

# GWYNEDD COUNCIL



<b>Committee:</b>	Democracy Services Committee
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	5 July 2022
<b>Title of Item:</b>	The Role of the Democracy Services Committee
<b>Purpose:</b>	To submit information about the role of the Democracy Services Committee
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	Geraint Owen, Head of Democracy Services

## Report to a meeting of the Democracy Services Committee

### 1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- The Democracy Services Committee is asked to note the information submitted.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 A specific role for the Democracy Services Committee is set out in the Local Government (Wales) Act 2011. It is noted in the Act that the Democracy Services Committee is responsible for certain matters (under Section 11), as follows:
- Appoint a Head of Democracy Services on behalf of the local authority
  - Review the available support for the Head of the Democracy Services in relation to staff, buildings and other resources, ensuring they are sufficient for carrying out the requirements of the role
  - Produce a report, at least once a year, to be presented to the Full Council in relation to support for Members.
- 2.2 There are 15 members on the Committee. Membership is based on the political balance of the Council, seeking to ensure representation from all political groups. The Chair is appointed by the full Council on an annual basis. It is the responsibility

of the committee to appoint a vice-chair. The Chair has an important role as a point of contact for all Council members to discuss any support requirements in their role.

- 2.3 As Head of the Democracy Service, I continue to emphasise that an open dialogue with you as Elected Members is a necessity in order to ensure that the support provided to you responds to your needs for the role. Therefore, I encourage you to contact me or the Chair of the Committee to raise any relevant matters. As members of the Committee, you have a responsibility to represent your fellow members, raising issues on their behalf.
- 2.4 As you are all aware, I presented my annual report to the full Council meeting on 23 June this year.
- 2.5 Over the last Council term, there has been progress with the provision offered to elected Members as a result of issues raised by the committee. Please note below some examples:
- Develop the Members Intranet to be easier to use
  - Develop useful guidance and links for how to look after yourself e.g. setting a workstation correctly, considerations when running surgeries with the public, mental health support e.g. through Medra
  - Input into arrangements for virtual and hybrid meetings
  - Input into the arrangements for the election, including offering options of IT provision, developing the Members' Handbook and identifying/prioritising an information and training programme.
- 2.6 It is likely that committee members will pay attention to the following issues over the next year or two.

### **Building on this year's developments**

- 2.7 The focus this year will be on trying to ensure that you receive the necessary information and training to enable you to fulfil your role and to develop within it. A programme of presentations and training is available to you, but please remember to contact the Learning and Development Team if you wish to receive any further or specific training.
- 2.8 We will continue with the informal sessions for female Councillors and also hold similar sessions for new Councillors. This will be an opportunity for informal discussions, to ask any questions and support each other in your role.
- 2.9 We will also implement the Committee Arrangements Framework and move on to offer hybrid provision for meetings of the Full Council, Cabinet, Planning Committee

and Scrutiny Committees. Considerable work has been carried out in this field already, but there is always room for improvement. We will be working together with you on this over the coming months.

### **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**

2.10 The requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will come into effect gradually and the details of the requirements continue to be developed. We will need to ensure that we comply with the conditions of the Act, looking in detail at some elements such as;

- webcasting requirements,
- a duty to encourage local people to participate when local government make decisions,
- a duty to make and publish a petitions plan,
- continue with the remote access work to ensure that it is possible to facilitate Members to contribute to committees.
- Secure an annual review of the individual training requirements of every Councillor
- Review committee start times

2.11 Some issues are discussed on an annual basis by this committee, including the annual consultation by the Independent Panel on Financial Remuneration (wales), relevant legal requirements in the field, the draft Head of Democracy, committee calendar for the year.

2.12 I look forward to your input to progress this work.