

Meeting	OLC Board Meeting	Agenda Item No.	10
		Paper No.	138.9
Date of meeting	29 April 2025	Time required	10 Minutes

Title	Revision of the Welsh Language Scheme
Sponsor	Mike Harris, Interim Head of Communications, Engagement and Impact
Status	OFFICIAL
To be communicated to:	Members and those in attendance

Executive summary	
<p>The Legal Ombudsman is covered by the provisions of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and is required to: (a) put in place a Welsh Language Scheme (WLS); and (b) to report against it annually.</p> <p>A Welsh Language Scheme explains how an organisation ensures that it treats the Welsh and English languages equally when providing public services in Wales.</p> <p>This paper summarises the work we have been doing to update the Legal Ombudsman's WLS, our interaction with the Welsh Language Commissioner, and when we anticipate our final scheme to be approved.</p> <p>It also notes the update we plan to bring to the OLC Board's July meeting, where we will share a performance report on how we met the provisions of our <i>existing</i> scheme during 2024/25.</p>	
Recommendation / action required	
Board is asked to note the update.	
Equality Diversity and Inclusion	
EDI implications	Yes
Our Welsh Language Scheme reiterates our commitment to treating Welsh and English equally, where appropriate and practicable, with an action plan setting out how this will be delivered across the different areas of our service.	
Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Fol)	
Paragraph reference	Fol exemption and summary
N/A	N/A

Revision of the Welsh Language Scheme

1. Background and context

A Welsh Language Scheme (WLS) explains how an organisation ensures that it treats the Welsh and English languages equally when providing public services in Wales. Schemes must be approved by the Welsh Language Commissioner, who also gives advice and guidance to organisations as they prepare and implement their schemes.

As part of our commitment to meeting our statutory obligations under the Welsh Language Act 1993, we have made significant progress in reviewing and updating the Legal Ombudsman's WLS.

We have completed a comprehensive review and update of our WLS, ensuring that it reflects our current operational practices and incorporates best practice principles set out in the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance. The revised scheme reiterates our commitment to treating Welsh and English equally, where appropriate and practicable, and sets out how this will be delivered across our service areas.

2. Action Plan

An important addition to the scheme is the inclusion of a new action plan. This outlines a series of practical measures to support implementation and embed our WLS across the organisation. The plan covers improvements in service planning, correspondence handling, internal guidance and awareness, translation procedures, staff training, and how we monitor our commitments. It includes time-bound actions with clear success criteria to ensure accountability and progress.

In January 2025, we shared the draft of our revised WLS and action plan with the Welsh Language Commissioner for review and comment. We have since received the Commissioner's feedback, which we have carefully considered. The feedback was constructive and broadly supportive, with a small number of suggestions to strengthen clarity and alignment with best practice. We have now completed our review of these suggestions and are in the final stages of updating the scheme accordingly.

3. Final submission and next steps

We intend to submit the finalised version of the updated WLS to the Welsh Language Commissioner in May 2025 for formal approval. Subject to the Commissioner's process and timetable, we anticipate receiving a response by the end of July.

The updated WLS will be promoted internally to ensure staff understand their responsibilities and will ensure that our commitments are embedded in practice across the organisation. A public version of the WLS will also be made available on our website once final approval has been secured.

We will continue to monitor our progress in delivering our current scheme through our established internal reporting mechanisms. Each July we provide the Welsh Language Board with an annual report in a form approved by them, describing our progress in implementing the scheme measures. We plan to bring an update on our 2024/25 annual performance report to the July Board meeting. Once we have the final approved version of our revised WLS, we will share that with the Board also.