.63%
2018-2019	18.53%
2019-2020	21.37%
2020-2021	21.99%

The number of staff with Welsh language skills has increased between 2017-18 and 2018-19. This increase is associated with improved recording and awareness raising and staff surveys, and the first five year strategy (which included a target to increase the number of staff with Welsh language skills as aligned with the operational Welsh language standards).

Activities

A table reporting the full list of activities together with the record of actions, is attached as evidence for the purposes of reporting on standard 146 (Annex 1). The activities were subject to regular scrutiny during the Forum and Council scrutiny processes, and a report on them was also included as part of an Annual Monitoring Report to the Commissioner up to 2019 before the pandemic.

Naturally, progress during 2020-22 has been limited in a number of areas due to the impact of Covid-19, as people focus on adapting to new models of service delivery. The lessons learned as more flexible and blended provision and work develop over this period will be very valuable when considering future targets both in terms of delivery and of measuring impact.

Compliance

Together with looking at the impact of the strategy with its vision and far-reaching aims on the promotion and use of the language within the borough, compliance with the two Welsh language standards (145 and 146) will be a particular focus for the Welsh Language Commissioner as the regulatory body.

CCBC have produced and published the strategy which sets out how they intend to promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of Welsh more widely. It also includes a target for increasing the number of Welsh speakers by the end of the five year period including setting out how the Council intend reaching that target. These elements are in direct response to the requirements of Standard 145.

Meeting Standard 146 has meant reviewing the strategy at the end of the five year period and assessing to what extent the Council has followed the strategy and reached the target, outlining the number of Welsh speakers and a list of activities arranged or funded to promote the language over the five year period. We await the results of the 2021 Census to analyse the current number of Welsh speakers alongside the activities arranged and funded.

This has therefore entailed maintaining a record of progress in terms of achieving the targets set out in the action plan together with evidence that shows progress towards the overarching target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers. This evidence has required a variety of quantitative and qualitative information collated by the Council and by external partners (see appendix 1).

5. Delivering the 2017-2022 Strategy – partner feedback

For this review, as well as an interview with key officers, a snapshot survey was conducted during March 2022 to gather stakeholder views on the Caerphilly County Borough Council Five Year Welsh Language Strategy for 2017-22. This was limited to key external partners amongst the members of the Welsh Language Forum and also key partners from within the Council in various departments relevant to the implementation of the strategy which resulted in 11 respondents.

The responses provided have given a useful insight into the strengths of the strategy and possible opportunities to strengthen and develop the new strategy over the next five years from the point of view of partners.

The survey covered the following areas:

- Vision
- Targets
- Strategic alignment
- Implementation
- Strengths/Weaknesses
- Opportunities/Challenges

Vision

Partners were asked how clear the vision and aims of the strategy were to them. All of the Welsh Language Forum partners that responded stated ‘very clear, you would hear the same description of the vision by each partner’. This reflects the central role that these key partners have played in the strategy from the outset. It is also reflected in the fact that the same respondents noted that they agreed that CCBC provided sufficient opportunity for partners to give their input to the strategy and that CCBC continues to include partners in implementing the current strategy and preparing for the new strategy.

Internally, the views were more mixed with the majority stating that the vision and aims ‘were much clearer now than in 2017’.

The findings reinforce the importance of continued support and engagement to articulate the vision in contexts that are relevant to different areas of Council delivery and amongst wider partners in general.

Targets

The survey asked whether the targets within the strategy were realistic and achievable, with all external partners agreeing with this together with the majority of internal partners.

However, it was noted that some targets were difficult to measure, which is also reflected in the annual reporting on progress of targets as regards the impact of the activities on language use. As noted in the Welsh Language Commissioner's advice document 'Promotion standards: assessing the achievement of the 5-year strategies':

"The success of the promotion strategies will depend heavily on the attitudes, linguistic practices, opinions and social situations of individuals and groups within the target audiences. These are difficult factors to measure with numbers and statistics.

In this regard, as the public body wishes to influence the attitudes and linguistic behaviour of the general public and the organisations in its locality, it could be useful to supplement the findings of the quantitative evidence by undertaking qualitative research as well." (page 15)

This, therefore, is the challenge for the new strategy, in that the targets need to be measurable, with quantitative and qualitative evidence to show the impact of the strategy both on the numbers of Welsh speakers and the use of the language within families, the community, education, local services and the workplace.

Strategic alignment

The strategic priorities were developed in consultation with internal and external partners, reflecting the specific needs of the population and echoing the Welsh Government's strategic priorities for the language.

Internal partners were asked how the strategy fitted in with their service areas strategic priorities. All but one stated that the aim of the strategy fitted with the priorities of their departments with one stating that the aim of the strategy fitted with the priorities on the whole but there may be a slight conflict with some. No concerns were noted however.

The external partners were split regarding the strategic alignment with half noting that the strategy's priorities were in alignment with their priorities as a body, with the other half stating that there was a general alignment but with some conflicting priorities at times. Once again, no concerns were noted.

Amongst the relevant comments made for the future strategy, were the need to ensure that there were clearer links with CCBC service objectives and main performance framework.

Implementation

The survey asked participants to comment on the strategy's implementation. The majority of respondents from within the Council as well as external partners agreed that they had seen a positive change in attitude/behaviour as regards Welsh language promotion in CCBC services.

"The Strategy has encouraged some departments within CCBC to commit to providing Welsh language services or to explore new approaches in Welsh language provision along with other partners. This has been an important shift which is different from the previous reticence to acknowledge the requirements and expectations on the Council to provide services in the Welsh language or bilingually" (external partner)

The majority also stated that they had seen a positive shift in behaviour amongst residents and their use of the language with increased engagement.

However, the majority of respondents noted uncertainty as to whether all service areas of CCBC understood their role in the successful implementation of the strategy, with some respondents noting an element of concern as to whether the Council has the appropriate resources and support structure to help implement the strategy.

On a positive note almost all respondents noted that they believed that there was still more their service area can do to explore opportunities for collaboration with partners to ensure the success of the strategy, which, if encouraged further, bodes well for the next strategy.

“There are examples of good practice where opportunities and collaboration projects between various CCBC departments and external partners such as Menter Caerffili have developed successfully, e.g. Arts Development, Youth Services. However, there is more potential to develop this kind of work offering solutions to the challenges facing Welsh language provision.” (external partner)

Strengths/Weaknesses

Many strengths were noted with the strategy, that prove useful in moving forward with the new strategy for 2022-27. These include:

- Well set out and clear strategy in terms of vision, layout and strategic language with clear commitments.
- Includes a good cross-section of key partners.
- Accessible to all staff with clear targets and detailed examples of practical application.
- The increase in the Welsh language learning provision for CCBC staff.
- Good partnership working within the Council and especially with external Welsh language forum partners.
- The strategy shows that CCBC understands and appreciates the importance of the work carried out by Welsh language partners in the borough.
- The strategy has encouraged collaboration and discussion between the Welsh language partners.

To summarise, one department within CCBC noted that the strategy:

“Unifies what we need to do as individual departments and as an authority to provide excellent Welsh language resources to residents.”

In terms of weaknesses, once again the comments by respondents provide useful considerations for the 2022-27 strategy. For example:

- The 2017-22 strategy is very dependent on external partners' work within the borough
- Lack of buy-in amongst some departments and the need to get them on board
- A need for a clearer accountability structure and closer links to service objectives and main performance framework

An external partner makes a key point for future consideration, especially after the pandemic has caused organisations to examine ways of working and communicating:

“The Strategy has not dealt with the digital aspect to ensure a place for the Welsh language within this element”

Opportunities/Challenges

Partners offered a number of suggestions for maximising opportunities with the new strategy for 2022-2027:

- Continue to seek opportunities to better promote the strategy across all areas
- Explore opportunities arising from the increased connection with the WESP, childcare objectives etc
- Collaboration with further education providers and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol in implementing their *Towards Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers Further Education and Apprenticeship Welsh-medium Action Plan*
- Explore opportunities for learning Welsh with staff training and the current increased appetite for learning Welsh
- Collaboration with the Centre for Learning Welsh in terms of exploring the provision of online courses possible of CCBC residents and staff
- Adopt a bitesize approach for Welsh learners in the workplace, with informal Zoom chats, drop in sessions etc

- Explore opportunities to increase use of Welsh amongst children and young people outside the classroom, together with developing their awareness of the value of the language through the breakfast provision and dinner services
- Develop specific projects over the five years under the main target headings
- Develop new partnerships and projects across a variety of organisations with different CCBC departments
- Seek opportunities for stronger collaborative links between partners in the implementation of the strategy
- Develop bilingual leadership skills amongst young people to help them develop to become champions of the language within their communities

Menter Caerffili noted the importance of ensuring improved and local access for Welsh language activities for residents within their communities and neighbourhoods.

“During the lifetime of the Strategy we have seen a continuation of positive behaviour (increasing use of the language) amongst the residents of CCBC, with more people engaging with the Menter to access opportunities to use Welsh. One key aspect in this context is the demand for more opportunities within specific communities and a clear demand for opportunities and services within communities and settings that are local to residents.”

Alongside the opportunities, the challenges highlighted by partners, covered the following:

- Covid-19 and its legacy
- Attracting and recruiting Welsh speakers to key roles in order to achieve the aims of the strategy
- The need to highlight links and opportunities for more Council partners to engage and develop Welsh language provision. Overcoming resistance to change in order to ensure new Welsh language provision and opportunities
- Encouraging people to have confidence to use Welsh language provision
- Ensuring the commitment of wider partners within CCBC and beyond to engage with the strategy
- Lack of sufficient resources to take the Welsh language forward (eg. translation provision)

Impact of COVID-19

Although it may be too early to assess the full impact of the pandemic on the Welsh language, it is fair to say that in terms of formal and informal opportunities to use Welsh in the community the pandemic has undoubtedly had a negative effect, as highlighted in the Welsh Government's report on the Impact of COVID-19 on Welsh-speaking community groups (December 2020).

Lowri Jones, Chief Officer of Menter Caerffili and Chair of Mentrau Iaith Cymru has commented on the need to reach out to communities following the pandemic:

“We often deprive our poorest communities of contact with our language as well as the culture and heritage associated with the Welsh language... We need to ensure that the Welsh language is an integral part of the support that helps communities overcome economic challenges and develop aspirations and ambitions for the future.” [Report from the Academi Hywel Teifi conference, A Worry or an Opportunity: Welsh in the “New Normal”, March 2021]

Officers and partners were keen to emphasise the positive side in going forward with many partners having managed to adapt and change ways of working very quickly with flexibility and creativity. Everyone was forced to adapt, experiment and learn, with some successfully extending their appeal nationally with online activities although missing out with the face-to-face contact locally.

Internally, officers noted that there had been little negative impact on the Welsh language work of the team itself, except for a period of time when their roles were redeployed to deal with the crisis.

However, they noted that with staff working from home during the pandemic, the visibility of the language and presence of Welsh speaking officers onsite meant staff were much less exposed to the language and bilingualism in everyday work, as well as noting the negative impact on progress with workplace Welsh language learning.

6. Conclusions

Standards 145 and 146

To address the Council's compliance with the standards in question, it is clear that the Council has fully met the requirements of standard 145 by setting a target in terms of the percentage and number of speakers in the area, together with outlining in the strategy how it would aim to achieve that target in the form of an action plan and targets.

This review addresses the requirement in standard 146 in terms of assessing the extent to which the Council has followed the strategy and met the target set, and in turn, the feedback received from internal and external partners provides useful considerations for the delivery of a revised and ambitious five year strategy for 2022-2027 to be published in due course.

Overall impact of the strategy

As noted above, Census data is not yet available to measure the exact extent of the success of the Council's strategic intervention in terms of the numbers and ages of Welsh speakers in the area, but indications from other reliable sources suggest a stable and gradual increase.

It would be difficult to attribute any increase in numbers directly to the strategy's community activities, but, as the Commissioner's advice document on assessing the achievement of 5-year strategies notes, it is also difficult to attribute an increase in everyday use to specific activities. The Council is therefore encouraged to consider the Commissioner's advice document in the context of the second Cymraeg 2050 target of doubling the daily use of Welsh, by setting qualitative and quantitative measurements to track the impact and success of specific activities. The feedback from the survey reflects this also.

Future considerations

With all that the past five years has presented to residents of CCBC, it is important to celebrate the strengths of the Promotion Strategy and the lessons learned should continue to be considered and good practice shared. A number of opportunities arise for the Council with the implementation of a new promotion

strategy and WESP along with other strategic developments at a national level and with partners.

Section 3 sets out the recent position at national policy level in relation to the Welsh language and any new approach at this level should be taken into account as the second five year strategy progresses with consideration of any new opportunities arising.

Section 6 sets out valuable insights and suggestions contained in the feedback received from the interview with key officers and the survey of partners, and careful consideration should be given to these for the delivery of the next five year strategy over 2022-2027. Further considerations are outlined below:

1. **New data** The new Promotion Strategy should be reviewed following the publication of Census data on Welsh speakers within the county borough with critical scrutiny of targets, adapting them as necessary.
2. **Measuring impact** In order to be able to measure the strategy's progress effectively by 2027, the Welsh Language Commissioner's advice on assessing the strategy should be considered alongside the practical examples of evidence gathering given by partners. Discussions with partners should lead to a decision as to the evidence that could demonstrate the impact of interventions, in terms of change in behaviour / attitude / use of Welsh as well as what success means in quantitative terms.
3. **Wider Partnerships** Build on the support of the Welsh Language Forum partners with their communication and links with partners/stakeholders and Welsh speakers in the county borough. Consider how best to include:
 - (i) officers from the Council to share knowledge and good practice and ensure a shared understanding of goals;
 - (ii) a wider base of partners eg. from healthcare, business and economy to seek opportunities for stronger collaborative links and develop new partnerships and projects.