

Review of
**Wrexham County Borough Council's
5-year Welsh Language
Promotion Strategy
2016-21**

This document is also available in Welsh



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"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 from 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,
Closing the Gap, Assurance Report 2019-20**

1. Introduction

This review of the achievement of Wrexham County Borough Council's Five Year Strategy was undertaken by Nia Davies, Nico, at the end of the five-year period. The Council is required to review the strategy and publish a revised version of it in accordance with the statutory requirements under the Welsh Language Standards.

The review was conducted in March 2023, and was based on desktop research, a review of internal documentation regarding the Council's strategy, and an interview with the Welsh language officer. The research also included consideration of the 2021 Census figures and the Language Profile compiled in 2021 by Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam, the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance documents; the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy, together with Wrexham County Borough Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. A number of partners and internal and external stakeholders were contacted for feedback but we received just one response.

This review looks at the strategy in its statutory and policy context; the extent to which the objectives of standards 145 and 146 were achieved; and provides comments for the Council's consideration for the next five-year strategy period.

2. Summary

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

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

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

With the publication of the 2021 Census figures, it is noted that Wrexham has seen an overall fall in its percentage of Welsh speakers. This is discussed further section 4. While there is naturally a feeling of disappointment at not achieving the target set, one must look at the national context and where there are lessons to be learned at that level, they should also be actioned at a local level.

This review concludes that the Council has met its requirements under standards 145 and 146 by setting a target for 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 its partners. With Covid-19, achieving the targets originally set has been difficult in a number of areas and among external partners, and has also had an impact on the timescale of targets. The Council's most recent activities are outlined in the table in appendix 1.

This review is provided in 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 offers points to consider for achieving a revised and ambitious 5-year strategy to be published in due course.

Feedback from one of the partners along with relevant points taken from a SWOT analysis undertaken by Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam in 2021 highlights several practical points for the Council to strengthen the delivery of the next strategy. Therefore, the conclusions in this report seek to reflect these practical findings on [page 23](#).

3. Context

Wrexham County Borough Council's 5-year Welsh Language Strategy is a specific statutory requirement arising from the Welsh Language Standards Regulations, but also exists in a wider policy and legislative context.

The strategy was formally adopted by the Council in March 2017. The strategy was updated in year 3 to be *"more in line with the guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner and to align it with the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers."*

The Strategy acknowledges its relationship to the objectives of the Welsh Government's strategy for the language, and its role alongside the Welsh Language in Education Strategic Plan as well as the wider objectives in terms of wellbeing and health and care. The strategic context continues to evolve and presents 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 (Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015).

The standards that specifically refer to the 5-year Strategy are standards 145 and 146 and require Wrexham County Borough Council to:

- Produce and publish a 5 year strategy explaining how the Council 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 organisation intends to reach that target
- review the strategy and publish a revised version on its website within 5 years of publishing a strategy (or of publishing a revised strategy).
- assess to what extent it has followed that strategy and have reached the target set by it, and
- publish the assessment on the website, showing the number and age of Welsh speakers in the area;
- note in the assessment a list of activities arranged or funded by it 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 of monitoring progress.

Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers.

Cymraeg 2050 outlines the Government's long-term aim of achieving one million Welsh speakers by 2050. It is based on three core 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:

- The number of Welsh speakers to reach a million by 2050.
- The percentage of the population that speak 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.

Wrexham County Borough's strategy is therefore a vital contribution to both national targets. In recognition of that the strategy was updated in year 3 to align more with the themes of the national strategy.

Cymraeg 2050 update (July 2021)

In July 2021, the Government announced the Cymraeg 2050 Work Programme for 2021-2026, outlining the course of action for the next five years. Here are some themes that refer to areas relevant to Wrexham's Welsh language promotion strategy:

- review Welsh language transmission rates in families following the results of the 2021 Census
- the importance of education and the education workforce
- building on the skills acquired within statutory education to provide 16-25 year olds with free access to Welsh courses for adults and ensure parents have access to learning the language
- supporting community groups to expand activities following the pandemic with an emphasis on developing and empowering communities
- the initiative 'Welsh – it belongs to us all' and the importance of that narrative

The Government's 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 those 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."

Recommendations included:

- *"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"*

Therefore, it will be important to consider the national strategic context when delivering the next strategy for 2022-27 along with any opportunities that may arise.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2031

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

The Council has produced its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2022-2031. The Council recognises 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.

The target for increasing numbers of children receiving Welsh language education in Wrexham for the period 2022-2031, based on Year 1 pupil data, is an increase from the current figure of 15% (2019/20 figure), to a percentage between 23% and 27% by 2031. The figure in 2016/17 was 12.5%.

There is significant overlap between the aims of the new WESP and the new promotion strategy and with improved strategic alignment, it will be essential that the new strategy reinforces and drives the WESP forward, particularly with regard to Outcomes 1 and 5.

Well-being

One of the well-being aims under the Well-being of Future Generations Act is 'a Wales of vibrant culture where the Welsh language thrives'. However, it is important to recognise that the language is very closely linked to all well-being goals (economy, health and care etc.) which emphasise the importance of wider partnerships and frameworks. This is set out in the Welsh Standards Commissioner's [advice document regarding the promotion of the Welsh language](#) which states "The Welsh language is a crosscutting issue that relates to all activities conducted by local authorities, national parks and partners"

It is also relevant that Public Service Boards are required to examine all available data 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 published in March 2021 for the next round of assessments 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 an increase in provision. This in turn will provide a richer context for the 5-year Promotion Strategy with clearer links to wellbeing activities.

4. Performance targets and measures

As noted above, the promotion strategy (standard 145) must include:

- a target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in your 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 setting out how the council intends to reach that 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

Related 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 2016-2021 strategy proposed the following target:

Target	Census 2001	Census 2011	After 5 years (2021 Census results)
Increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the County Borough over the lifetime of this Strategy	14.4% of the population fluent in Welsh	12.9% of the population fluent in Welsh	14.4%

The strategy explained that the aim was to maintain the number of speakers as a minimum.

Apart from the Census data, the Council's own main sources of data regarding 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.

In terms of targets and indicators for the strategy as a whole that would work towards achieving the Council's target, the themes related to:

- Increasing the number of Welsh speakers
- Increasing the use of the Welsh language
- Creating favourable conditions

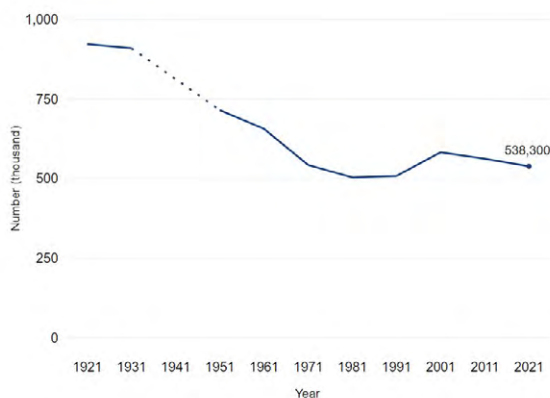
The action plan was updated in year 3 to align with the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. The targets included activities for action by the Council and external partners. Some have had to be modified further due to Covid-19.

The Council has internal scrutiny arrangements on the achievement of the strategy where matters are scrutinised by a Members and Officers Group/Executive Board/Scrutiny Committee.

The Census

The 2011 census was the basis for the 2016-2021 strategy targets. The first sets of data from the 2021 Census regarding Welsh speakers in Wales were published on 6 December 2022. This is the picture across Wales:

Number of people aged 3 years or older able to speak Welsh, 1921 to 2021



Source: <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-wales-census-2021-html>

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2022-12/chart1.svg>

Here are the figures at county level:

2011	Can speak Welsh Number	Can speak Welsh % of population
Wrexham	16,659	12.9
Wales	562,016	19.0

2021	Can speak Welsh Number	Can speak Welsh % of population
Wrexham	15,956	12.2
Wales	538,300	17.8

Wrexham saw a decrease of -0.7 percentage points, compared to a decrease of -1.2 percentage points across the whole of Wales.

Looking at the different age groups, we can see the following pattern:

Age group	Wrexham (+/- percentage point)	Wales (+/- percentage point)
3-15 years	-3.1	-5.7
16-64 years	+0.4	+0.3
65+	-2.6	-2.3

Broadly, the pattern in Wrexham seems to mirror that across Wales, but with slightly smaller decline in Wrexham than in Wales as a whole.

If we take a closer look at the small increase seen in the 16-64 age group and focus on those leaving education, starting work, starting to raise a family and making decisions about their children's education, we can see a slightly higher increase than the rest of Wales:

Age group	Wrexham (+/- percentage point)	Wales (+/- percentage point)
16-44 years	+1.7	+0.7

Looking at the 2021 Census figures compared with 2011 for this age group, the increase in Welsh speakers is as follows.

% able to speak Welsh in the age group	16-44
2011 Census	10.5%
2021 Census	12.2%

Source: www.statiaith.com

The 16-44 age group is important for Wrexham: with the new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) focusing on increasing the number of children receiving Welsh language education, it will be important for the Council's next 5-year promotion strategy to build on this small increase with this cohort of 16-44 year olds, ensuring that more young people leaving Welsh language education will have access to the language beyond education, and use it socially and in the workplace, and ensuring they pass it on to their children.

What other evidence is there?

Although advising caution with the accuracy of different quantitative figures, the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance document on assessing the achievement of the 5-year strategies refers us to other methods of tracking patterns or trends that may provide useful insight for the delivery of promotion strategies.

It is also worth heeding the words of the Welsh Government's Chief Statistician in 2022 who notes the differences between different sources in terms of the Welsh language:

Other data sources are available that are useful to monitor trends in Welsh language ability between censuses. A previous Chief Statistician's update has discussed this in more detail, including how we should not compare estimates from other surveys directly with the census, as we know there are differences in how some of these surveys are conducted, for example.

Estimates from other household surveys are typically higher than estimates from the census. While today's census estimates that around 538,300 people reported they were able to speak Welsh, the Office for National Statistics' Annual Population Survey, estimated that around 884,000 people aged three years or older were able to speak Welsh in April 2020 to March 2021, or 29.2% of the population. The National Survey for Wales, on the other hand, estimated that 18% of adults aged 16 years or older were able to speak Welsh in April 2020 to March 2021, with an additional 15% saying that they had some Welsh-speaking ability.

[Chief Statistician's update: understanding Census 2021 data about the Welsh language | Digital and Data Blog \(gov.wales\)](#)

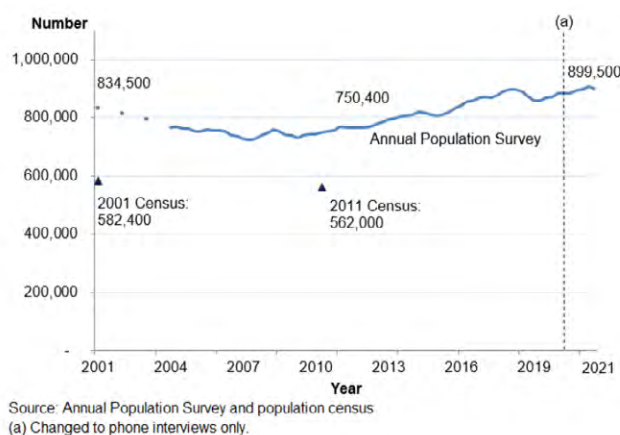
Annual Population Survey

The Office for National Statistics carries out a quarterly survey and provides data on the number of people who can speak Welsh at local authority level to show trends in terms of the Welsh language between each census. However, as the Commissioner's guidance document states the results of the Annual Survey should not be used to measure progress towards the target of one million Welsh speakers.

Despite this, the advantage with the survey is that it produces results more often and can be an indicator of how people feel about the language and how they feel ownership of it. It provides results according to age groups to give us a general idea of any increase or decrease. Looking at the figures during the five-year strategy period we can see a positive trend.

At all-Wales level the trend is as follows:

Number of people aged 3 years or older able to speak Welsh, 2001 to June 2022



And at Wrexham county borough level:

Year	Can speak Welsh (number)	Percentage of population	All Wales (percentage)
30 September 2017	32,900	25.4	29.1
30 September 2019	34,700	25.6	29
30 September 2021*	35,000	25.8	29.6

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

National Survey for Wales

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

A snapshot is outlined below to show how the trend in Wrexham once again roughly reflects the trend nationally.

Year	Wales/ Wrexham	% of adults who speak Welsh
2016-17	Wales	20%
	Wrexham	15%
2017-18	Wales	19%
	Wrexham	14%
2018-19	Wales	18%
	Wrexham	14%
2019-20	Wales	16%
	Wrexham	11%

Source: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language>

Welsh Language Use Survey

The language use surveys do not collect information on the number of Welsh speakers, they collect more detailed information about usage including use of the language in different social groups and situations. Due to Covid-19 the 2019-21 Language Use Survey had to be discontinued early but the data collected and published in November 2022 provides an insight into how people use Welsh at a national level.

The plan is to publish the remaining survey findings in themed statistical bulletins, combining NSW 2019-20 data where applicable. The information in the bulletins will be of use in developing the second promotion strategy in due course.

<https://www.gov.wales/social-use-welsh-language-july-2019-march-2020.html>

Language transmission

According to 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 Wrexham the percentage was lower, at 80%.

Most children aged 3-4 in the county borough live in a household where no adult speaks Welsh. There is therefore considerable reliance on nursery and education provision to pass the language on to children and increase the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough.

After a more detailed analysis of the 2021 Census data, the Council should look closely at the corresponding figure obtained in the 2021 Census to ensure that it is implementing appropriate interventions alongside the work of its Welsh language partners.

Education

Wrexham's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan target for 2022-2031, is based on Year 1 pupil data of 15% (2019/20 figure), with the aim of increasing this by 2031 to a percentage between 23% and 27%. The figure in 2016/17 was 12.5%.

According to the Annual Pupil Level School Census (PLASC) for 2021-22, there were 19,272 children in Wrexham schools. Of these, 2446 received their education through the medium of Welsh, a percentage of 12.7%.

However, Census figures indicate that 27.6% of children aged 5-16 are able to speak Welsh (the figure in 2011 was 30.6%). So a figure much higher than the official education figures. The Language Profile 2021 analysis compiled by Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam offers the following explanation:

"It is clear that parents (mainly non-Welsh speaking) are misrepresenting their children's language ability, which means that the Census results are very misleading. The position of the Welsh language in Wrexham, as in the rest of the North East counties, is probably quite a bit worse than the figures that appear in the Census results every decade." (translated)

Along with the target to further increase this number as noted above, the Council has outlined in its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2022-31:

It is recognised that a large number of children and young people who speak and learn Welsh do not have many opportunities to speak the language in normal, social situations. It is vital that the Council presents opportunities for children and young people to speak Welsh outside of the school environment and that it becomes a normal language in their daily lives. (p.47)

This shows the clear relationship between the two strategies. The work undertaken in line with the targets of the 2016-21 strategy, particularly by Welsh-language partners in the area, will provide a solid basis for better targeted efforts over the next five years.

The workforce

County councils are required to assess the Welsh language skills of the workforce and publish the information annually. While increasing the workforce's Welsh language skills falls under 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. With a workforce of around 3000 people, the Council is a major employer for the area.

The table below summarises the figures over the period:

Council staff - Welsh language skills*	Percentage Level 1	Percentage Level 3+
2022	14.8	2.8
2021	13.3	2.8
2017	21.1	5.1

(* figures do not include staff working in schools)

The figures have gone down since the start of the Strategy. Of course, Covid-19 has not had a positive impact on speakers' confidence in the workforce as a result of having to work from home isolated from their colleagues. But we also have to ask the question why the figures at Level 1 remain so low and whether the methods of collecting the data are effective enough given that this is essentially based on self-assessment and volunteering the information.

The workforce is one of two areas on which the Council has a direct influence in increasing the numbers of speakers and learners. As the new WESP tackles the aim of increasing the number of children receiving Welsh language education over the next 10 years, it is only fair to suggest that the promotion strategy should also look at how the Council can increase the numbers of Welsh speakers in its workforce through relevant interventions.

The Commissioner's Assurance Report for 2021 - 2022 specifically highlights the Welsh language within the workforce, stating:

Over the course of the Commissioner's next strategic plan, there will be a further focus on improving performance in skills assessment and improving the quality of recruitment processes to see progress in obtaining Welsh language skills within the workplace of bodies subject to Welsh language standards... The Commissioner will also open investigations and force change in this area where deficiencies persist. (p.33)

With that in mind, therefore, consideration should be given to how the promotion strategy can increase interest and engender pride among its workforce in the language, and work alongside the formal steps taken to implement the standards with activities to support and inspire individuals that the Welsh language is a language for all, in the workplace and in the community.

Activities

A table reporting the full list of activities together with details of actions taken is attached as evidence for the purposes of reporting on standard 146 (Appendix 1). The activities were regularly scrutinised during the Council's scrutiny processes, and the action plan was updated following the publication of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy to better align the themes and targets.

Naturally, progress during 2020-22 has been limited in a number of areas of provision due to the impact of Covid-19, as people focus on adapting to new approaches to service delivery. The lessons learned as more flexible ways of working develop over this period will be invaluable when considering targets in the new strategy in terms of delivering and measuring impact.

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 of monitoring progress. An example of Wrexham Council's 5-year strategy indicators was included as an example of how targets and indicators that can be assessed can be effectively set. *"When setting indicators, it is important to be clear about the features that ensure the indicators set are fit for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy for promoting the use of Welsh."* (p.25)

While the strategy in general has clear and measurable indicators that enable the Council and partners to actively track progress quantitatively, it is crucial not to forget qualitative evidence to accompany the quantitative data (eg. numbers attending an event). It is also important not to be afraid to set targets that require more creative and qualitative methods of gathering evidence to enrich quantitative data and give a fuller picture of the situation (eg. how opinions/attitudes have changed over time).

5. Delivering the Strategy

Along with looking at the impact of the strategy with its long-term vision and goals on promoting and using the language within the borough, compliance with both standards (145 and 146) will be looked at by the Welsh Language Commissioner as the regulatory body.

The Council has produced and published the strategy which sets out how it intends to promote the Welsh language and facilitate wider use of the Welsh language. It has also included a target for increasing the number of Welsh speakers by the end of the five-year period including setting out how the Council intends to meet 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 the extent to which the Council has followed the strategy and met the target, outlining the number of Welsh speakers and a list of activities organised or funded to promote the language over the five-year period. Initial Census figures released in December 2022 show a decrease in the number of Welsh speakers in the county by -0.7 percentage points (compared to an all-Wales figure of -1.2 percentage points).

The Council has kept a record of progress in achieving the targets set out in the action plan. This evidence has required a range of quantitative and qualitative information gathered by the Council and from external partners over time (see appendix 1 for the latest table from the Council).

Feedback

As noted, the views and feedback of a number of stakeholders and internal partners were sought for this review, and one response was received. That said, that feedback, together with SWOT and PEST analysis in the Language Profile compiled by Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam on the position of the Welsh language, offers a number of valuable and relevant points for the Council to consider with their work to promote the Welsh language in the county.

An internal partner believed the vision of promoting the Welsh language was considerably clearer now than it was in 2016. They noted that the targets drawn up were realistic and sustainable, although with the Covid-19 pandemic some became unrealistic. There were good ideas in the strategy and the 5-year period has given opportunity and time to achieve them.

They also noted that the aim of the Strategy was aligned with the priorities of their service area (Social Care), and that they had seen a positive change in attitude/behaviour from a service provider and service user perspective, albeit in part, indicating that some areas were better than others and that

there was still a way to go. They felt that service areas could do more to seek greater opportunities to collaborate with external partners by holding joint events and targeting promotional activities to specific groups.

Below are the main points of relevance arising from the Menter Iaith SWOT analysis:

Strengths

- The area has a Language Forum featuring a number of Welsh language organisations working together to promote the use of Welsh
- The presence of important institutions such as Glyndŵr University, Coleg Cambria, Wrexham Football Club, along with the Canolfan Saith Seren in the area offers opportunities to promote the Welsh language
- There is a tradition of celebrating the language and Welsh culture in some areas with Welsh groups active across the county
- Local desire to use and take pride in the Welsh language

Weaknesses

- Public and voluntary bodies are not working together strategically enough to plan the future of the language in the county
- Many of the county's young people are losing their language skills after leaving the statutory education system
- Lack of opportunities to use Welsh socially
- The growth of commuter zones is overwhelming small communities where the Welsh language was strong and means that some areas have a very high percentage of people who have moved in and have no understanding or awareness of the language and culture in Wales
- Wrexham Council's planning department does not pay sufficient attention to the position of the Welsh language in the community during planning
- The Menter Iaith does not have the resources to be active throughout all areas of the county.

Opportunities

- Ensure greater strategic focus to the terms of reference for the Language Forum and improved collaboration between partners and each other

- Building on the strength of natural Welsh-speaking communities such as Dyffryn Ceiriog and Rhosllanerchrugog
- Emphasising the economic value of the language to encourage parents to choose Welsh language education; young people to choose to study subjects in Welsh; more businesses to use Welsh
- That the Council begins to consider the Welsh language as an overarching theme within its policies in support of the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- Technology use developing across age spans and the ability to reduce costs and develop new initiatives.

Threats

- The aftermath of the pandemic and recession and the need to save money will mean cutting back on Welsh language promotion funding
- Social and demographic changes and population mobility factors undermine the position of the Welsh language
- A lack of bilingual staff within the Council and a lack of plans on addressing this issue
- Lack of knowledge of the language especially among incomers and the non-Welsh speaking (but sometimes amongst Welsh speakers also).

Impact of COVID-19

While 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 certainly had a negative impact, as highlighted in the Welsh Government's report on the Impact of COVID-19 on Welsh-speaking community groups (December 2020).

Lowri Jones, Chair of Mentrau Iaith Cymru 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." [March 2021]

6. Conclusions

Standards 145 and 146

In terms of the Council's compliance with the standards in question, it is clear that the Council has met the requirements of standard 145 by setting a percentage target to increase the 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, indicators and targets.

This review addresses the requirement in standard 146 in terms of considering the extent to which the Council has followed the strategy to reach the target set, and in turn, offers considerations for achieving a revised and ambitious strategy for 2022-2027 to be published in due course.

Overall impact of the strategy

In the context of a decline in the number of Welsh speakers across Wales, it would be difficult to attribute any increase in particular age groups of speakers directly to the activities of the strategy, but, as the Commissioner's advice document on assessing the achievement of 5-year strategies points out, 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.

Future considerations

With the difficulties of the past five years faced by the residents of the county borough, it is important to build on the strengths of the Promotion Strategy and the lessons learned should continue to be considered, and good practice shared and learnt from with partners. A number of opportunities arise for the Council through the implementation of a new promotion and WESP alongside other strategic developments by the Council and partners locally and at regional and national level.

Further considerations are outlined below:

1. Targets and impact measurement

As set out in the Welsh Language Commissioner's advice document 'Standards for Promotion: assessing the attainment of the 5-year strategies':

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

In this connection, as the public institution wishes to influence the linguistic attitudes and behaviour of the public and the institutions in its local area, it may be beneficial to support the findings of the quantitative evidence by also conducting qualitative research." (page 15)

This, then, is the challenge for the new strategy, i.e. that the targets need to be meaningful, measurable, with quantitative and qualitative evidence to demonstrate the impact of the strategy on the number of Welsh speakers and the use of the language within families, the community, education, local services and the workplace.

To be able to effectively measure the progress of the strategy by 2027, the advice of the Welsh Language Commissioner should be considered alongside current approaches. The inclusion of quantitative targets was a strength of the first strategy, but the more far-reaching impact of the activities beyond quantitative figures and data should also be considered. The inclusion of qualitative goals should also be a feature, though harder to measure. Discussions with partners should lead to a decision about the evidence that might show the impact of interventions, both in terms of behaviour / attitude / use of Welsh language as well as what success means in quantitative terms.

2. Resources

It is difficult to compare and benchmark the strategies of different council against each other because each area is unique and therefore each strategy is too. But the resources different councils have put into their strategies are crucial. This strategy is not the remit of just one language officer. While the Council has a robust scrutiny and accountability structure in place, the day-to-day work requires a great deal of collaboration and ownership across the Council and beyond. To enable effective implementation of the strategy the Council should look at ways to ensure sufficient resources and capacity, whether that is sharing the burden and expanding ownership more effectively across the Council or investigating how regional work in certain areas could develop effective solutions.

3. Partnerships

Given the lack of response to requests for information and feedback to this review, it is clear that work is needed to bring the Council's promotion strategy closer to the top of the Welsh language agenda in the area.

The Council should actively develop relationships with Welsh language partners and wider partners to ensure strategic support and collaboration from the Forum's partners. Forum members have in-depth knowledge and understanding together with effective links to stakeholders and Welsh speakers across the county borough and the Council should aim to identify how to work together so that everyone benefits from the relationship, particularly Welsh speakers in the area.

Consideration should be given as to how best to include:

- (i) officers from the Council to share knowledge and good practice and ensure a common understanding of goals;
- (ii) a wider base of partners eg. from sport, business and the economy to seeking opportunities for stronger collaborative relationships and developing new partnerships and projects.

4. The next five years

The following points arising from the review should also be considered in the context of the new strategy:

- After more detailed analysis of the 2021 Census data, the Council should pay close attention to the data on **language transmission** within the family to ensure that it is implementing appropriate interventions alongside the work of its Welsh language partners.
- It will be important to build on the progress seen with the **16-44 year old cohort**, who are leaving education, starting work, starting to raise a family and making decisions about their children's education. It must be ensured that more young people leaving Welsh language education have access to the language beyond the classroom and use it socially and in the workplace, and pass it on to their children
- Consideration should be given as to how the promotion strategy can increase interest and pride in the language amongst the **Council's workforce**, and work hand in hand with the formal steps taken to implement the standards with activities to support and inspire individuals that the language is a language for all, in the workplace and in the community.