

MEETING OF	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	18 March 2014
SUBJECT	Websites for Town and Community Councils
PURPOSE	To submit an update on the scheme to support Town and Community Councils to develop a website.
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2013/14 the Welsh Government provided funds to enable Local Authorities to provide a grant of £500 each to Town and Community Councils to establish a website.
- 1.2 The purpose of this grant was to assist Town and Community Councils to prepare for the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Measure. This Measure includes a provision which requires Town and Community Councils to publish information on a website; the purpose of this grant is to enable them to meet this requirement.
- 1.3 In order to achieve this, Gwynedd Council signed a grant agreement with the Welsh Government. This grant was £32,000 for issuing grants of up to £500 each for the county's Town and Community Councils to establish a website.

2. UPDATE ON THE TIMETABLE AND THE FUNDING SITUATION

- 2.1 On 5 February 2014, correspondence was received by the Welsh Government confirming that Lesley Griffiths AM, the Minister for Local Government and Government Business has agreed to allow any funds received for web casting council meetings, remote attendance and websites for Town and Community Councils to carry over into the 2014/15 financial year.
- 2.2 The Welsh Government acknowledges that progress with regards to developing websites for some community councils has been slow. Therefore permitting the funds to carry over, allows the opportunity for further flexibility to enable them to better prepare for the requirement upon them to have a website once the appropriate sections of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Measure 2013 will come into force, as intended in 2015.

3. UPDATE ON THE GRANT IN GWYNEDD

- 3.1 In July, the Town and Community Councils were invited to express an interest in receiving a grant of up to £500 to develop a website. As the sum available is comparatively low, it was resolved to offer two options, namely:

- a) Option 1
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.

3.2 **Option 1**

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

3.3 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 a new website
- b) develop an existing website

3.4 In November 2013, application forms by Cist Gwynedd were sent to those Town and Community Councils which expressed an interest in Option 1; 26 Town and Community Councils in total; with the closing date for the application process on 10 January 2014.

3.5 16 applications by Town and Community Councils have been received up to now, and of these applications it is foreseen that the majority will have fulfilled the requirement of having a website by the end of July 2014.

3.6 **Option 2**

The IT Unit, in the Customer Care Department is leading on Option 2 in collaboration with the Democratic Services Department.

3.7 The intention of the IT Unit is to create a brief and invite providers to submit applications in response to the brief by mid April 2014; and then determining the successful applicant by beginning of May 2014.

3.8 The successful applicant will be expected to collaborate with Town and Community Councils to establish a joint website and convene a meeting with them in June 2014; the exact date to be confirmed.

3.9 Correspondence has been sent to Town and Community Councils informing them of the above intentions and timetable for Option 2.

4. **RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:-

- a) continues to support the work of facilitating the development of a website for Town and Community Councils during 2014/15.