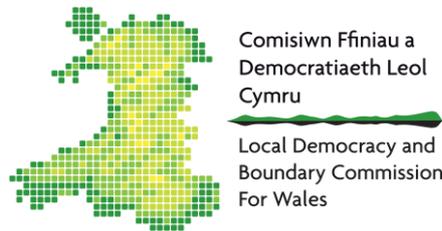


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Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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9 November 2018

I am writing on behalf of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales to contribute to the Committee's consultation to assist its inquiry into the legislative, policy and wider context of supporting and promoting the Welsh Language.

Since its initial creation under the Local Government (Wales) Act 1974, the Commission has supported the Welsh Language by ensuring that its public documents are published in both Welsh and English. Over the years the integration of the consideration of the Welsh Language into the work of the Commission has increased, particularly following the introduction of the Commission's first Welsh Language Scheme in 1998.

When the full list of Welsh Language Standards were published as a result of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the Commission raised concerns about the resource implications of applying all of the standards to the organisation. The Commission was therefore pleased that the particular standards the Welsh Language Commissioner applied to the Commission took account of the size and remit of the organisation. For example, the standards in respect of the promotion of the Welsh Language were not applied to the Commission.

The Commission was not in the first tranche of bodies to apply the standards and by learning from their experiences it enabled the Commission to have a better understanding of what would be required. That, and the historic ethos within the Commission in respect of the Welsh Language, meant that the Commission was in a much stronger position to meet the required standards than otherwise may have been the case.

Whilst there was a degree of additional work and cost required to establish the appropriate policies and procedures for the implementation of the standards were in place, the workload and costs were contained within the Commission's budget. The subsequent workload and costs as a result of maintaining the standards have so far been marginal.

The one area of difficulty that the Commission has experienced is in the appointment of sufficient numbers of staff within the Secretariat with Welsh Language capabilities. This is despite our best efforts to attract candidates with the appropriate skills and

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The Commission welcomes correspondence in English or Welsh

making provision for Welsh Language training for existing members of staff. This dearth of Welsh Language skills within the office has proved a challenge at times and represents an ongoing risk in the Commission's efforts to meet its Welsh Language Standards.

In respect of judging how effective the legislation on the standards have been in improving and increasing access to Welsh Language services from the Commission's perspective it is difficult to quantify. The Commission has certainly made additional provisions as a result of applying the standards but how effective these have been are for our stakeholders and the Welsh Language Commissioner to pass judgement. Having clear standards to be assessed against does make it easier for stakeholders to hold the Commission to account and, if necessary make an appropriate complaint.

The Commission were initially concerned that the process of imposing fines for not meeting standards that was set in the legislation would result in a punitive regime that would not be beneficial to the promotion of the Welsh Language. In the experience of the Commission, however, this has not been the case as the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office has to date taken a reasonable, proportionate and co-operative approach to the application of the Standards. It is the Commission's view that such an approach is more conducive to the promotion of the Welsh Language than would be the case if an immediate 'name and shame' regime were in operation.

On behalf of the Commission I would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to take part in this consultation.

Yours Sincerely

Steve Halsall
Chief Executive