

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

6 NOVEMBER 2013

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 Member Referrals

4.1.1 Service Performance – Member Referrals

4.1.2 The following table details the number of Member Referrals made to Directorates/Departments between 1 July and 30 September 2013. It shows the:

- number of referrals that were received,
- the percentage of referrals that each Directorate or Department received,
- The number and percentage of referrals that were completed, and
- the current overall completion levels for each directorate for the referrals raised during the period.

Name	Referred	% of referrals	Completed	Department Percentage Completed	Directorate Completion %
Chief Executive	1	0.12%	1	100.00%	100.00%
LARS	2	7.14%	2	100.00%	98.28%
LARS::Legal	4		4	100.00%	
LARS::Public Protection	52		51	98.08%	
Children's	57	7.02%	53	92.98%	92.98%
Communities	19	67.24%	18	94.74%	91.58%
Communities::Regeneration & Development	62		57	91.94%	
Communities::Street scene	465		425	91.40%	
Resources	3	4.43%	3	100.00%	94.44%
Resources:: ICT & Property	18		16	88.89%	
Resources:: Customer Services	6		6	100.00%	
Resources:: HR & OD	3		3	100.00%	
Resources:: Electoral Services	1		1	100.00%	
Resources:: Finance & Performance	5		5	100.00%	
Wellbeing	22	2.71%	22	100.00%	100.00%
External	4	11.33%	4	100.00%	86.96%
External::Care & Repair	1		1	100.00%	
External::Environment Agency	1		1	100.00%	
External::Groundwork	1		0	0.00%	
External::Network Rail	1		0	0.00%	
External::Others	16		15	93.75%	
External::SW Police	8		8	100.00%	
External::V2C Maintenance	40		36	90.00%	
External::V2C Management	15		12	80.00%	
External::Wales & West Housing	2		1	50.00%	
Carwyn Jones AM	1		0	0.00%	
Janice Gregory AM	1		1	100.00%	
Madeleine Moon MP	1		1	100.00%	
Totals	812	100.00%	747		

4.1.3 The following table shows the completion times of Member Referrals raised between 01 May – 30 September 2013.

	Less Than 5 Days	Total 10 Days	% In 10 Days	Total 20 Days	% In 20 Days	More Than 20 Days	Total
May	75	113	46.31%	183	75.00%	61	244
June	79	117	42.55%	195	70.91%	80	275
July	81	119	51.29%	208	89.66%	24	232
August	67	88	39.64%	155	69.82%	67	222
September	60	98	47.80%	163	79.51%	42	205
Total	362	535	45.52%	904	76.98%	274	1178

4.1.4 The following table shows the overall completion statistics for referrals between 01 May to 30 September 13.

Month	Referred	Completed	On-going	Percentage Completed
May	255	246	9	96.47
June	297	285	12	95.95
July	288	275	13	95.48
August	245	225	20	91.83
September	256	225	31	87.89
TOTALS	1341	1256	85	93.52

4.1.5 A snapshot was taken on a single day to determine the number and type of referrals that were outstanding in the three month period from 01 July – 30 September 2013. It was hoped that this would enable the identification of any reasons or trends for the level of outstanding referrals.

4.1.6 A total of 62 (approximately 9%) referrals that had been logged during the three month period were considered as incomplete. These outstanding referrals have been assessed and reasons for not being completed have been categorised as follows:

Ownership and Responsibility (12%)

Member referrals are often more complex than their initial detail indicates. The first stage is to identify the correct department(s) or organisations that are most likely to provide a resolution to the query. However, issues such as land ownership and legal responsibilities often require the transfer of referral to a different department in order to progress the referral. The referrals clock cannot be reset when transferred to a different department resulting in the 10 day target for completion unable to be achieved e.g. A referral regarding Japanese Knot weed was passed to the Communities Directorate, they identified that the land where the knotweed was growing did not belong to this Authority and therefore the referral was passed to an external organisation to investigate and address.

Investigation and Enforcement (12%)

Several of the outstanding referrals that were received required appropriate investigation. Investigations often take longer than the 10 day completion target. These investigations are often followed up by regulatory enforcement action which may take up to 42 days, e.g. A messy property was identified in a referral which was initially processed by the Public Protection Department. They were unable to progress the referral but passed the matter to the Planning Department to undertake a planning enforcement investigation. The investigation could take 42 days before any enforcement action could be taken to resolve the referral.

Policy Clarification and consultation (21%)

Some referrals have related to the clarification of either BCBC or other organisations policies. Some of these referrals are the result of consultation activities which remain as on-going until the formal decision regarding the policy is made, e.g. changes to the foster carers allowance created difficulties with a constituent who required clarification of the policy. A meeting was set up with the constituent, the elected member and appropriate officers to address the concerns that were raised. Follow-up meetings were needed and appropriate remedial action was arranged to inform all carers as necessary.

Communication (42%)

Many of the outstanding referrals appear to be caused by poor communication linked to a lack of understanding of the referrals system. This is normally shown by departments and organisations not sending updates and responses back to the referrals system. The subsequent chase-ups then take additional time deliver a successful resolution to the referral. This is not only internal issue but one which is mirrored by external organisations, e.g. A referral was initiated requesting that the communal housing area be cleared of overgrown vegetation. This was referral passed to the relevant department/organisation but no responses were received other than an initial acknowledgment. The referral was chased-up and the Democratic Services Team was informed that the matter was being addressed and that a update would be provided. No progress responses were received and after a further chase up it was identified that an email had been circulated internally within the department/organisation but had not been passed to the Members Referrals system to update the query.

Additional Related Issues (12%)

Some of the referrals are addressed quite quickly but during their resolution other issues arise that are related to the initial referral. This causes the target time for referral completion to be exceeded, e.g. a referral was raised to address loose brickwork near a play area. A site visit was undertaken and additional work was identified which also needed to be addressed. The referral then included all of the matters that had been identified by the site visit and not purely the loose bricks of the original referral.

Other matters (12%)

There were a few referrals that exceeded the target date due to work scheduling issues, referrals not completed to the satisfaction of the Elected Member or awaiting a response from an Elected Member.

Combination of categories

Some of the referrals that exceeded the 10 day target time were affected by a combination of these categories.

- 4.1.7 Work will be undertaken to improve the understanding of Departments and other organisations of the practical use and procedures of the referrals system in order to minimise some of the communications issues that have arisen.
- 4.1.8 It should be noted that as the Authority and other organisations are squeezed by budget and resource reductions that the response times for referrals are likely to increase.

4.1.9 The referrals monitoring information as shown in paragraphs 4.1.2 – 4.1.4 has identified that approximately 45% of referrals are completed within the 10 day target period. Monitoring of these statistics will continue and these figures will be used as a provisional benchmark for the completion times of referrals

4.1.10 The overall percentage of completed referrals appears to be averaging between 90-95% at the end of a three month period. Complete referrals will continue to be assessed and will use these figure a provisional benchmark for the completion of referrals.

4.2 **Member Development Programme**

4.2.1 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.

4.2.2 Pre council Briefings

4.2.3 The following Pre Council briefings have been arranged:

- 13 Nov 13 MTFS Update (following the Provisional Budget Settlement)
- 11 Dec 13 Independent Advocacy (for Children)/Adoption Service
- 16 Oct 13 Private Rented Sector

4.2.4 The following topics have been requested to be considered as potential pre-council Briefings and could be scheduled accordingly:

- Individual Electoral Registration
- Police and Communities Together (PACT) and the SARA problem solving model
- Freedom of Information
- Mental Health
- Ward Census data
- Advocacy for Older People
- Y Bont
- ADHD

4.2.5 There are an increasing number of requests for 1 hour Elected Member briefing sessions. The best time to undertake these sessions is a pre-Council briefing but there a only a limited number of these sessions available. To ensure that the maximum benefit is achieved from these briefing sessions the Democratic Services Committee is requested to identify the priority of topics that should be scheduled between Feb and April 14.

4.2.6 Member Development Activities

4.2.7 The following Member Development events have been scheduled:

- 21 November (10.00 – 13.00) School Performance
- 26 November (14.00 – 17.00) School Performance

4.2.8 The following member development activities are planned to be scheduled:

- Understanding Equalities and Diversity

4.2.9 The following topics have been identified for possible inclusion in the member development programme:

- Dealing with Conflict
- Media Training for Members
- Supporting People Programme
- Dementia Awareness Training
- Risk Management (How the Council Manages its Risks)
- Performance Management
- Public Engagement (possible regional event)

4.2.10 The Democratic Services Committee is requested to determine a priority for the member development events listed in Paragraph 4.2.9 in order for them to be scheduled between December 2013 and March 2014

4.3 Development Control Training Sessions

4.3.1 The following training sessions for the Development Control Committee have been confirmed. These sessions are primarily for members of the Development Control Committee but there is an open invitation for all members if they wish to attend.

Topic	Facilitator	Date	Time
"Draft Landscape and Biodiversity: A Green Infrastructure Approach SPG"	LUC Consultants	14 Nov 13	12.15pm
"Conservation and listed buildings"	Claire Hamm - BCBC Regeneration Team	TBC	TBC

4.4 Scrutiny Updates

4.4.1 Wales Audit Office.

4.4.2 Bridgend County Borough Council has 12 representatives confirmed to attend an Spotlight on Scrutiny event being held in Cardiff on 28 November 13.

4.4.3 Scrutiny Development Fund (SDF)

4.4.4 The draft SDF bid for the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Education Committee (JOSEC) has been submitted by CfPS to Welsh Government (WG) on behalf of the constituent Authorities. The bid has been acknowledged and welcomed by the WG who have requested that minor amendments be made. However, due to changes in the role and governance of the four Welsh Education Consortia announced by WG recently the SDF bid for the JOSEC requires further clarification before it is progressed further.

4.5 Elected Member Annual Reports 2012-13 Update

- 4.5.1 A total of 32 draft Elected Member Annual Reports for the 2012 – 13 period have been received by Democratic Services. These reports have been formatted and key information including Member Development activities, attendance information and referrals data has been added. These reports have been reviewed by the Head of Democratic Services and returned to Elected Members for final confirmation prior to publication on the BCBC website by 01 November 2013.
- 4.5.2 Three further reports are being developed and reminders have been sent to all Members who have not yet completed their Annual Reports for the 2012-13 period. They have been offered further assistance to enable them to complete their Annual Reports if they so wish.
- 4.5.3 The process for the completion of Annual Reports is being reviewed due to the length of time taken to achieve compile, complete and publish the reports.

4.6 Elected Member Personal Development Reviews (PDR) 2012-13 Update

- 4.6.1 The Personal Development Review process for Elected Members was introduced in May 2013 as part of the Local Government (Wales) 2011 Measure. This element of the measure required a PDR process to be put in place by the Authority and offered to Elected Members however, it was not mandatory requirement for Elected Members to undertake the PDR process. However, in order to achieve the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development it was compulsory for all senior salary holders to undertake the PDR process prior to Charter submission being made.
- 4.6.2 To-date 40 (74%) of the possible 54 PDRs have been submitted to the Head of Democratic Services. This includes all of the 20 Senior and Civic Salary holders PDRs.
- 4.6.3 An assessment of the completed PDRs will be undertaken to determine the training and support requirements that were identified. It is proposed that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee to provide the action plan for meeting the needs of Elected Members.

4.7 ICT Update

- 4.7.1 The second meeting of the Elected Members ICT Forum was re-scheduled from 14 Oct to 5 December where the following topics are expected to be considered:
 - a. Improving referrals
 - b. Use of Citrix/Tablet/Smartphones
 - c. Social media policy update
 - d. Netconsent update regarding ICT Code of conduct (6 Simple Rules)
 - e. ICT Training
 - f. Paperless Office Update
 - g. T&CC Websites
- 4.7.2 Progress is being made with the upgrade of the security software for Elected

Members laptops. The upgrade is being linked to a refresher of the ICT code of conduct (Six simple rules) and which is necessary for the Social Media Protocol.

4.7.3 The Social Media Protocol was approved by Council on 16 October 2013 where it was also agreed that the Democratic Services Committee would review the Social Media Protocol in due course. To date no members have signed up to the Social Media Protocol to access social media from their BCBC supplied equipment. Some suggestions to enhance the Social Media Protocol have been received and it is proposed that a report be submitted for the Democratic Services Committee to consider at its next meeting.

4.8 Terms of Reference – Democratic Services Committee

4.8.1 On 16 October Council approved changes to the Bridgend County Borough Council constitution in respect of the role and functions of the Democratic Services Committee. The functions of the committee as stated in the Local Government (Wales) 2011 Measure included:

- a) to designate an officer as the Head of Democratic Services,
- b) to review the adequacy of provision of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions, and
- c) to make reports and recommendations to Council, at least annually, in relation to such provision.

4.8.2 The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 further increased the functions of the Democratic Services Committee to include:

- d) at the request of the Council, review any matter relevant to the support and advice available to members of the Council, and the terms and conditions of office of those members
- e) to make reports and recommendations to the Council following a review.

4.8.3 It was anticipated that further guidance and information would be provided as part of this change to the legislation. However, no guidance as has yet been received and the Democratic Services Committee will be informed of any guidance that is received.

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 equality 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 requested to note the contents of the report and to:

- identify the priority of topics that should be scheduled for pre-Council briefings between Feb and April 14
- determine a priority for the member development events listed in paragraph 4.2.9 in order for them to be scheduled between December 2013 and March 2014

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Background documents – None