

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	19 March 2013
SUBJECT	Members' Report
PURPOSE	To submit the requirements, schedule and risks to the Committee in order to decide on a direction for the remainder of the members.
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1. The Democratic Services Committee is already aware that the Wales Local Government Measure (2011) notes that:

1. A local authority must **make arrangements** -

- *for every person who is a member of the authority to draw-up an annual report regarding the activities of the person as a member of the authority during the year in which the report is involved,*
- *for every person who is a member of the executive of the authority to draw-up an annual report regarding the activities of the person as a member of the executive during the year in which the report is involved,*
- *for the authority to publish every annual report drawn-up by its members and by members of its executive.*

2. *The arrangements may include conditions with respect to the contents of the report that must be satisfied by the person drawing up the report.*

3. *A local authority must provide publicity for its arrangements.*

4. *When exercising its functions under this section a local authority must consider the guidelines given by the Welsh Ministers.*

2. Background:

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.

The main purpose of the reports is to enable the public to find information about the activity of their local councillor. Local authorities can place their own restrictions on the contents of the reports. Annual reports should only include factual information. Which

suggests that information about meetings, events, conferences etc. attended by the councillor should mostly be included, along with any training and development activities. Although it could be acceptable to include information that a member “has made observations on behalf of the campaign to save the local hospital in the following ways”, it would not be acceptable to say that a member “has successfully saved the local hospital following his efforts on behalf of his electors.”

Similarly, including information in reports about activities undertaken by the member that are outside his role as a councillor should be avoided. Therefore, although it would be acceptable to include information about a speech given by a member in a conference he attended as part of his role in the council, it would not be acceptable to refer to a speech given by a member in a political party conference for example, as he was there as a representative of the local branch of his party.

It should also be ensured that the report does not include information that could be interpreted as a criticism of another member. For example, it would not be acceptable for a member to compare his presence or his activities with another member or other members.

3. Points to be Considered:

All of the elected members are required to be able to draw-up an annual report on their activities as a Council member in the year gone by, namely 2012/13.

A member does not have to draw-up an annual report.

4. Suggested Direction

It is suggested that the following standard items should be included:

- Role and responsibilities – including the membership details of committees and external bodies, attendance records of these committees and the full council.
- Local activity – details of any surgeries held and the observations made on behalf of the electors along with the outcomes.
- Large projects – details of any local, county or regional initiatives or projects that the member was part of.
- Learning and development – details of training and development events attended or followed, and conferences and seminars attended.

5. Risks and Considerations

When making a decision the committee should consider the following matters:

- Some members doing this and others not (compare with the member for the nearest ward)
- Tight schedule, especially in terms of support that would be required for 75 x 2 versions.
- Risk that members could include something that is not factual / of a political sense and not be happy to change it
- The need to establish who would be advising / editing if the above were to happen

- Risk that the member could take this as their only method of communication and overlook personal surgeries etc.
- Risk that some reports would not follow the guidelines
- Risk that not many people would read them after all the work

6. **Implementation Recommendations**

That there is an opportunity for any member to draw-up a report but we recommend -

For 2012/13:-

That a Cabinet member and a member of this Committee draw-up an annual report for 2012/13 to set out a direction and provide guidance, and the rest of the Council members to draw-up reports for 2013/14 onwards.