

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	24th November 2015
REPORT TITLE	Members e-mails
PURPOSE	Report on the latest situation
RECOMMENDATION	Recommend that the Committee confirms the original vision and decision with regards to Members official e-mail address.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Whilst making preparations for the new Council, the Council Board discussed IT provisions for elected members in its meeting on 27th March 2012. The Board adopted the vision for the new Council, being *“that the main method of communicating with members is by means of using electronic technology, rather than paper.”*

1.2 In order to implement the vision, the following was noted:

“The main link of the service will be the Council’s corporate e-mail address Elected Members will be required to accept and use a corporate e-mail, following the pattern councillor.xxxxxxxxxx@gwynedd.gov.uk, where “xxxxxxxxxxx” represents the Member’s name.”

1.3 The report also detailed the reasons why a corporate Gwynedd e-mail address is required for e-mail correspondence, rather than allowing Members to use personal e-mail addresses. The reasons were noted as follows:

- Gwynedd Council sets and follows high security steps in order to guarantee compliance with the “Government Connect – Code of Connection (CoCo).” This means that the e-mail address is maintained with a procedure and under controls that have been approved by the auditors.
- The e-mail address councillor.xxxxxxxxxx@gwynedd.gov.uk is part of the Council’s brand and gives Elected Members an opportunity to take pride in the fact that they are acting under the same banner as Council staff.
- There is no guarantee of security by using personal e-mail, in particular if the e-mail is a general one for all the family.
- The e-mail address should clearly show to whom the message is being sent. Personal e-mail such as ty_ni@btinternet.com does not convey this, where the convention of using names with corporate e-mail addresses is completely clear, e.g. councillor.iolaevans@gwynedd.gov.uk. The address shows clearly that the name of the recipient is Lola Evans and that she is a Councillor in Gwynedd.
- There is no administrative or implementation costs for the Member to establish a corporate e-mail address with Gwynedd Council.
- Full bilingual support is available between 08:00 and 17:00 for the corporate service, with staff going the extra mile to ensure that the customer has the best possible service.
- The information that is sent and received by means of corporate e-mail is done

completely confidentially. Although the information is kept in the Council's Data

- Centre in the Headquarters in Caernarfon, the Council's officers do not have access to the information.
- Only the official corporate address will be advertised on the Council's website.
- Only the official corporate address will be advertised on the Council's internal directory. Personal addresses will not be advertised on the directory.

1.4 In addition, electronic correspondence has led to a substantial reduction in printing requirements, which in turn leads to financial savings for the Council, as well as contributing towards saving the environment. A report to Full Council in July 2014 noted as follows:

"Since introducing the i-pad for members, savings of over £17,000 per annum have been made in the Democratic Services budget alone with further savings made in individual departmental budgets. There is a possibility of a further £5,000 annual saving if members continue to make use of the i-pad instead of paper copies."

2. THE SITUATION IN 2015/16

2.1 In general, it has been positive over the years, with the majority of Members using their official e-mail address for receiving correspondence from the Council through electronic means in a timely manner.

2.2 However, two matters have arisen lately with regards to the use of official and personal e-mail addresses.

2.3 Firstly, it has become apparent that a small number of Members who have an official e-mail address have not been using these e-mails at all. There are examples of accounts having been closed by the Council's systems as the e-mail addresses have not been used for over a 12 month period.

2.3 We are aware of the personal choice of a few Members not to use the official address, and therefore have made alternative arrangements to receive paper copies in those circumstances.

2.4 However, we were not aware of all circumstances. It was taken for granted, as Members had a Council supplied iPad, that they were being used to receive official correspondence. This is a cause for concern as Elected Members have therefore, unaware to us, not been receiving important Council correspondence to enable them to undertake their role as Elected Members effectively.

2.5 Secondly, a small number of Elected Members have requested to receive correspondence via their personal e-mail address. We have not allowed this so far as we have been following the original decision due to the reasons noted in 1.3 above.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Democratic Services Committee is invited to confirm the original decision with regards to vision and official Councillor e-mail address.