

MEETING	Full Council
DATE	2nd May 2013
SUBJECT	Annual Report from the Head of Democratic Services on behalf of the Democratic Services Committee with regards to support for Members
PURPOSE	To submit an update to members regarding the support available and developments realised and those in progress.
Authors	Councillor Lesley Day, Chair - Democratic Services Committee
Relevant Officer	Geraint George Head of Democratic Services

1. Under the new Local Government 2011 measure, the Democratic Services Committee is responsible for specific matters (Under Section 11), as follows:
 - Fulfill the local authority's role to appoint a Head of Democratic Services
 - Review the support available with regards to staff, buildings and other resources available to the Head of Democratic Services, in order to ensure they are sufficient for the requirements of the role
 - Produce a report, at least annually, to be presented to the full council in relation to the above.

2. As you are aware, Geraint George, Head of Strategic and Improvement Department was appointed to the role of Head of Democratic Services in the first Democratic Services Committee on 29th May 2012.

3. On 4 October 2012, a report was submitted to the full Council outlining the support available for the Head of Democratic Services and elected members, including the support which was being developed, in particular as a result of the following changes:
 - Transition to the Cabinet regime as a result of the new Measure
 - Several new members following the May 2012 elections

4. The following table includes a reminder of what was reported to the Council on 4 October 2012 and an update of the current situation in the context of the developments. The report submitted to the Council also contained a piece about the support for Cabinet members. We have not included that part in this report as the main responsibility of the Committee is the support given to those members outside the Cabinet.

A. What is the support available to ensure effective communication?

Ref	What to expect?	How?	By whom?	Update April 2013
1	<u>Surgeries</u> - One-to-one meetings with Cabinet Member so that members are given the opportunity to raise questions and receive updates.	It is intended to hold a pilot to assess whether the idea of surgeries will improve communication between Members of the Cabinet and non-executive members.	The Cabinet Team will be responsible for arranging the surgeries and appointments. The Cabinet Member will be responsible for recording any action issues arising from the meeting.	Some Cabinet members have held surgeries, some in the areas, but work of assessing their success has not yet been undertaken. This will be programmed to happen over the next few months.
2	<u>Information /Consultative workshops</u> on specific subjects for members with an interest in the field.	An opportunity to submit information and/or engage with elected members on specific subjects.	The Cabinet – Cabinet Member with assistance from the Heads of Service.	Several workshops have been held when preparing the Strategic Plan and also the Financial Strategy. The informal feedback from members who attended the workshops was favourable and we will be incorporating further similar opportunities into the programme over the coming year.

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3	<u>Champions</u> – there is a job description for champions.	The Cabinet has received a standard job-description for the role of a Champion and has appointed three and the remainder will be appointed before the end of September.	A Cabinet Member to appoint a non-executive member.	Six champions have now been appointed - Older People – Gareth Thomas Carers – Eryl Jones-Williams Disability – Peter Read Autism – Elin Walker Jones Vice of Children and Young People – Mair Rowlands Poverty prevention – Brian Jones
3b	<u>Area Assemblies</u>			A unanimous decision was made in the Council that four area assemblies would be established to start work in May.
4	<u>Electronic information for elected members</u> Ensure that elected members are able to easily receive information electronically by means of a portable tablet.	a) Pilot of a portable provision – tablet – to be held for a period by Cabinet members. Members will be able to receive e-mails, access to their calendar and access to public documents on the internet. Access to confidential documents via e-mail. b) The work of developing the information portal	Responsibility of the Democratic Services Committee. Input on the technical side by the Senior IT and Business Transformation Manager. Input in terms of needs and information to be coordinated by the Strategic and Improvement Department.	It was managed to ensure that every elected member had been offered and given the opportunity if they so wished to receive electronic equipment (iPad) and basic training on how to use it, along with the opportunity to attend a further session on how to make the best use of the i-pad which has been provided. Currently, nearly 70 of the 75 elected members have received an i-pad to assist with their Council work, and a substantial number of members use their iPads as their main method of communication and report that they receive information in a much easier and more timely manner through the new technology. The developments with regards to the Information portlet has been delayed for a period, but it

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		<p>that would be a place to 'capture' all the relevant information has to be amended as a consequence of recent difficulties.</p>		<p>remains a goal for future developments, pending new technical developments.</p> <p>It should be noted that the development has not been as fast and problem-free as first anticipated as the timetable has slipped and we have had to continue to distribute information electronically and in hard copy format for some time. Electronic copies only will be distributed from now on, with the exception of those elected members who do not have iPads or whom request to receive hard copies.</p> <p>It should also be noted that there have been some problems with a few accounts and it is vital for elected members to contact the information technology experts in such circumstances to try and find a solution for each individual and their co-members. <u>It is the elected members' responsibility to contact the IT helpdesk in order to resolve the problem on (01286 679114).</u></p> <p>It is now timely to move on to define a further brief to ensure developments over the coming months.</p>
5	<p><u>Information Bulletins by Cabinet Members</u> – short bulletins. The</p>	<p>a) Information bulletins by the Cabinet as a body on a monthly basis to provide an update for</p>	<p>a) The Cabinet Team will assist in terms of information and administration.</p>	<p>A lengthy discussion was held, with members and officers, to agree on the format of the bulletin and it is now intended to address four headings, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information about what the Cabinet or

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	focus will be on developmental work.	all members on what the Cabinet has achieved. b) Information Bulletins by individual Cabinet Members summarising what has happened in a particular field as required.	b) Responsibility of the individual member with administrative assistance and assistance in terms of information from the Head of Service.	<p>individual members of the Cabinet do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information about member support matters (training etc.) ➤ Information about what is happening within the Council in a broader sense (latest news/press releases) ➤ Information about matters within wards (road works/disposal of properties etc.) <p>The first information bulletin was published on 19th April, and it is seen as one valuable tool to address the members' need for information and is an opportunity for the Council to act in an inclusive manner.</p> <p>The value of the bulletin to the members will be assessed during the year.</p>
6	<u>Cabinet Members' Reports to the Council</u>	Three Cabinet members reporting at every meeting of the Council.	Cabinet Members with the assistance of the Delivery Managers.	<p>A procedure has started of having a Cabinet member reporting on an element of his/her work in every Council meeting, with an opportunity for members to ask questions. The following presentations have already been made:</p> <p>December Council meeting – Cllr Sian Gwenllian (challenges in the education field)</p> <p>January Council meeting – Cllr Brian Jones (changes to the welfare system)</p> <p>February Council meeting – Cllr R H Wyn Williams (developments in the care field)</p>

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					It is intended to continue with this procedure for the next few meetings and then assess the value.
7	<u>Meetings between Scrutiny Chairs and the Cabinet</u>		Protocol on the nature of the relationship in order to discuss and facilitate networking is being discussed. Meetings will be held bi-annually between members of the Scrutiny Chairs Forum and the Cabinet.	Meetings between Scrutiny Chairs and the Cabinet	Currently two meeting have been held between the Scrutiny Chairs' Forum and the Cabinet, the first at the end of September 2012 and the second during April 2013. A protocol on the nature of the relationship between Scrutiny and Cabinet has been established, ensuring respect and collaboration in order to do the best for the residents of Gwynedd. The meetings have allowed open and constructive discussion to assess progress to date and share lessons learned by the Scrutinisers and Cabinet.

B. What is the specific support available for elected members to undertake their specific duties?

Ref	What expect?	to	How?	By whom?	Update April 2013
8	<u>Timely information on developments or consultations on developments in the local area of elected members.</u>		Cabinet Member or Heads of Service to try to identify when specific work or developments are in the pipeline in any field in the wards of the local members	Cabinet Member, Head of Service or any specific Project Leader.	See comments above about the Information Bulletin.

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		and contact elected members in a timely manner to inform them.		
9	<u>Responding to enquiries or complaints by Local Members.</u>	Local Member to contact the specific service first of all to seek an answer to the enquiry. If the answer provided is not adequate, the matter should be referred to the attention of the relevant Cabinet Member to ensure an answer is given.	Responsibility on the local member to follow the correct steps to ensure a response.	<p>This procedure is already in place but there is no detailed information regarding how often it is implemented. There have been some examples of members expressing their complaints in the press before following this procedure and there was a discussion on that in the Business Group on 18 February 2013.</p> <p>Members are urged to use the appropriate systems in the first place as it is more likely to lead to a resolution to the enquiry.</p>
10	<u>Individual Members' Right in Cabinet meetings</u>	Cabinet meetings are public meetings and, therefore, individual members are entitled to be present. The Local Member is invited to be present in relation to local matters. Cabinet agendas are distributed via a link to all members.	Cabinet team's responsibility to identify local members for local items and local members' responsibility to ensure that he/she is aware of the content of the Cabinet agenda.	Update not needed – report has already been given.

C. Support for Scrutiny Members and to various other committees

Ref	What to expect?	How?	By whom?	Update April 2013
11	<p><u>Independent advice and guidance</u> for Chairs and members of Scrutiny Committees.</p>	<p>Advise Scrutiny Committees on their work programmes, hold preparatory meetings and provide advice on the live work programme including challenging progress and hold the Cabinet to account and ensure that scrutiny adds value.</p>	<p>Head of Democracy Services, Senior Corporate Commissioning Service Manager and the team within the Strategic and Improvement Department.</p>	<p>The three Scrutiny Committees have received training on their role and have been receiving independent advice and guidance continually during the months since their establishment. As the role of the committee has changed, they have taken some time to establish.</p> <p>It should be noted that the Wales Audit Office recently facilitated a peer investigation to improve Scrutiny in Wales. As part of the work, a team from Conwy observed two Scrutiny Committees in Gwynedd and they gave positive initial observations on the running of those scrutiny committees. A full report by the observation team will follow.</p> <p>Additionally, the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-chairs Forum has been formalised and established, with invitations also extended to the Chairs and Vice-chairs of the Audit Committee and Democratic Services Committee to attend. The forum is considering the work programme and priority fields across all Committees.</p>
12	<p><u>Administrate and</u></p>	<p>Brief minutes of the</p>	<p>Members of the relevant</p>	<p>Administering and taking minutes of meetings</p>

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	<p><u>take the minutes at meetings</u> (scrutiny and others) and publish the minutes</p>	<p>recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on the issue in question to be submitted to the relevant Portfolio Leader. Brief minutes of other committees also.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Committee with support from the Strategic and Improvement Department.</p>	<p>has been undertaken successfully over the last year, with the minutes published on the Council website.</p> <p>It should be noted that work to modernise Dafydd Orwig Chamber has been undertaken, and work is still ongoing in Hywel Dda Chamber. The sound and translation systems have improved greatly at Dafydd Orwig Chamber, and the new voting system is easier to use. The modernisation work prepares us further for the future requirements regarding webcasting.</p>
13	<p><u>Scrutiny Investigations</u> to examine the impact of policies at grass roots level (an in-depth examination of a specific subject) Start and finish investigation.</p>	<p>A series of meetings within a specific period with members of the investigation to programme and undertake the detailed investigation (by means of research and visits) and to submit specific recommendations to the Cabinet Member.</p>	<p>Members of the Scrutiny Committees supported by the Democratic Service Unit and the Performance and Efficiency Unit within the Strategic and Improvement Department.</p>	<p>Two 'start and finish' scrutiny investigations have already reported to the Scrutiny Committees with the recommendations submitted to the relevant Cabinet Member. The two investigations which have already reported are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems Thinking (Corporate Scrutiny Committee) • Housing Scrutiny Investigation (Communities Scrutiny Committee) <p>Members and officers have also held a session to learn lessons after these two investigations in order to try to improve for the future.</p> <p>Other fields have been identified for the next</p>

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				<p>investigations by the Scrutinisers, namely the rural agenda, Bangor Pride and Procurement by the Council.</p> <p>In addition, an investigation commissioned by the relevant Cabinet Member is also currently ongoing into the education quality field and it is expected to report to the cabinet member shortly.</p>

Ch. Support for all members – administrative, practical and developmental

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14	<u>Administrative support for political groups</u> , such as arranging meetings, taking minutes, a service for typing letters, photocopying and coordinating response of the supported party.	Political Assistants are available to the three main parties for specified hours per week in accordance with the decision of the Full Council on 17/05/2012.	Political Assistants and further support from the Strategic and Improvement Department (by arrangement with Gareth James, Members' Manager – Support and Scrutiny).	Administrative support to the political groups has been implemented in accordance with what was decided by the full Council in May 2012.
15	<u>Administrative process and pay</u>	Travelling expenses claim forms already	Strategic and Improvement	Arrangements for administrating, processing and paying salaries and travelling expenses

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	<p><u>salaries and travelling expenses</u> of all members in a timely manner.</p>	<p>distributed. New clear and simple guidelines have now been developed.</p>	<p>Department coordinating the work.</p>	<p>are ongoing in a timely manner and in compliance with the guidelines of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales on Financial Recognition. Guidelines on claiming are on-line.</p> <p>It should be noted that an independent report had been received from Internal Audit to confirm that the new, current arrangements are correct but that there is room to remind members to submit their application on a monthly basis in accordance with the guidance.</p>
16	<p><u>Annual Reports</u> by elected members</p>	<p>Section 5 of the Local Government Measure (2011) noting the need to submit annual reports. Awaiting further guidelines on the need for members to be producing annual reports, but it is currently understood that it is necessary for the Council to ensure that support is in place to assist</p>	<p>All members (awaiting confirmation) with the assistance of officers from the Strategic and Improvement Department. It is recommended that members keep a record of what they currently do.</p>	<p>The requirements of the Measure note the need to ensure that arrangements are in place to allow individual elected members to produce an annual report, however a member does not have to draw up an annual report.</p> <p>The Democratic Services Committee decided to hold a pilot of the process for this year in order to ensure that experience was gained from it with regards to the most suitable format, whilst also allowing the Council to establish the appropriate support for the elected members who wish to produce a report in the future.</p> <p>The reports from the pilot will be published on</p>

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		members to produce annual reports.		the Council's website by the end of June as per the requirements.
17	Training – a comprehensive programme of training – a general programme available to all and a more specialist and developmental programme available depending on a member's post.	A series of programmed training sessions provided in-house or externally. Continuous adaptation of the programme in accordance with requirements of the members.	<p>Developments of the Cabinet under the guidance of the Cabinet Member.</p> <p>Democracy Services Committee to consider the developments of a training programme to the remainder of the members.</p> <p>A questionnaire to be sent out to members in order to have further consideration of the nature and order of the training programme – to be discussed by the sub-group established by the Democratic Services Committee.</p>	<p>A sub-group of the Democratic Services Committee was formed to look at training issues, rather than sending a questionnaire to all members. The cross party sub-group consisting of newly elected and more experienced members succeeded in ensuring ownership of the training requirements they wish to see provided, and the Learning and Development Service is now moving forward with planning and modifying the training programme based on the groups work. See part 4 above with regards to training for i-pads.</p> <p>Further work is currently being undertaken in order to respond to the requirements of the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 and in order to try and ensure that Gwynedd Council progresses towards winning the Welsh Local Government Members Development and Support Charter.</p>