

# Language Strategy Working Group

Thursday, 16th May, 2024

## LANGUAGE STRATEGY WORKING GROUP MINUTES HELD IN PERSON AND REMOTELY

Members present: Councillor Walsh (Chairperson);  
Alderman Rodgers; and  
Councillors Brooks, Long and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Mr. C. McGuigan, Irish Language Officer;  
Mr. R. Connelly, Policy, Research & Compliance Officer;  
Mr. M. Johnston, Language Officer;  
Ms. J. Beck, Sign Language Interpreter;  
Ms. M.T. McGivern, Client Manager  
(Physical Programmes); and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 9th February, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Update on Language Strategy Action Plan**

The City Solicitor provided the Working Group with an update on the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan. She outlined that the Council had conducted a consultation on the Draft Action Plan between 16th October, 2023 and 22nd January, 2024. The public and interested parties were encouraged to give feedback in English and Irish. A range of consultation sessions and stakeholder engagement sessions had also been conducted by Council officers.

The Members were reminded that the consultation had resulted in a range of amendments to the Draft Action Plan. The revised plan had since been presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19th April, 2024. While there had been broad agreement with the revised Action Plan, Members had suggested some further additions to the Action Plan, specifically, actions in relation to the development of a Gaeltacht Bursary Scheme and recurring annual funding for a large-scale event to mark Seachtain na Gaeilge.

The City Solicitor explained that those proposals were likely to require additional significant resource commitments, including staffing resource. It was therefore proposed that there was a commitment to undertaking exploratory work on those proposals as part of the Action Plan. She outlined that a detailed report would come to the Language Strategy Working Group in relation to Seachtain na Gaeilge 2025 in the coming months.

In response to a Member's question, regarding the Gaeltacht Summer Schemes, the City Solicitor confirmed that officers would look at who was already being catered for in respect of current Irish Language Summer courses and that the Council's schemes should demonstrate some additionality and that they should particularly seek to consider the inclusion of adult learners and those in receipt of benefits.

In response to a further Member's question, regarding the timeline for delivery in respect of sign language and disability communications, the Language Officer and the City Solicitor confirmed that it was realistic, based on current resources.

After discussion, the Working Group recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would agree the amended Draft Language Strategy Action Plan.

### **Update on Draft Irish Language Policy**

The City Solicitor reminded the Working Group that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had approved the draft Irish Language Policy for the purposes of public and staff consultation, together with an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). She outlined that the proposed timeline for consultation would be from the end of June 2024, for a period of 14 weeks.

It was reported that officers would engage with the Irish Language Stakeholders Forum before the consultation would commence.

She explained that, after the consultation period had concluded, officers would produce a report for consideration by the Working Group and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The Members were advised that indicative costings and a draft Implementation Strategy would accompany the final version of the Policy and accompanying EQIA. As a high volume of response was expected to the consultation, the Working Group noted that the report from officers would likely not be available until January 2025.

In response to a Member's query, the City Solicitor confirmed that public meetings would form part of the consultation exercise. She confirmed that she would be happy to consider venue suggestions from Members as to where those public meetings would take place.

The Working Group noted the update that had been provided.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting would take place in August, 2024.

Chairperson