

GWYNEDD COUNCIL



Committee:	Democracy Services Committee
Date of meeting:	5 July 2022
Title of Item:	Review Councillor induction arrangements
Purpose:	To ask Committee members for observations on the induction arrangements following the May 2022 Election.
Contact Officer(s):	Vera Jones, Democracy and Language Services Manager

Report to a meeting of the Democracy Services Committee

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- **The Democracy Services Committee is asked to make observations on the Councillor induction arrangements following the 2022 Election in order to learn lessons prior to the 2027 election.**

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Over the past eighteen months, members of the Democracy Services Committee have been focusing on developing arrangements for the new Council term following the May 2022 election. There was an opportunity for members to provide input to the arrangements for various elements, including the awareness raising sessions about the election for the public, the arrangements for the Welcome days, the programme to present information and training, along with IT provision.
- 2.2 We are extremely pleased to have received positive observations about the arrangements, but are fully aware that there is always room for improvement. As we normally do, it is important to try to capture and record what went well and what we should consider changing next time, while it is all still fresh in our minds. A few comments about the arrangements are set out below as a starting point for the discussion.

RESULTS DAY

- 2.3 In accordance with our normal arrangements, the count and declaration of the results took place in Caernarfon and Dolgellau. As part of the arrangements, the Democracy and Language Service welcomed the new councillors and ensured that we collected the necessary details from them in order to process email addresses, payroll numbers, meeting requests etc., all of which took place within 1 working day of the result.
- 2.4 The service was also responsible for declaring the results on the website, with the information readily available by ward and as a total across Gwynedd by party, live. At the same time tweets were updating the public of the results.
- 2.5 The count was completed and all results declared by 2 o'clock that afternoon, which was a particularly good performance and very quick compared to a number of other authorities. The information was also clear on a ward-by-ward basis in Gwynedd, and that could be filtered rather than having to work through one long list that was not in particular order, like some other authorities.
- 2.6 We are aware that a small number of tweets were published before the web site was updated, and we have identified this as a lesson for the future.
- 2.7 We are also aware that some users had not been updating the results page and have therefore noted that the results had not been declared. We can ensure that there is guidance to assist the public with this next time.

WELCOME DAY

- 2.8 Two welcome days were held, on the 10th and 11th of May this year. All members were invited to attend one of the two days. There was a combination of returning and new councillors in the sessions on both days. It was nice to welcome 25 new councillors. Most were able to attend over the two days, 5 of whom attended virtually. The purpose of the days was to:
 - seek to present the necessary information to Councillors before new Council business resumes
 - ensure that all Councillors had signed to accept the post and have an introduction to the code of conduct
 - give Councillors the opportunity to meet other Councillors
 - arrange IT provision for all

- 2.9 Following comments from Members of the Democracy Services Committee, a short handbook for all Councillors was developed as a directory resource to obtain more information and to take with them from the welcome days. Committee members also assisted in prioritising the information to be presented to Councillors at the start of the new term. It is not an easy task to strike the right balance in this regard. Alongside this, the Members Intranet has been developed to be easier to use and as a point of information for Councillors. This is a continuous development, and we kindly ask that anyone with ideas to improve the provision contact us. A training session will also be provided soon.
- 2.10 Councillors who wanted to were offered remote access for the first time on the welcome days. Comments were received that it had all worked smoothly for those who had joined via zoom.
- 2.11 However, there were some challenges that needed to be overcome. There was a wi-fi connection problem on the Tuesday, with a number of Councillors having to wait a long time for their IT provision or had to leave without receiving their equipment. The arrangements for the second day were adapted and the problems were overcome. It should also be noted that the IT team attended the day of the first meeting of full Council to assist councillors with any questions that arose.

INFORMATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

- 2.12 10 virtual sessions, 1 by each of the Heads of Department have been held between 23 May, 2022 and 4 July, 2022. All sessions have been recorded and will all be placed on the Members Intranet for any Councillor who was unable to attend to watch them, or for any other Councillor to refer back to at any time. The numbers attending these sessions varied greatly.
- 2.13 At the same time training sessions have also been held virtually in line with the work programme that had been created. We are aware that the first year of a new Council is very demanding in terms of requirements on all Councillors, and that it is a difficult balance in terms of ensuring that the necessary information is available in a timely manner to all.

LEARNING LESSONS

- 2.14 In general, the main comments that have been made in order to learn lessons to the future are as follows:

- Timetable See if the timetable for the first events following the election can be extended e.g. welcome days, annual meeting of full council, start of committee cycle etc. to allow more time to put things in motion behind the scenes.

- Welcome Days.
 - Consider a specific day to receive IT provision, or a different procedure for receiving and returning IT provision, although everything worked smoothly on the second day.
 - Consider a specific day for new Councillors only, but with the need to consider an event that enables new Councillors to get to know returning Councillors
 - Expand on remote access provision for welcome days
 - Consider smaller groups to enable more conversation rather than presentations.

- Information and training
 - Consider how to further prioritise the information being presented over the initial period.