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Gwasanaeth Democraidd
Democracy Service
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Cyfarfod / Meeting

PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD
DEMOCRATIC SERVICE COMMITTEE

Dyddiad ac Amser / Date and Time

10.00 a.m. DYDD MERCHER, 11 RHAGFYR, 2013

10.00 a.m. WEDNESDAY, 11 DECEMBER, 2013

Lleoliad / Location

SIAMBR HYWEL DDA
SWYDDFEYDD Y CYNGOR/COUNCIL OFFICES
CAERNARFON

Noder y man cyfarfod os gwelwch yn dda/Please note the venue

Pwynt Cyswllt / Contact Point

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Dosbarthwyd/Distributed 4.12.13

**PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

AELODAETH / MEMBERSHIP (15)

Plaid Cymru (7)

Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors

Selwyn Griffiths
Michael Sol Owen
Dilwyn Morgan

Charles Wyn Jones
Linda Ann Wyn Jones
Gareth Thomas

Mandy Williams-Davies

Annibynnol / Independent (4)

Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors

Lesley Day	Tom Ellis
Anne Lloyd-Jones	Jean Forsyth

Llais Gwynedd (3)

Dilwyn Lloyd

Jason Humphreys

Anwen Davies

Llafur / Labour (1)

Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Sion Wyn Jones

Aelodau Ex-officio / Ex-officio Members

Cadeirydd ac Is-Gadeirydd y Cyngor / Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council
Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors Selwyn Griffiths a / and Huw Edwards

RHAGLEN

1. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn unrhyw ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb.

2. DATGAN BUDDIANT PERSONOL

Derbyn unrhyw ddatganiad o fuddiant personol.

3. MATERION BRYS

Nodi unrhyw eitemau sy'n fater brys ym marn y Cadeirydd fel y gellir eu hystyried.

4. COFNODION

Bydd y Cadeirydd yn cynnig y dylid llofnodi cofnodion y cyfarfod diwethaf o'r pwyllgor hwn a gynhaliwyd ar 10 Medi, 2013 fel rhai cywir (copi yma – papur melyn).

5. ADNODDAU I GEFNOGI GWAITH AELODAU

Ystyried adroddiad Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, (copi yma – papur gwyn)

6. PROTOCOL CYFRYNGAU CYMDEITHASOL

Ystyried adroddiad Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, (copi yma – papur lelog)

7. GWE DDARLLEDU

Ystyried adroddiad Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, (copi yma – papur pinc)

8. GWEFANNAU I GYNGHORAU TREF A CHYMUNED

Ystyried adroddiad Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, (copi yma – papur hufen)

9. ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL AELODAU ETHOLEDIG

Ystyried adroddiad Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, (copi yma – papur llwyd)

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman shall propose that the minutes of the last meeting of this committee held on 10 September, 2013 be signed as a true record (copy herewith – **yellow** paper).

5. RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MEMBERS' WORK

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, (copy herewith – **white** paper)

6. SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, (copy herewith – **lilac** paper)

7. WEB-CASTING

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, (copy herewith – **pink** paper)

8. WEBSITES FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, (copy herewith – **cream** paper)

9. ANNUAL REPORTS BY ELECTED MEMBERS

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, (copy herewith – **grey** paper)

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE, 10.09.13

Present: Councillor Lesley Day (Chair);
Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones (Vice-chair).

Councillors: Anwen Davies, Tom Ellis, Jean Forsyth, Selwyn Griffiths, Jason Humphreys, Sion Wyn Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Michael Sol Owen and Gareth Thomas.

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Customer Care).

Officers: Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager, Corporate Commissioning Service), Debbie Williams Jones (Temporary Democratic Services Manager), Sion Gwynfryn Williams (Communications Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Charles Wyn Jones and Mandy Williams-Davies.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. BEST WISHES

Vera Jones, Democratic Services Manager, was congratulated on the recent birth of her daughter.

3. URGENT ITEM – GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSION'S CONSULTATION ON GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC SERVICES PROVISION

This item had not been included on the agenda; however, the Chair agreed to discuss it as an urgent matter under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, in order to receive clarification on the constitutional situation prior to the discussion in the full Council on 19 September 2013.

Concern was expressed regarding the contents of a letter sent by the Council Leader in response to the Commission's consultation on Governance and Public Services Provision, and the fact that the response had been sent on behalf of the Council before consulting with members. The item was on the Council's agenda on 19 September, but it was argued that this was too late, and that an urgent Council meeting should have been called to discuss the response prior to the end of the consultation period on 31 August.

Regarding the process, the Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service, outlined the usual process of submitting provisional comments until a committee had convened, and he also explained that it would be unconstitutional for this committee to discuss the response as the matter was outside its remit.

RESOLVED to leave the matter for discussion by the Council.

The Chair noted her willingness to forward any observations that members wished to submit as individuals, to the Commission.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 4 June, 2013 as a true record.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA

Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services presenting the Welsh Local Government's guidelines on social media to councillors, requesting that the committee considered amending them specifically for Gwynedd's use and/or producing specific protocol on the use of social media by councillors.

The Communications Manager elaborated on the Council's corporate use of social websites and outlined the influence and potential of these new media. He suggested that the national guidelines were a good starting point, but that there was scope to strengthen them, for example, from the perspective of the Welsh language.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion the following main observations were highlighted:-

- It was important to recognise that many constituents chose to contact the Council by visiting the office, telephoning or sending a text message or e-mail.
- Following their adoption, it would be beneficial to provide members with training on the guidelines, and a series of suggestions relating to the use of *Facebook* and *Twitter*.
- A sub-group could examine the possibility of Cabinet Members using *Twitter* as a method of sharing information about what was happening within the remit of their portfolio.

A member referred to the technical difficulties with the I-pad, noting that members required more support from the Information Technology Unit. The Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service, agreed to relay the message.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To recommend that Gwynedd should adopt its own guidelines on the use of social media.**
- (b) **To recommend establishing a sub-group jointly with the Standards Committee to collaborate on drawing up guidelines on social media for councillors in Gwynedd (with the exact process for achieving this to be agreed between the Chairs of both committees).**
- (c) **To nominate the Chair of this committee, Councillor Lesley Day, and Councillors Selwyn Griffiths and Sion Wyn Jones to serve on the sub-group.**

6. WEB CASTING AND REMOTE ATTENDANCE

Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services presenting the most recent developments regarding web casting and remote attendance requirements, and the developments relating to the grant for town and community councils.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion the following main observations were highlighted:-

Remote attendance at meetings

- Those members participating from Pwllheli or Dolgellau could feel isolated as it would be difficult for them to attract the Chair's attention in Caernarfon.
- Although it was a medium that worked, there was no wish to see it being extended excessively.
- A policy should be established on what would happen if the equipment failed.
- A study on the cost benefits of holding meetings by remote attendance could be considered.
- Chairs required training on how to conduct a meeting through video conferencing.
- It was difficult for Chairs in Ystafell Ogwen, Caernarfon, to keep an eye on the large screen (Dolgellau) and the small screen (Pwllheli), as well as on the people in the room, and that there was a danger of ignoring people not present in the same room.

Web casting

- Special effort should be made to arrange web casting when a major or contentious issue was being discussed, as it was important that everyone wishing to listen to the discussion had the opportunity to do so.
- With regards to the public's right to listen to Council proceedings, it was noted that the external door of the Chamber had not been open at the beginning of meetings recently, and the Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service, noted that this would be resolved.

Website development for town and community councils

- A question was raised on the possibility that community councils could create websites jointly, and the Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service, agreed to check the guidelines to see whether this would be possible.

RESOLVED

- (a) To approve proceeding with the provision for remote attendance at meetings, subject to the clauses listed below:-**
- (i) That the provision is only available in the video conferencing rooms in the Council's offices in Dolgellau and Pwllheli (in order to ensure the reliability of the provision);**
 - (ii) Not to offer the provision to meetings where executive decisions are made (Cabinet, Planning Committee and Licensing Committee) for the time being, to avoid any constitutional questions if the equipment fails and a member is unable to use his or her voting rights.**
- (b) To approve to proceed with the web-casting provision at Siambr Dafydd Orwig and Siambr Hywel Dda and, subject to the scale of the costs, to provide for any establishment and running costs, over and above the value of grant monies from the Democratic Costs budget;**
- (c) To continue to support the facilitation of developing websites for community councils, and to receive an update on the numbers who have expressed an interest in establishing a website at the next meeting.**

7. ELECTED MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORTS

Submitted - the report by the Head of Democratic Services detailing the lessons learnt from the members' experiences of producing Annual Reports this year.

A point of accuracy was raised, and it was noted that the reference to Councillor 'Eirwyn Thomas' in paragraph 3.1 should read 'Eirwyn Williams'. <<

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. During the discussion the following main observations were highlighted:-

- It was extremely important that members kept a continuous record of their activities in order to facilitate the production of the report at the end of the year.
- It was important that all members understood that it was not mandatory for them to publish an annual report.
- The guidelines were rather restrictive and that there was no freedom for members to make any personal remarks in the report.
- It was difficult to find the annual reports on the Council's website. In response, the Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service, explained that there was a specific section and a link to the individual reports on these pages which included members' photographs and contact details. It was suggested that an item could be included on *Rhaeadr* explaining how to find the eight members' reports for 2012/13, and inviting other members to produce their own annual reports next year.
- The annual statement of members' expenses could refer to the fact that some members produced annual reports.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To hold discussions with those elected members who did not produce annual reports this year to identify what support and guidance they would need to enable them to publish annual reports in 2013/14.**
- (b) **To submit a report to the next Democratic Services Committee following these discussions, to include clear and definite recommendations that would enable the Council to facilitate the process of producing and publishing the annual reports of elected members in 2013/14.**

8. INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

Submitted - the report of the Head of Democratic Services presenting feedback received from some members on *Rhaeadr* and discussing methods of communicating with elected members.

The members were asked for guidance:-

- (a) on any further developments for *Rhaeadr*.
- (b) on the next steps that should be taken in terms of looking at methods of receiving observations and/or responses from elected members.
- (c) on the best methods of receiving responses from members to a questionnaire that had been produced for them.

The Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service, noted that he was of the view that *Rhaeadr* was an effective medium of disseminating information to members, but that it was not as effective in receiving responses to consultations.

The Communications Manager expanded on the perception and the use to date of *Rhaeadr*, and noted that there was perhaps scope for improved co-ordination so that responses to many consultations were not requested at the same time.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

RESOLVED to submit the following guidance in relation to *Rhaeadr* and the methods of communication with members:-

- All the departments should be informed that *Rhaeadr* is to be used as the norm for communication with members.
- E-mails should be sent to members requesting comments and responses on specific subjects in *Rhaeadr*.
- The final decision on the frequency of publishing *Rhaeadr* should be taken once the results of the questionnaire have been received.
- The arrangement of reminding members when a new edition of *Rhaeadr* is available is to be welcomed.
- The idea of allocating each Cabinet Member a page on *Rhaeadr* is welcomed, and the Chairman of the Council should also be allocated a page.
- It would be useful to have information on *Rhaeadr* regarding street and road works.
- There is a risk of creating too many information sources for members, and a search facility would be useful.
- It would be beneficial to include a link to enable members to track the outcome of planning applications that go to appeal.
- Items in *Rhaeadr* should be succinct and focused, so as not to overload members with information.
- *Rhaeadr* should not be used as an excuse by officers not to give information to individual members regarding developments in their own areas.

9. MEMBERS' TRAINING

Presented – a verbal report by the Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service, noting:-

- The interest among members in conducting a review of their training and development needs was patchy, and that the response to an item in *Rhaeadr* to attract interest was poor.
- He intended to contact each member formally to ask whether or not they wished to be interviewed for a Personal Development Plan, and would then act accordingly.
- According to the need, arrangements would be made to identify people to conduct the interviews once the numbers had been confirmed.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.35am.

MEETING OF	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
DATE	11 December 2013
SUBJECT	RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MEMBERS' WORK
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	Update the Committee on the resources in place and consider the main issues in order to plan resources for the future.
AUTHOR	Geraint George Head of Democratic Services - Strategic and Improvement Department

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 One of the basic responsibilities of this Committee is to consider and make recommendations regarding the adequacy of the provision of staff, buildings and other resources to allow me to support members to fulfil their roles.
- 1.2 As I reported last year when establishing the Democratic Services, many steps were taken to try to address the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2011 within the resources available with the exact staffing structure being the result of general restructuring within the Department to cope with many changes and release savings.

2. THE CURRENT SUPPORT

See a summary of the support for members in Appendix A.

- 2.1 The main emphasis of the Democratic Services is to support non executive councillors in order to ensure that they can fulfil their duties and contribute fully to the work of the Council. The core support is provided through a combination of the Democratic Services Team and other resources in the Strategic and Improvement Department, specifically the Performance Team. In addition, we commission some elements from other Department within the Council. There has been no change in the structure since last year's report.

2.2 The main activities and support are as follows:-

2.2.1 Organise and support the Authority's committees

The Member Support and Scrutiny core team is responsible for providing guidance, organising, supporting and keeping minutes of some 179 meetings annually.

In addition there are some other meetings outside the formal Committee system which require support, including the Business Group and the Chairs Forum.

2.2.2 Promote the Authority's overview and scrutiny role

The main emphasis is to provide independent advice and guidance to the Scrutiny Committees. This support is delivered via the core team and with support from the Performance Efficiency team and also by prioritising the time of other members of the Strategic and Improvement team. The main elements include the Scrutiny Committees, preparatory meetings and the Scrutiny Investigations.

2.2.3 Members' Salaries and Expenses

These responsibilities include providing general guidance and specifically on national guidance from the 'Independent Remuneration Panel' with the administration provided by the Support Unit.

2.2.4 Training and Development

The role is mainly linked with planning and commissioning a development programme and also providing some seminars jointly with Human Resources.

2.2.5 Information for Members

As well as providing guidance, information and responding to occasional enquiries, this support includes 'Rhaeadr' which is supported by a specific officer in the Customer Care Department.

2.2.6 Support for political parties

This support involves organising group meetings, taking minutes and assisting members as required with internal and external correspondence.

3. **MAIN ISSUES**

3.1 Members will be fully aware that the financial situation will be extremely challenging in the coming years and the Council will be required to reduce its costs substantially. To this end, it is intended for the full Council on 6.3.14 to adopt a savings strategy and agree on the split of savings targets to every Department for the period of 2015-2017/18.

3.2 There are some specific developments which arise from the requirements of the Local Government Measure and which are already being addressed by the Committee, which require capacity including

- webcasting
- remote attendance of meetings
- annual reviews of development needs
- preparing annual reports

We are planning to cope with these requirements within the current resources but an element of risk must be noted as we will not be entirely sure of the demand for services until such time as we have installed and run the developments in full.

3.3 The implications of our strategy and current arrangements are also vital in the resources equation.

3.3.1 In terms of our priority to scrutiny investigations I am now attempting to support four scrutiny investigations at a time across the Scrutiny Committees. This is an increase of one scrutiny investigation from the original number following agreement that there was a need to respond to the breadth of responsibility of the Services Committee by holding Education and Social Services investigations.

3.3.2 The decision to establish the Area Forums has increased work, namely four Forums meeting six times a year. Again, we are seeking to cope with this within current resources.

3.4 **Designated Persons Order**

In this regard, the Welsh Government is placing a new duty on Local Authorities to scrutinise providers of other public services in their areas.

The Government intends to do this in stages, and in the first stage, the suggestion is that it should focus on the following organisations:-

- Local Health Boards
- NHS Trusts
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- National Park Authorities

Clearly, scrutinising these establishments will increase the pressure on the scrutiny members and officers and careful planning and prioritisation will be required to meet the expectations with the current resources.

4. **OTHER DEVELOPMENTS**

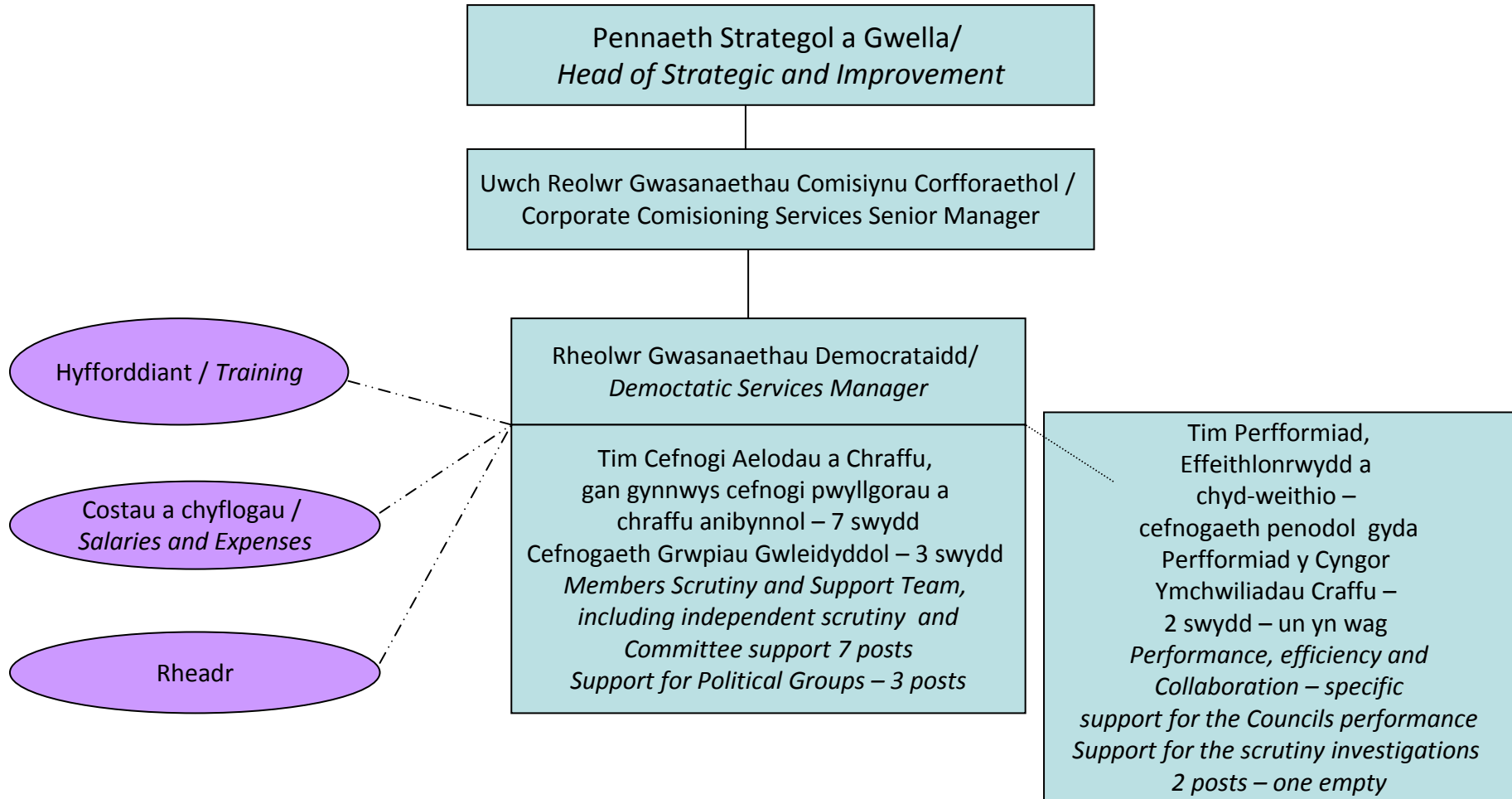
As well as staff support, other reports such as technology and buildings are important to enable members to fulfil their roles effectively. One of the issues being addressed at present is the accessibility of our buildings and specifically fair access for all. I have commissioned work by the property unit in the Customer Care Department to assess what needs to be addressed to improve the situation. I will report to the next Committee with an update on this.

5. **CONCLUSIONS**

In general, I am of the opinion that to date, we have successfully met with the challenges of the Local Government Measure 2011 by establishing the Democratic Service without additional cost and providing good quality support but with room for improvement. It must be acknowledged that there is some frustration regarding capacity to assist members to tackle more issues e.g. scrutiny investigations. However, given the financial climate facing the Council and the need for substantial savings over the coming years, continued consideration will need to be given to opportunities to be more efficient and deliver services with less resource.

CRYNODEB O'R GEFNOGAETH - SUT/ SUMMARY OF SUPPORT – HOW

STRATEGOL A GWELLA/ STRATEGIC AND IMPROVEMENT



MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	11 December, 2013
SUBJECT	Social Media Protocol
PURPOSE	To submit an initial draft of a social media protocol for councillors
AUTHOR	Geraint George Head of Democratic Services

1. At its last meeting, the committee decided as follows:-

“(a) To recommend that Gwynedd should adopt its own guidelines on the use of social media.

(b) To recommend establishing a sub-group jointly with the Standards Committee to collaborate on drawing up guidelines on social media for councillors in Gwynedd (with the exact process for achieving this to be agreed between the Chairs of both committees).

(c) To nominate the Chair of this committee, Councillor Lesley Day, and Councillors Selwyn Griffiths and Sion Wyn Jones to serve on the sub-group.”

2. The Social Media Task Group met on 18th November. The meeting was attended by three members of the Standards Committee and also two of the councillors from this committee. There was a very beneficial discussion in terms of taking advantage of and the risks related to the use of social media by councillors.

3. In terms of the way forward, it was agreed to prepare a local protocol and the work of preparing that protocol with the members of working group is in hand. Appended for the committee’s information is the current draft of the protocol as it stands. The plan is for the Task Group to to approve the final draft in the next few weeks consulting widely with every member of the Council after that with a view to the Standards Committee adopting it at its next meeting for submission to the full Council on 6th March.

4. Clearly, whilst there will be no further meeting of this committee before then, it would be good to have the committee’s initial views now, bearing in mind that it will be possible for each member to respond in due course to the wider consultation.

5. Initial observations are sought on the attached draft protocol.

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

PROTOCOL ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY COUNCILLORS

INTRODUCTION

1. The “Social Media” are changing the way in which people communicate and network. This change offers a new platform for engagement, communication and listening. As a result, it is natural that this change affects the way in which the Council contacts the county’s citizens and also the way in which councillors operate.
2. The purpose of this policy document is to provide guidance for councillors in the use of this media.

THE ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

3. The development of “Social Media” offers opportunities for sharing information with and seeking responses from residents. The various means (Facebook, Twitter, Blogs etc) offer a quick, cheap and effective way of doing so. They also are a means to enable contact with those who would, perhaps, have had no previous link with democratic processes.
4. As a result, they are media that can prove very useful to the Council corporately and also to local councillors. Used well, councillors can benefit greatly and the Council encourages appropriate use by councillors. However, it is important to be aware of the dangers and risks associated with their use.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

5. The fundamental principle is that “The Gwynedd Standard” (see Appendix 1) and the Code of Conduct for Councillors (see Appendix 2) are relevant to all activities, including the use of Social Media. Consequently, the conduct of members when using social media must adhere to the same standards as conduct by a member at a committee, a public meeting or in correspondence.
6. Therefore, in addition to the general legal duties, the following principles should be borne in mind:-
 - Showing respect to others
 - Not revealing exempt or confidential information
 - No bullying or threatening of others
 - Not seeking personal benefit
 - Remembering the principles of equality
 - Being careful not to decide matters in advance

THE RESONSIBILITY FOR “CONTENT”

7. One big difference between the social media and other media is that the owner of the “site” is responsible not only for their own statements but also the statements made by others on that site. Consequently, if inappropriate statements are made, the owner of the “site” is responsible for withdrawing those statements.

“POLITICAL” DISCUSSIONS

8. Local “political” discussions can be robust and challenging. Whilst the Public Services Ombudsman has accepted that members must have a “thicker skin” since criticism of ideas and opinion is part of democratic debate, the “Gwynedd Standard” does make it clear that no-one should be offensive or abusive even in those “political” discussions. This protocol confirms that those standards are relevant to members in their use of social media.

THE COUNCILLOR AS AN INDIVIDUAL

9. A councillor can establish a site in their own name or as “Councillor ****”
Members should be aware that this protocol is relevant to either scenario. Since it is clear that the fact that an individual is an elected member is public information, a member should be equally careful on one as the other. The relevance of the policy to matters depends on the content and the conduct standards are constant throughout.

THE USE OF COUNCIL EQUIPMENT

10. The councillor may use the Council’s equipment for publishing information on social media but members should be wary of the content.

USE AT MEETINGS

11. Social media may be used at the meetings of the Council and its committees. However, it must be borne in mind that:-
 - A member’s main focus should be on the discussion in hand and the decision to be made
 - Exempt and confidential information should not be tweeted
 - The details of meetings should not be tweeted

WEB-CASTING

13. The Council will be moving in due course to broadcast some of its meetings (full Council and some committees) over the Web. As a part of that development, we will be encouraging the use of social media for members of the public to respond to discussions. However, that will take place through the Council’s official “sites”. The individual use of media by elected members falls under paragraph 11 of this protocol.

TRAINING

14. Training on this protocol will be provided for members in order to empower them to make responsible and appropriate use of the media but emphasising the individual responsibility of the individual member of them.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

15. Any complaints relating to the protocol should be sent to the Propriety Officer.

APPENDIX 1 – THE GWYNEDD STANDARD

APPENDIX 2 – CODE OF CONDUCT

APPENDIX 3 – WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES

DRAFT

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	11 December, 2013
SUBJECT	Web-casting
PURPOSE	To submit the latest information on web-casting developments
AUTHOR	Geraint George Head of Democratic Services

INTRODUCTION

1. It has already been reported to this committee that the Welsh Government is promoting local and inclusive democracy, amongst other matters, by encouraging the development of web-casting.
2. The Council has accepted a grant to enable the broadcasting of all or some of the Council's meetings.
3. By now, developments to facilitate this (in terms of cameras etc) have been completed in the Dafydd Orwig Chamber and Hywel Dda Chamber. The work completed so far means that we will be in a position to produce the material to be broadcast but we need to arrange for the broadcasting of that material on the web.

FURTHER WORK

4. In order to learn from the experience of others, I and another officer from the department visited Carmarthenshire County Council that has already introduced such a system in a situation where two languages are used. The visit proved very beneficial with a number of important lessons coming to the fore:-
 - The need to plan in detail in advance and, crucially, to allow enough time to pilot the system before going live.
 - The importance of reducing as much as possible the work related to the "running" of the system when a meeting is taking place
 - The need to increase members' awareness of the sensitivity of such systems
5. Further discussions continue and we are working on a reasonable programme of work that should enable us to be able to broadcast for the first time early after April 2014 after appropriate piloting, introducing it gradually after then. In that time, we will have to invite bids for the work and, in this context, there is a National Framework Agreement that should facilitate this.
6. In terms of the committees under consideration, the contract with any provider would be for a certain amount of hours to be broadcast. Clearly, therefore, it would

be necessary to prioritise those of greatest interest. The intention at the start is to concentrate on the full Council and Planning Committee, choosing meetings of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees for the remainder of the hours on the basis of the likely interest in the matters to be considered.

7. Of course, this committee has already discussed one key element of the provision, how we will deal with the translation requirements. Clearly, at the moment there is simultaneous translation when a non-Welsh speaker is present but, if there is no non-Welsh speaker present, there is no translation. Consequently, if there is no non-Welsh speaker present at a meeting that is being web-cast, no translation will be provided and therefore, there would be no audio feed for the non-Welsh speaker viewing and listening on-line. The committee has accepted the suggestion that it would not be a good use of resources to provide a translation at every meeting “in case” a non-Welsh speaker wanted to listen. Once the system is operational, it is proposed that we review the use of the non-Welsh language stream to assess the demand before considering what provision if at all to make.
8. The initial discussions that have taken place with possible providers have offered the possibility of linking the web-casting system with a wider system to manage the Council’s management of its committee work. Such a system would be able to improve the management of its documents, being able to link discussions with the documents under consideration at the meetings and able to offer a “social media” link on matters of importance to the county.
9. One other important element is, of course, the cost. Whilst an element of the grant from the Welsh Government will help with the cost of setting up the system, we must be aware that moving to a system like this will have revenue implications – at a time when resources are reducing. Having said that, with the importance of democratic debate increasing, there will be clear value in ensuring that key discussions within the Council are open for everybody to see and understand and it would be of great benefit in terms of open democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee continues to support the introduction of the system, subject to the funding being adequate, seeking a report back to the next meeting on the detailed work plan for its introduction.

MEETING OF	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	11 December 2013
SUBJECT	Websites for Town and Community Councils
PURPOSE	To submit an update on the scheme to support town and community councils to develop a web presence.
AUTHOR	Geraint George, Head of Democratic Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Welsh Government has supplied a fund to enable Local Authorities to issue a grant of up to £500 each for Town and Community Councils to establish a website.
- 1.2 The purpose of this grant is to assist Town and Community Councils to prepare for the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill, which contains provisions which would require each community council to publish information on a website, and the grant is to be used to help them prepare for that.
- 1.3 The Economy and Community Department has been commissioned to administer and identify the level of interest in developing a website by Town and Community Councils.

2. UPDATE

- 2.1 In July, the Town and Community Councils were invited to express an interest in receiving a grant of up to £500.00 to develop a website. As the sum available is comparatively low, it was resolved to offer two options, namely:
 - a) Option 1
A Council to establish an individual website, committing to maintain the website for a minimum of three years.
 - b) Option 2
Work with other Town and Community Councils in the county to set up a new joint website that would include a section for every individual Council with a joint commitment to maintain the website for a minimum of three years.

Option 1

- 2.2 It was resolved that Cist Gwynedd would administrate the grant process for developing Town and Community Council websites in Gwynedd.

2.3 In September, further clarity was received from the Welsh Government that Town and Community Councils would be able to use the grant for the following purposes:

- a) Create new web presence
- b) develop existing web presence

2.4 At the end of October, the Town and Community Councils expressed an interest as follows in the grant to develop a website:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 1+2	Not Interested	No Response
Town and Community Councils	21	19	2	10	14

2.5 In November, application forms were sent to the Town and Community Councils with the closing date for the application process being 10 January 2014. As part of the process, the need to spend and claim the grant before the end of March 2014 was stressed.

2.6 To coincide with the application process, a basic guide was submitted to the Town and Community Councils which provided guidance on the technical issues to be included in a specification to invite quotes from providers.

2.7 **Option 2**

The IT Unit, in the Customer Care Department is leading on Option 2.

2.8 The intention of the IT Unit is to bring stakeholders together, namely the Town and Community Councils, so as to ensure clarity of their requirements and decide on a provider.

3. **RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:-

- a) continues to support the work of facilitating the development of a web presence for Town and Community Councils, and to receive an update on the numbers who have applied for the grant at the next meeting on 18 March 2014.

MEETING OF	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	12 December 2013
SUBJECT	Annual Reports by Elected Members
PURPOSE	To learn lessons from the members' experience of producing Annual Reports this year
AUTHOR	Geraint George, Head of Democratic Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Democratic Services Committee is already aware that the Local Government Bill (Wales) 2011 notes that:

A local authority must make arrangements for:

- each person who is a member of the authority to make an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the authority during the year to which the report relates,
- each person who is a member of the authority's executive to make an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the executive during the year to which the report relates, and
- the authority to publish all annual reports produced by its members and by the members of its executive.

- 1.2 The purpose of the Annual Reports by Elected Members is to improve communication between Elected Members and the public. The Minister for Local Government said that the reports will be a means of improving the public's understanding of what local members do and the important role that they have and will enable the public to discover information about the activity of their local councillor.

2. GWYNEDD ANNUAL REPORTS 2012/13

- 2.1 In 2012/13, the Council implemented a pilot of the procedure following guidance from this Committee, making it a requirement for the Cabinet Member for Customer Care and the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee only to provide annual reports, although any other member was free to produce annual reports also.
- 2.2 The result of this pilot was that eight elected members provided annual reports, namely one member of the executive and seven frontline members. The annual reports can be found on the Council website by following this link:

http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy_doc.asp?cat=3313&doc=30269&Language=2&p=1&c=1Xxx

3. 2013/14 ANNUAL REPORTS

- 3.1 In order to pave the way for more elected members to provide annual reports in 2013/14 and in order to assist them to do so, it is suggested that the following should be provided as support:
- a) a standard template for the annual report
 - b) information about the number of committees attended during 2013/14 (for every councillor individually)
 - c) information about the number of training sessions attended during 2013/14 (for every councillor individually)
- 3.2 The remainder of the template (which will be restricted to one side of A4) will be available for every member to provide details on specific aspects of their work as a councillor during 2013/14.
- 3.3 Correspondence has already been sent to members via *Rhaeadr* asking them to confirm their intention of providing annual reports for 2013/14. This information will be of assistance to assess the demand and ensure adequate resources to support the members to create annual reports in 2013/14.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended:
- a) that the proposal of creating a template including data about the number of committees attended and the number of training sessions attended for every councillor individually be accepted as a way of supporting members to provide annual reports in 2013/14.