

MEETING	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
DATE	11 September 2012
SUBJECT	Members' Reports
PURPOSE	To submit the requirements and to discuss how Gwynedd deals with the requirement.
AUTHOR	Councillor Dewi Owen, Chair of Democratic Services Committee Vera Jones, Democratic Services Manager

1. What are the requirements?

1.1 The Welsh Local Government Measure (2011), notes the following:-

(1) A local authority must make arrangements -

(a) for each person who is a member of the authority to produce an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the authority during the year to which the report relates,

(a) for each person who is a member of the authority's executive to produce an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the executive during the year to which the report relates, and

(c) for the authority to publish all annual reports produced by its members and by members of its executive.

(2) The arrangements may include conditions as to the content of a report that must be satisfied by the person making it.

(3) A local authority must publicise its arrangements.

(4) In exercising its functions under this section, a local authority must have regard to the guidelines provided by Welsh Ministers."

1.2 The purpose of the Annual Report by Elected Members is to improve communication between Elected Members and the public. The Minister for Local Government notes that the reports will be a means of improving the public's understanding of what local members do and the important role which they have. He has also noted that every local authority will be free to choose its own format for the reports.

1.3 In addition to the Measure, the Welsh Government has also published a guidance document to assist local authorities in incorporating the act, namely, "*Statutory Guidance for the Local Government Measure 2011 – June 2012*".

- 1.4 No further guidance has been included in the document 'Members Reports' but the Welsh Government has stated that they expect to release further guidelines after the summer recess.
- 1.5 Therefore, at the moment it would be unwise to proceed with strong developments to respond to this requirement. However, it is recommended that the committee contacts all members to raise awareness of the general requirement, recommending that all members keep a record of their main activities so that producing an Annual Report by the end of the financial year is not unexpected.

2. What have other authorities done thus far?

- 2.1 'Annual Reports' by elected members have existed in England for some years but every authority has a different interpretation of what should be included and what format should be used. It varies from giving elected members a clean sheet to write anything they consider to be of interest to the public about their work. In the case of a clean sheet, some elected members have used the reports for political propaganda and for discrediting other political parties. Consequently, several local authorities have favoured more structure to the reports.
- 2.2 It is always useful to seek good practice and to consider current developments in other local authorities. In Wales, Bridgend is currently the authority which has invested the most time in investigating and developing arrangements.
- 2.3 Bridgend has developed a model to complement the guidelines below:
 - A factual, interesting and non-political document
 - Two pages in length at the most
 - To report on five specific fields
 - Role and responsibility
 - Events within the electorate
 - Initiatives and special activities
 - Learning and Development
 - Other events and Issues
- 2.4 A sample document by Bridgend is in **Appendix A**.

3. Considerations for the Democratic Services Committee

- 3.1 The Democratic Services Committee must consider the following factors:

A. Format of the report – It must be considered whether the Democratic Services Committee wishes to develop a template and specific guidelines for elected members to follow or to leave every member to develop their own reports.

i. Developing a Template -

- ✓ Consistency in terms of the report
- ✓ Easier for the public to compare different wards
- ✓ Keep it brief

- ✓ No opportunities for political mocking
- Could be frustrating for a member because she/he is restricted

ii Freedom

- ✓ Freedom for every member to include the things she/he considers important
- ✓ An opportunity to elaborate on a few important 'stories' for the electorate
- ✓ An opportunity for the member to put her / his own stamp on the report
- A risk for members to use the report to discredit other political parties

B – Depending on the above, there is a need to consider the support for members to produce these reports. It can be seen from the example document of Bridgend that the authority provides some assistance in supplying the data.

Issues which must be considered in terms of support:

- ✓ How much support and by whom?
- ✓ Providing data
- ✓ Translation support
- ✓ Support in inputting the reports on the internet
- ✓ Support in producing the reports

4. Recommendations

4.1 Before proceeding any further with the work, it is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee offers initial guidance on the nature and format of the report in order to complete further work on this and to approve the action steps noted below

- Chairman of the Democratic Services Committee to contact his fellow members to raise awareness of members of what is expected of them, recommending that all members keep a record of their main activities.
- The Democratic Services Manager to produce a further report to be submitted at the next meeting of this Committee, recommending the way forward. The recommendations will a) respond to the considerations noted in (3) above, (b) follow / respond to the further guidelines provided by the Welsh Government and will be (c) based on further research work on what is currently happening in Wales.

BCBC Councillor's Annual Report ~ Sample

This is the report by the Councillor below regarding their key activities over the year ending 30th April 2012. It is provided for the information of all constituents and for no other purpose.

Completion instructions.

Councillors are free to include as much or as little information as they wish in each section, however the report is to be kept to this 2 page (maximum) format.

Councillor: A N Other

Party: Central Party

Ward: Southtown

Section 1: Role & Responsibilities

I sit on the following committees:

Town & Community Council Forum	Attendance X/X*
Community Safety & Governance Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Attendance X/X*
Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Attendance X/X*
Corporate Resources & Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Attendance X/X*

I sit on the following external committees

Bridgend Town Hall Trust	Attendance X/X†
Local Service Board Scrutiny Panel	Attendance X/X†
Southtown Comprehensive School Governing Body	Attendance X/X†
Westview Community Council	Attendance X/X†
Southtown Community College Management Committee	Attendance X/X†
Southtown Litter Management Group	Attendance X/X†
Bridgend Citizens Advice Bureau Steering Group	Attendance X/X†

† figures supplied by Councillor

* figures supplied by BCBC

Section 2: Constituency Activity

I hold weekly constituency surgeries on Friday Lunchtimes between 1pm and 3pm in the Westview Community Centre

Attendance at the local PACT meetings regularly and am able to address any complaints or queries in a timely manner.

I compile and deliver a quarterly newsletter to each address in my constituency - this is based on the topics which I believe my constituents would like information on.

I support individuals who contact me on a wide range of issues and have acted as an advocate in Planning matters, Neighbourhood disputes involving the Police and Bridgend Council, the Environment Agency, Highway matters and Social Services requests.

I receive a considerable number of telephone calls from residents seeking advice and assistance on a range of personal issues and I am always prepared to listen to their concerns and offer appropriate support.

I have given a talk at the Southtown Town & Community Council meeting on 'My role as a Councillor' and have taken part in 'What's your Opinion' as a member of a panel.

Section 3: Initiatives and Special Activities

Through communications with the Vale of Glamorgan Transportation Committee I have been successful in generating a new bus service between Corporation Street in Southtown and the Central Bus Station in Bridgend. The service runs 4 times each weekday morning affording residents public transport into Bridgend and the same frequency in the early evening.

I was requested to organise a survey regarding the potential introduction of a one-way system for Cardiff Road and Town Square in Southtown. The response to the survey was not large in terms of numbers in favour of the proposal which has subsequently been shelved. I wrote personally to each of the residents who responded to the survey conveying my thanks for their efforts and outlining the results.

With the help of local youngsters and BCBC's Leisure Department I have supported the development of the new skateboarding zone within Southtown Park, between May and September each year.

I have also supported the renovation of the outdoor Bowling Green at Southtown Community Centre which now has more than 120 regular members of Southtown Bowling Club. The club is aiming to open a junior section during the summer months of this year - so constituents should keep an eye open for more news on this subject in the local press and publications.

Section 4: Learning & Development

I have attended the following Learning & Development initiatives during the past year:

Corporate Parenting Training

Risk Assessment for Children's Directorate Training

Night-time Economy Training

ICT - Internet & Intranet Training

Project & Programme Management Training

Media Awareness Training

Budget Analysis & Interpretation Training

I have attended the following pre-Council Briefings:

Rota Visits for Residential Care Establishments

Bridgend Care & Repair

Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

Section 5: Other Activities and Issues

There are serious concerns amongst the residents of Southtown that the land adjoining Southtown Park will be developed as a Retail Park. I have supported local residents in protest against any such development as I believe it would fundamentally alter the characteristics of the local community and cause considerable impact on the existing traffic problems in the area. I have attended both appeal enquiries and will continue resisting any such plans for development along these lines.

I am a strong supporter of the 'Keep our Playing Fields' action group and have gone on record in opposing the recent sale of part of the Southtown School Playing Fields for a new Residential Estate. Whilst the sale will result in a small number of affordable housing opportunities I believe other local sites would have been a better option and could have afforded the opportunity to develop brown-field land.

I plan to support the Southtown Community Council in its efforts on fund raising for new festive lights in the town this Christmas. I will be approaching local businesses for modest contributions to this worthy cause in the next few months which provides a welcoming sight on cold winter nights.

Signature of Councillor:

Date: