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## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE, 11.12.12

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**Present:** Councillor Dewi Owen (Chair);  
Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones (Vice-chair).

**Councillors:** Lesley Day, Tom Ellis, Selwyn Griffiths, Jason Humphreys, Linda A.W.Jones, Charles Wyn Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Michael Sol Owen, Gareth Thomas,

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

**Officers:** Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department), Gareth James (Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager), Carey Cartwright (Learning and Development Manager) and Ioan Hughes (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**Apologies:** Councillors Anwen Davies and Mandy Williams-Davies. In addition, apologies were received from the Democratic Services Manager.

**Welcome:** Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department) was welcomed following his recent illness.

### 1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

### 2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 11 September 2012 as a true record.

### 3. MEMBERS' TRAINING

i) Submitted – the report of the Chairman of the Training Sub-group, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan.

ii) In light of work undertaken by this Sub-group, a list of criteria and potential action steps to be taken was provided to assess and ensure fairness when considering members' applications to attend 'additional courses' that were outside that of the members' development framework.

iii) The Committee members expressed their opinion and it was noted:-

a) that the Standing Orders should be the priority of the training programme;

b) that some outside bodies provided their own training and that a training arrangement on behalf of the Council was not required in such instances;

c) that there was a need to consider holding courses that the Council was responsible for, in central locations, such as Penrhynduedraeth;

ch) on the other hand, it was noted that some faced travelling difficulties and that Penrhynduedraeth was not convenient for them;

d) that it was possible to receive much training on-line or through other alternative methods.

**RESOLVED:**

**a) To adopt the following criteria:**

Elected members should hold a job or responsibility in the field on behalf of the Council, and should be able to demonstrate that attending the “additional course” will enable them to undertake their work better.

The post or responsibility can be as:-

- Scrutiny Chair or Vice-chair
- Cabinet Member
- Champion
- Member of the Pensions Committee
- Chair or Vice-chair of any other committee
- Representative of Gwynedd as a member on an outside body
- An individual elected member who is part of a Scrutiny Investigation, where attending the course would add considerable value to the Scrutiny Investigation.

*(NB: Any visits by a number of members as part of a Scrutiny Investigation will be considered as part of the investigation's work and not a “course”)*

- The ‘additional course’ should not be available within the Elected Members’ Training Programme or that it could be arranged in another way internally for a number of elected members to reduce costs.
- It should be considered whether or not a course offers value for money, i.e. the cost of the course should be a criteria.
- Travel should be avoided by arranging, if possible, to participate or listen to the “additional course” by means of alternative methods e.g. webinar / video conferencing.
- Aim for a maximum of 2 “additional courses” per member in each year
- The relevance of the course to the elected member’s personal development programme must be considered.

**b) To adopt the following actions to implement the criteria:**

- All members should submit written information (by letter or e-mail) outlining how they meet the criteria
- It should be ensured that the member has a seconder for the request, e.g. Chair or Vice-chair of a specific committee to support the individual member by virtue of their role.

- The application should be submitted at least a fortnight beforehand to the Head of the Democratic Services Department, who will consult with the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee, before deciding whether to approve or reject the application,
- The above-mentioned will assess the application against the criteria and will inform the member of the outcome. It should also be ensured that arrangements for reporting back and summarising/sharing the additional information are made clear (this will vary according to each application/field).

**c) To note that training for chairs and vice-chairs is part of the Core Programme and it is intended to review the Core Programme on an annual basis.**

**ch) That an item is added to the agenda of the next meeting of this Committee to provide information regarding the 'Champions'.**

Following the discussion, the Learning and Development Manager submitted information regarding:

i) A plan to develop an e-learning site for all local authority members in Wales. He noted that this could benefit the Council and that Gwynedd could lead on the work relating to Welsh language materials. The Committee agreed that Gwynedd Council should support the national scheme.

ii) MSc training on Public Service Management which was being run nationally through the University of Glamorgan. At present, he wished to raise awareness of the advanced level training being arranged.

It was agreed that the scheme should be supported and due to the costs and the limited number of spaces, there was a need to consider a method for nominating members.

#### **4. MEMBERS' REPORTS**

**a) Submitted – the report of the Democratic Services Manager by the Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager.**

b) He expanded on the Welsh Local Government Measure (2011) which noted the need for all local authorities to make arrangements and create opportunities for each member to produce an annual report about the individual's activities as a member of the authority.

c) Submitted – an example of a template used by the Bridgend authority following extensive research.

ch) It was explained that the purpose of the Measure was to enable members of the public to receive information on the activities of their councillors.

It was added that factual information would be included in the annual reports and that these would be monitored with support available to members in accordance with the guidelines.

d) Members expressed various views in considering potential methods of producing an acceptable template and fair reports.

(dd) In response to an enquiry, it was noted that the role of this Committee was to work in order to be more comfortable with the principle and to then provide a procedure for implementation that could be recommended to the full Council.

**RESOLVED:**

**a) That a number of members, including the Chairman of this Committee, the Chairman of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Customer Care should convene in order to produce a draft template that could be used for the annual reports in Gwynedd;**

**b) That the initial template is submitted to the next meeting of this Committee for further consideration.**

**5. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

a) Submitted – the report of the Chairman of the Democratic Services Committee and he referred to the number of members who had now received personal electronic IT equipment.

b) Members expressed their views, noting:

- That detailed information was needed regarding the size of a message, namely a maximum of 2MB, as there were difficulties in some areas and because of the time it took to send messages.
- Support could be offered to obtain the necessary equipment for some to overcome the abovementioned problem;
- Some wished to receive further training and additional software to make best use of the equipment;
- Those members choosing not to receive the new equipment should not be named;
- Councillors should be able to obtain easy access to their e-mail messages and avoid any difficulties when messages were transferred to the 'archive';
- The Council had now reached a point where there was a need to make use of the scheme and ensure that paper and postage costs were reduced.

c) Some members noted their willingness to operate on a paper-free basis and that this could be a starting point for securing savings. In light of this, it was suggested that officers should number paragraphs, rather than pages, when producing reports.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Care noted that the demand for training was obvious and that members should note what kind of training would benefit them. He further noted that it would be beneficial for officers to receive full training.

**RESOLVED that the Democratic Services Committee approves:**

- **That all correspondence (where possible) and all meeting requests will be sent to members by electronic means only, with the remainder receiving hard copies;**
- **That a note is to be sent to officers within the Council regarding the above and in accordance with the following:**
  - 1. Electronic provision for 66 members;**
  - 2. Paper provision for nine members;**
  - 3. A reminder to ensure that correspondence is required to be in pdf format;**
  - 4. A reminder that messages must be no larger than 2MB**
  - 5. In arranging meetings, to ensure that a Wi-Fi connection is available, or a reminder for members to open documents prior to a meeting where there is no Wi-Fi provision.**

The meeting commenced at 10am and concluded at 11.45am.