

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	22 March 2016
SUBJECT	2017 Local Authority Elections
PURPOSE	Present an update of the work of the diversity sub-group along with an outline of the preparatory work to prepare for the Local Authority Elections in 2017.
AUTHOR	Arwel Ellis Jones Senior Manager (Democratic and Delivery)
RELEVANT OFFICER	Vera Jones Democratic Services Manager

1. With the Local Authority elections a little over a year away, it is important that the Council begins to prepare for a number of different considerations in relation to the Local Authority Elections of 2017.
2. Members of the Committee are already aware that a sub-group has been at work to respond to the Government of Wales' White Paper, Local Government Reform: Power to Local People, which noted that there is a lack of diversity of elected Members in Local Government, especially in terms of young people, ethnic minority, disabled and females.

Work of the Diversity sub-group

3. The group has previously reported on the inconsistency between the profile of elected members in Gwynedd with the profile of the County, with the main inconsistency in the number of females and young people in the County compared with the number which are elected Members. The work programme established by the sub-group has been presented to the committee, and Members of the sub-group have also raised awareness amongst their fellow-members in the Area Forum meetings during March 2017.
4. In addition, the Council has shown its support to the project, which has been included in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020, with the aim of raising the number of individuals from less represented backgrounds (young people and females) standing in the Local Authority elections in 2017.
5. The work programme includes a number of different factors, including raising awareness of the people of Gwynedd to what is democracy, what the Council does, and what opportunities exist to take part, in the hope of encouraging more individuals from different backgrounds to stand in the local elections in May 2017. The sub-group plans to do this in an uncomplicated but effective series of short clips to be released on the website, which will be promoted through twitter and facebook.
6. In addition, following raising awareness, a questionnaire has been devised to try and identify the obstacles facing individuals which prevent them from standing in elections, and hold focus groups to try and ensure a fuller understanding of the obstacles. This will then lead to specific projects to respond to the obstacles, where possible.
7. Hand in hand with the work of the diversity sub-group, work is ongoing to prepare possible candidates who wish to stand in the May 2017 elections. Following comments raised by a

number of elected members who joined the Council since May 2012, we understand that a number of elected members were not fully aware of what to expect, or the expectations on them following their success at the elections.

#### Awareness raising sessions for potential candidates

8. In response to the comments received, work is currently ongoing to develop awareness raising sessions for individuals who wish to stand in the elections in May 2017. These sessions will be an opportunity for potential candidates to develop a fuller understanding of the situation prior to elections – aiming at ensuring that individuals are aware of the opportunities available, the expectations on them, the support available for elected members following successful elections.
9. The intention is to provide sessions with information on the following subjects:
  - Council's responsibilities,
  - The role of the Local Member and the institutional role within the Council
  - Requirements on time, including hearing the experiences of existing Members,
  - The interim situation of the Council before the reorganisation
  - Expectations and support with regards to IT etc.
  - How the Council committee's work and a presentation to the Member's Code of Conduct,
  - Practical considerations such as salaries and the election process

#### Induction Programme for Elected Members following May 2017 elections.

10. The natural step following the elections in May 2017 will be an induction programme for newly elected members. Again, members have shared their experiences with us of sessions held at the beginning of the current Council term, and what else would have been beneficial for newly elected members. Again, work is underway to plan the induction sessions and the subsequent training sessions in a meaningful and rational way, whilst considering the comments received so far and consulting with current members. Although the elections may feel a long time away, it is important that the Council starts planning ahead now.

#### Electronic Equipment.

11. At the same time we need to start to consider the requirements of elected members and the Council for the future, and start considering the various forms of IT equipment available and what best to provide for elected members following the elections in May 2017.
12. The preparation work ongoing in relation to the awareness raising sessions prior to the elections, the induction programme and the subsequent training programme, along with the IT considerations are key elements for the consideration of the Committee over the coming months. We also believe that listening to the views of Elected Members who were elected from May 2012 or later will help us develop the above.

We therefore ask the Committee to identify 4 or 5 members who are willing to share their views on the matters raised as we continue to develop the work streams. We will report on progress to the Committee when suitable.