

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	4 May 2013
SUBJECT	Members' Reports
PURPOSE	To present the latest situation regarding developments with members' reports for 2012/13.
Authors	Councillor Lesley Day, Chair of the Democratic Services Committee
	Geraint George Head of Democratic Services

1. A report has already been submitted to the Democratic Services Committee on the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to ensure that the Council makes arrangements for members to be able to form an annual report if they so wish.
2. The purpose of this report is to introduce the latest situation in terms of developments and action to the Democratic Services Committee.
3. Following a discussion on the matter at the last meeting of this committee, I corresponded with all the members on 8 April
 - reporting on our decision as a committee to undertake a pilot of the arrangement for 12/13
 - noting that any member is entitled to produce an annual report
 - asking members to declare if they intended to produce a report
 - and notifying members that more detailed guidelines would follow.
(See a copy in **Appendix A**).
4. Following the annual meeting of the full Council, where all members were updated on the developments in relation to annual reports (as part of the update report on member support), further guidelines were distributed to elected members on 9 May. The detailed guidelines had already been discussed and agreed by the Council's Business Group at the end of April. See a copy in **Appendix B**.
5. As this report was being published, six elected members had contacted to note their intention to publish an annual report. An oral report will be submitted at the Committee on the numbers who have presented by the end of May, as required.
6. Initial 'lessons learnt' could be discussed at this meeting, but it is suggested that the discussion on the way forward (to include lessons learnt from the perspective of the members and the Council) in the context of annual reports takes place at a more appropriate time during the next meeting of the Committee on 10 September 2013.

Adran Strategol a Gwella Strategic and Improvement Department

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8th April, 2013

To: All Elected Members

Dear Co-Member

Annual Reports by Elected Members

As you are aware, the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 requires that local authorities make provision to enable individual Elected Members to produce and publish an annual report. However, it is not compulsory for elected members to produce such a report.

The Democratic Services Committee discussed the matter during their meeting on 20/03/2013. Whilst it is optional for any member to publish an annual report, the Committee recommended that the Cabinet Member for Customer Care, along with myself as Chair of the Democratic Services Committee produce an annual report for 2012/13. The reports will be published, as per requirement, on the Council's website by the end of June 2013.

The above approach will enable us as elected members to experiment and learn from different experiences and examples. In addition, it will enable Council staff to identify and assess the appropriate resources required to support us as elected members undertaking this work. It will also give us an opportunity to learn lessons from the exercise undertaken in 2012/13 and prepare a clear direction and guidance to all members who wish to publish a report in 2013/14.

I would be very grateful, if you could contact Arwel Ellis Jones, Senior Manager Corporate Commissioning Service, or Vera Jones, Democratic Services Manager in the Strategic and Improvement Department as soon as possible if you intend to publish a report for 2012/13, to ensure the appropriate support is arranged for you.

I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage any member who intends to publish a report in the future, in 2013/14, to begin keeping a record of all the meetings and activities undertaken throughout the year.

The Democratic Services Committee will keep all members informed of experience gained in carrying out the exercise as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
Councillor Les Day
Chair Democratic Services Committee

GUIDELINES FOR GWYNEDD COUNCIL ELECTED MEMBERS – ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2012/13.

Requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

4. 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.*

5. The arrangements may include conditions with respect to the contents of the report that must be satisfied by the person producing it.

6. A local authority must publicise its arrangements.

7. In exercising its functions under this section a local authority must have regard to guidance given by the Welsh Ministers.

Background

- The aim of the Annual Report by the Elected Members is to improve communication between Elected Members and the public, or in other words, present information to individuals from the ward.
- 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 that they have (i.e. they will enable the public to find information about the activity of their local councillor).
- He has also noted that every local authority will be free to choose its own format for the reports (i.e. local authorities can place their own restrictions on the contents of the reports).
- Annual reports should only include **factual information**.
- This 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 might be acceptable to include information that a member "has made representations 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 succeeded in saving 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, where he was present 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 criticism of another member. For example, it would not be acceptable for a member to compare his attendance or his activities with another member or other members.
- It should be ensured that the report does not include something that is not factual / is of a political nature.

Content – standard items to include:

- **Role and responsibilities** – including details of membership of committees and external bodies, attendance records at these committees and in the full Council.
- **Local activity** – details of any surgeries held and observations made on behalf of electors, and the outcomes of these.
- **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.

Timetable and restrictions

1. The information should be summarised to a maximum of two pages so that the public can read them easily (*it is expected that this will be within the statutory guidelines*).
2. The draft report must be submitted to the Senior Corporate Commissioning Manager (Arwel Ellis-Jones) by 31 May 2013. The Council will arrange to translate the report if the member wishes, and if he/she submits it within the timetable.
3. Requests for factual information regarding the number of committees/training sessions attended should be submitted to the Democratic Services Manager (Vera Jones) as soon as possible.
4. Members should be willing to discuss the content of the report with the Head of Democratic Services (Geraint George) should he be of the opinion that the report does not comply with the guidelines in the Measure, before the report is published. Only reports that comply with the guidelines will be published.
5. The final reports will be published by the Head of Democratic Services by the end of June 2013 on the Council's website, in electronic format only (*we are still awaiting confirmation of the publication date in the statutory guidelines*).