

MEETING OF THE	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	9 April 2019
SUBJECT	Annual report by the Head of Democratic Services on behalf of the Democratic Services Committee with regards to support for members
PURPOSE	Submit a draft report to be submitted to the Full Council in May 2019 outlining the support that has been developed and is being developed on behalf of members.
AUTHOR	Geraint Owen, Head of Democratic Services

1. A draft report is presented below to be submitted to the Full Council in its May 2019 meeting. Under the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011, the Democratic Services Committee is responsible for specific matters (under Section 11), as follows:
 - Appoint a Head of Democratic Services on behalf of the local authority
 - Review the available support for the Head of the Democratic Services in relation to staff, buildings and other resources, ensuring they are sufficient for carrying out the requirements of the role
 - Produce a report, at least once a year, to present to the Full Council in relation to support for members.

2. The report is somewhat different this year - it is more concise. It focuses on the developments made during the year rather than outlining all support available to members, which can be repetitive.

3. From the report, you will see that some elements are still incomplete and some elements will need to be updated as a result of other discussions.

4. I continue to emphasise that an open dialogue with you as Elected Members is a necessity in order to ensure that the support provided to you responds to your needs in the role and, therefore, I encourage you to contact me or the Chair to raise any matters. I also wish to thank all members of the Committee for their support over the past few months and I look forward to collaborate further with you over the coming months and years.



THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (2018-19)

- Support for Gwynedd
Elected Members



RHOI POBL GWYNEDD YN GANOLOG I BOPETH RYDYM YN EI WNEUD • PUTTING THE PEOPLE OF
GWYNEDD AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING WE DO

FOREWORD

Reviewing the available support for Elected Members so that they can fulfil their role is a fundamental part of my work, and the input and support of members of the Democratic Services Committee assists me with this important work.

Following a very busy first year in 2017/18 in light of Local Government elections in May 2017, it is integral that 2018/19 has been slightly more stable, with an opportunity to reflect somewhat on the support that is offered. Once again this year, I encourage any member who wishes to discuss the available support to contact me or the Chair or the members of the Democratic Services Committee immediately.

It is an honour to present the annual report to Gwynedd Council Members. The report is somewhat different this year, focussing on 2018/19 developments and what will be developed in 2019/20 rather than outline the range of available support.

Once again, I am very grateful to everyone for their input and I look forward to collaborating over the years to come.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gareth Owen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

**Head of Democratic Services,
Head of Corporate Support Department**

What has happened during 2018/19

We are still providing all the usual support, which includes:

- ✓ Arranging, publishing and taking minutes of the Council meetings - in a timely manner and to a consistently high standard. 97% of programmes are published electronically within 5 clear working days by the Council.
- ✓ Compliance with the requirements of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, ensuring that the salaries and expenses of members are paid promptly.
- ✓ Political support for the eligible political parties
- ✓ Reviewing the political balance in line with the requirement
- ✓ Webcasting in accordance with the work programme
- ✓ Maintaining and supporting an extensive training programme for all members, including 1-1 sessions when required
- ✓ Offering 1-1 support for members to discuss their personal development
- ✓ Information Technology support through the Information Technology Service
- ✓ Our process of creating annual reports was simplified by members, and hopefully there will be further progress again this year

Additionally, I would like to draw your attention to the specific projects noted below:

Consult with Elected Members:

Over the summer 2018 period, all Members were asked for their views on the service provided by the Democratic Services Team, as well as what can be done to improve. A number of responses were received, with many stating that they were very happy with the service, especially the assistance and the support by Team members.

A number of ideas were also offered on what could be done to improve. One of the matters that received most attention was support for new members. All of these matters have been noted, and they will certainly feed into the preparation work for the next Local Government Elections. In addition, areas for improvement with the "Porth" - Members' Portal were noted (see below), as well as observations regarding training (see below) and observations regarding IT provision (see below).

Transferring to Office 365:

It became apparent that there was still some frustration with the Information Technology provision for Elected Members, and having listened to your views, a change in provision was made in order to satisfy requirements.

By moving to the Office 365 provision, Members can now gain access to their member e-mail account and any documents they have from any location. Many have reported that being able to take a quick look at their e-mails from their mobile phones has made a world of difference for them,

and it is much easier to respond to any brief enquiries swiftly. It has also enabled members who work to gain access to their Councillor account from any other device, in addition to being able to use the Surface device during Council committees meetings.

Obviously, developments in the Technology field are moving extremely quickly, and therefore we will continue to address this field. If any Member wishes to receive further support, please get in touch with the Information Technology Team for technical matters, or the Training Team for any support with using devices.

Porth (Members' Portal):

Use of the Porth by Members is still low. We have attempted to continue to raise members' awareness of the content however, once again, by listening to members' observations, we believe that we must change direction with this provision. We understand that the information on the Porth is valuable for you as members (especially any new member), but the means of reaching the information is cumbersome. We are currently working on simplifying this, aiming to provide you with a resolution in 2019/20.

Reviewing Scrutiny Arrangements:

The new scrutiny arrangements were established in March 2017, commencing with implementing the new model from May 2017 onwards. At that time, it was pledged that we would review the provision during 2018/19, and this work commenced in January 2019. The work is still currently ongoing, and the working group will report on the outcomes in due course.

Specific Information Sessions:

Sharing accurate information in a timely manner is a challenge that the Council must face and, in an effort to attempt to share information with all members, a number of information sharing sessions were held on specific topics this year. Some of the sessions had been identified through the scrutiny process, where there was a feeling that knowledge of the field is relevant to all members and, therefore, specific sessions were arranged, e.g. updates with the North Wales Economic Growth bid, developments in the world of Education and what was being done to prepare for Brexit. Additionally, specific sessions were arranged on the savings - these sessions were held across the County for all members.

Induction and support arrangements for the new Cabinet Members

You will be aware that two new Cabinet Members have been appointed from 1 April onwards. We have developed an induction programme for the new members as a result of discussions with other Cabinet members. We congratulate both members and wish them well in their new roles.

Rationalising number of meetings

Whilst reviewing the committee's work since May 2017, committee members decided that it would be wise to reduce the number of meetings held and use the time allocated to develop support for members. Therefore, the committee will meet three rather than four times during 2019/20.

What is in the pipeline for 2019/20?

However, there is always room for improvement. There is always room for improvement, and the schemes below are in the pipeline to improve the provision for Elected Members in 2019/20.

Diversity Project:

We are still aware that the Council's membership does not reflect the cross-section of the County's population. A sub-group of the Democratic Services Committee has already been formed to attempt to look at ways of encouraging more young people, women, disabled people and people from minority backgrounds to consider standing to become a Councillor. This work will continue in 2019/20.

Porth (members' Portal):

It has already been noted that the use of the Porth is not very high, however members had noted that the information contained is very useful. As we are aware that the platform for using the porth is not user-friendly, it is intended to look at establishing a different platform, which is much more user-friendly.

Information Technology:

The world of technology does not stay still for very long. It is certain that there will be technical considerations to be addressed during the year.

As I noted above, much of what needs to be developed in terms of support for the Elected Members is in your hands. Therefore, I ask you to get in touch if you have any issue that, in your opinion, needs to be addressed or that would improve the provision that is available for all members.