

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES

SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Democratic Services Committee of the performance and updates in relation to the services provided to Elected Members.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The support provided by the Democratic Services team to Elected Members at all levels assists in the achievement of all Corporate Priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the previous meeting of the Democratic Services Committee a number of queries were raised regarding the provision of support to Elected Members. These queries were passed to the relevant departments and organisations for clarification and provision of information.

4. Current situation / proposal

4.1 Budget reductions and Staffing Changes

- 4.1.1 A re-structure of Legal & Regulatory Services is in the process of being completed. This has meant a number of staffing changes have been made in order to meet the requirements of the MTFS for 2015/16. Democratic Services is in the process of finalising the changes to its revised structures and members will be advised of outcome of these changes in due course.
- 4.1.2 Options to make savings include the reduction of the number of committee meetings. The Democratic Services Committee is requested to confirm that 3 meetings per year for the Committee is appropriate or confirm that it would consider reducing the number of meetings.

4.2 Member Referrals

4.2.1 The following table details the number of Member Referrals completed during the period 01 May 14 to 31 December 2014

Month	Referred	Completed	Ongoing	Percentage
May	166	166	0	100.00
June	193	193	0	100.00
July	235	234	1	99.57
August	173	172	1	99.42
September	193	193	0	100.00
October	168	166	2	98.80
November	139	138	1	99.28
December	137	132	5	96.35
Totals	1404	1394	10	Average 99.28

4.2.2 The average 5 and 10 day completion rates during this period are 48.11% and 71.88% respectively.

4.3 Member Development Programme

4.3.1 As identified in the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy the topics for inclusion in the member development programme are anticipated to include regional or national topics.

4.3.2 Pre Council Briefings

4.3.3 The following Pre-Council briefings have been planned and scheduled:

18 Mar 15 Dementia Awareness
08 Apr 15 European Funding Briefing

4.3.4 The following topics have been requested to be provided as Pre-Council Briefings:

- Lessons learned from Rotherham and its impact for Bridgend
- Domestic Violence
- Lessons from Fukushima – a briefing from Mr Brian Jones to describe the post-disaster work and the responsibilities of the Local Authority following a Nuclear disaster.
- Dark Skies – a presentation from the Bridgend Astronomy Society to provide information in relation to concerns regarding crime and accidents associated with reductions in street lighting.

4.3.5 Members are requested to identify any additional topics for inclusion as potential pre-Council briefings and prioritise those listed above for delivery over the next few months.

4.3.6 Member Development Activities

4.3.7 At its last meeting, the Democratic Services Committee agreed that the Chairperson and the Head of Democratic Services would attend a pilot of the Equalities and Diversity training being provided to staff to determine its suitability for members. The delivery of the training was postponed but it is hoped to be rescheduled in the future.

4.3.8 The cross party group of 13 Elected Members have successfully completed the Bridgend Leadership Academy. The members attending the Academy found the sessions invaluable.

4.3.9 Three Elected Members are currently participating in the National Leadership Academy which commenced in January and will be completed by March.

4.3.10 The following Member Development events are being scheduled:

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|----------|---|
| March 15 | Young Carers |
| March 15 | Round Robin Event which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elective Home Education,• Highways & Depot Rationalisation• Procurement Portal• Data Protection• Equalities Survey |

4.3.11 The following development activities are being provided as follows:

- 23 Feb 15 Western Bays Scrutiny Seminar
The Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot from 09:30 -12:00
- 30 Mar 15 Treasury Management (for members of the Audit Committee)
Committee Rooms 2/3 from 10:00 – 12:00

4.3.12 The Committee is requested to identify additional topics for possible inclusion in the member development programme and to prioritise those topics as necessary.

4.2.14 At its previous meeting the Committee requested that a survey be developed to identify the volume, frequency and timings of Member Development activities. The draft survey is shown at **Appendix 1** and the Committee are requested to comment on its suitability for circulation.

4.4 Changes to the WLGA

4.4.1 Members may be aware that the Minister for Local Government announced that the WLGA's Improvement Grant will be cut from 31 March 2015. This funding has in previous years been passed onto Local Authorities to provide local improvement support and resources.

4.4.2 This cut to the improvement grant will mean that from next April:

- There will be up to 16 compulsory redundancies in the WLGA and Data Unit
- the ending of funded support directly to authorities in terms of dedicated on site capacity support; peer reviews; mentoring and peer support, self-assessment

support; scrutiny support; member and leadership development, support and training; funding of collaborative projects and posts; and corporate governance support and capacity.

- the closure of highly successful and well regarded WLGA programmes such as the Leadership Academy and the Charter for Member Development and Support.
- closure of their equalities unit and all support programmes around equalities and diversity.
- ending of the WLGA specialised support for welfare-reform
- the WLGA will no longer be able to provide extensive capacity and interim support to those authorities with corporate or service challenges or provide such resources to help authorities recover from special measures.
- the Data Unit will also be assessing what this means for performance information collection, collation and benchmarking and wider performance management support to councils and LSBs.

4.4.3 The WLGA are considering other possible funding options and Local Authorities will be advised of any progress in due course.

4.5 Annual Reports and Personal Development Reviews (PDRs)

4.5.1 Following the Annual Meeting of Council the Democratic Services Team have provided support to Councillors to assist them in completing their Elected Members Annual Reports for the period covering May 2013 – May 2014.

4.5.2 Last year over 96% of Elected Members completed and published their Annual Reports. It was hoped that with this additional support the number of completed reports would be exceeded and that all Annual reports would be published by 30 September 2014.

4.5.3 To date 31(57.4%) of Elected Members have completed and submitted their Annual Reports for publication. These have been published and are now available on the BCBC website.

4.5.4 Elected Members have also been circulated templates for the PDRs for completion as part of a peer review process. Last year 78% of members completed their PDR. Several completed PDRs have been received by the Head of Democratic Services. Members are reminded to ensure that completed copies of individual PDRs are passed to him at the earliest opportunity.

4.6 Town & Community Council (TCC) Website Grants

4.6.1 Democratic Services is currently facilitating the administration of a Welsh Government Grant of £500 to each Town and Community Council (TCC) within the County Borough to develop their web presence.

4.6.2 To date nine TCC's have completed the grant agreement and 8 have submitted claims which have been paid.

4.6.3. All TCCs have recently been reminded of the deadlines for making claims for this funding and have been encouraged to make appropriate claims before the deadline of 31 March 2015.

4.7 Agile Working and Committee Room Update

- 4.8.1 The agile working programme is progressing well. Level 2 in the Civic Offices has now been completed with many of the staff from the Sunnyside Offices re-located accordingly. Refurbishment of Level 4 of the Civic Offices is being finalised and it is anticipated that Legal & Regulatory Services (LARS) will start to return to the Civic Offices later this month. It is hoped that the return of the Democratic Services teams will be complete by early March.
- 4.8.2 Work has now commenced on Level 1 which has required the relocation of some of the Customer Contact Centre staff. This has led to the Members' Meeting Room being temporarily moved to Level 2 near to the public gallery. This meeting room can be booked as usual and access can be arranged in liaison with the Members and Mayoral Team. It is planned that this arrangement will cease in May and the rooms will be returned to their primary use.
- 4.8.3 The Parliamentary Elections are planned for 7 May 2015. The Committee Rooms have been allocated to the Elections team for postal vote opening. Meetings will be moved into the Council Chamber during this period.

4.9 Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP)

- 4.9.1 The IRP have identified that the Schedule of Remuneration used by Bridgend be used as an example of "Best Practice". This is a public document which will be used by them to inform other Councils of how the remuneration of Elected Members should be undertaken.
- 4.9.2 The Chairperson of the IRP has invited all Chairpersons of Democratic Services Committees and the Heads of Democratic Services to attend a meeting to assist in the development of their annual report. The meeting will be held on Wednesday 4th March, 10:30, Penllergaer Business Park, Swansea and key issues relating to the following will be discussed:
- Access to support, such as IT services and allowances.
 - How the care allowance is received in the Authority and what barriers might exist to prevent members claiming allowances to which they are entitled.
 - The distribution of senior salaries and whether the Authority has ever felt the need to apply for specific or additional senior salaries.
- 4.9.3 These queries have been circulated to all Elected Members. A reminder will be sent to confirm if there are any further views Members wish to be presented at the meeting with the IRP. The Committee is requested to consider these areas of discussion and if appropriate provide feedback to the Chairperson or the Head of Democratic Services to raise at that meeting.

4.10.1 Modern.gov Update

4.10.2 The implementation of Modern.gov is progressing with the site now publically available. Members will have noticed that agenda and reports are being currently circulated in 2 formats. The first is with the reports pack as a PDF attachment and the other as a link to the Modern.gov element of the BCBC or the intranet websites. The email links will take recipients to either the public website or to the intranet for those items which are exempted. The intranet provides an opportunity to allow those members and officers considering this type of information to view exempted information online.

4.10.3 It is hoped that the hyperlinks from the exiting BCBC website to the new modern.gov element of the BCBC website will be updated shortly and the use of the email with attachments will cease.

4.10.4 Work will continue to enhance the facilities of the system and is likely to include:

- Developing the report approval process
- Enhancement of the Welsh Language pages
- Introduction of e-petitions

4.11 Webcasting

4.11.1 The tender for the provision of webcasting facilities is being developed and a report will be submitted to Council following its award. The report will propose how webcasting will be taken forward over the next few years.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no effect on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equalities implications in respect of this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 All activities described in this report will be met from existing budget provisions.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Democratic Services Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report and to:

- Prioritise the delivery of topics for pre-Council briefings;
- Identify any additional member development topics for inclusion in the Member Development programme
- Approve the Member Development survey attached as Appendix 1 for circulation.

P A Jolley

Assistant Chief Executive – Legal & Regulatory Services

12 February 2015

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Background documents – None

Member Development Activities – Maximising Attendance

In order to continue to deliver effective development opportunities to members it would be helpful to re-establish their views on the most appropriate volume frequency and timings for these events to take place. This would also help to maximise attendance at these event and enhance their effectiveness

Currently we are working on the assumption that the best times for delivering these events fall into 2 general slots: 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm. We have also assumed that with the commitments of Elected Members that one paired training event per month is preferred i.e. One session repeated a week or so later.

In order confirm that these assumptions accurately reflect the requirements of members it would be appreciated if you could assist us by answering the questions overleaf and returning them to Democratic Services by ** March 2015.

We have also asked the Group Leaders to raise this issue in your group meetings to ensure that the all members are aware of the range of commitments faced by other members before submitting your completed forms.

Regards

Gary Jones

Head of Democratic Services

Name: Councillor (Please print)

1. How many training events would you prefer each month

1 topic

2 topics

3 topics

Please comment if you have any alternative suggestions

2. How many sessions should be provided for each training topic:

A single session per topic

Paired sessions i.e. as currently provided

A single round robin session with multiple topics

Please comment if you have any alternative suggestions

3. Which days of the week are most acceptable to hold member development events:
(Please tick the 2 most preferred days of the week)

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

4. Which days of the week are not acceptable to hold member development events:
(Please tick the 2 least preferred days of the week)

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday

5. Please rank from 1 to 4 (1 being your most preferred time slot and 4 being your least preferred time slot).

- 8am to 10am
- 10am to 12noon
- 2pm to 4pm
- 4pm to 6pm

Please comment if you have any alternative suggestions

6. Is the current timing for Pre-council briefings appropriate? Please rank from 1 to 4 (1 being your most preferred time slot and 4 being your least preferred time slot).

- A 45 minute briefing starting at 2.00pm
- A 30 minute briefing starting at 2:15pm
- A 30 minute briefing starting at 2:30

I am unable to attend these briefing sessions due to my work/Personal commitments and I would prefer them at (please include your preferred a day and time)

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7. If you have any additional comments regarding the volume, timings and frequency of member development activities please add them below:

**Please return to 'Democratic Services' by
** March 2015**