

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

17 NOVEMBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

INITIAL OUTCOMES - POTENTIAL CANDIDATE EVENTS

1. Purpose of Report.

1.1 The purpose of this report is inform the Democratic Services Committee of the initial outcomes from the 'Potential Candidate' events held on 11 and 12 October 2016, for anyone considering standing as a Bridgend County Borough Council Councillor at the Local Government Elections in 2017.

2. Connection to Corporate Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

2.1 The support to be provided to Elected Members assists in the achievement of all of the following corporate priorities:

1. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
2. **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background.

3.1 Local Democracy Week is held every year in October with the purpose of:

- strengthening links between elected representatives and their communities
- increase participation in the democratic process
- involvement of citizens in community affairs
- increase their knowledge of local democratic institutions and processes

3.2 With the Local Government Elections in May 2017, this year's Local Democracy Week (10-16 October 2016) was an appropriate time to begin preparations for the elections and to actively involve the electorate in the democratic process.

3.3 A similar event was held in 2011 and a total of 38 people attended the event which

was well received. The feedback from those attending was very positive with comments including “Very satisfied; this was a very well organised, enjoyable and informative event” and “I thoroughly enjoyed this session, it was informative and gave me a real insight into the role”. Attendees also suggested other possible activities for the future Local Democracy events which included the shadowing of a councillor for a day. A number of the attendees were subsequently elected as BCBC Councillors.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 Bridgend County Borough Council held Potential Candidate awareness sessions during Local Democracy Week which were attended by constituents of the County Borough of Bridgend. The sessions provided information and were not political. Potential candidates who required further information regarding political parties were signposted to political representatives outside of the events.
 - 4.1.2 Each event took approximately three hours and was comprised of two parts. The first part outlined information about the role of the councillor and the functions of the Council. The second part provided information regarding how an individual becomes a candidate at the election and the processes for being elected.
- 4.2 Promotion and publicity
 - 4.2.1 The Marketing and Engagement Team received positive interest from constituents of the County Borough from the advertising campaign which was publicised using the BCBC website, press releases, local media (Glamorgan Gazette and BridgeFM) and social media (Facebook and Twitter).
 - 4.2.2 Other bodies such as the political groups and Town and Community Councils were informed of the event to encourage those councillors and party members that are already planning to stand as Borough Councillors.
 - 4.2.3 The publicity for the events requested that those wishing to participate, register their interest in attending in the event and confirm that they were considering standing in the Local Government Elections in May 2017. At the end of the registration period over 100 people had registered to attend one of the events.
- 4.3 Location, timings and venue
 - 4.3.1 The events were planned to be held in the Council Chamber which could facilitate approximately 60 people at each event. Sessions were held in the early evenings starting at approximately 6.00pm to provide a wider scope of access for those people interested in participating in these events and who were currently working or have childcare issues to consider.
- 4.4 Delivery
 - 4.4.1 The sessions were delivered by the Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services and supported by officers from Electoral and Democratic Services.
 - 4.4.2 Additional support was also provided at each event by cross party representation

from existing councillors to utilise their “real-life” experience to bring the event to life for those attending. Elected Members were also involved in informal discussions during the break.

4.5 Outcomes

4.5.1 The summary of the feedback provided at the events is shown at **Appendix 1**. The key outcomes were as follows:

- There were 33% women in attendance which is slightly higher than the existing range of gender balance across Local Authorities in Wales (20-30%)
- 25% of attendees were aged under 45 compared to the 15% of our current members who are under 45.
- 30% of attendees learned of the events from Facebook
- 93% of those who provided feedback stated that their expectations were met and the remainder did not explain why their expectations were not met.
- A wide spread of the event content was identified as being “most useful”
- The issues identified for improvement would be considered for any subsequent “potential councillor” event or included in the information being provided to potential councillors.
- Overall feedback was very positive.
- The sessions provided useful information and assisted the potential candidates determine whether to stand or not.

4.5.2 The true outcome of these events will be determined during the election process for the Local Government Elections in 2017. The publication of the Notice of Poll on 25 April will enable Democratic Services to identify those constituents who attended these sessions and whether they stood for election or were elected.

4.5.3 An initial email has been sent to all registered participants of the event with the presentation and handouts. It is hoped that further information updates could be provided inform them of relevant Councillor and Council related information over the next few months.

5. **Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.**

None

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 The registration process event requested any potential candidates to identify any support needs that they had to enable them to fully engage during their attendance at the events. The needs of a number of registered attendees were assessed as necessary at each of the events.

7. **Financial Implications.**

7.1 The expected costs of the events will not exceed the initial budget commitment from the Member Development budget.

8. **Recommendation.**

8.1 That the Democratic Services Committee considers the initial outcomes from the Potential Candidate sessions and the ongoing activities leading up to the Local Government Elections in 2017. .

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Background documents – None

POTENTIAL COUNCILOR EVENTS – FEEDBACK SUMMARY

A total of 101 people registered to attend one of the sessions being held on 11-12 October 2016. Only 45 people (44.5%) attended the sessions (30/57 on Tuesday and 15/44 on Wednesday)

Of the 45 people that attended only 43 returned feedback forms and some of these were not fully completed. The information collected has been summarised below (based on the 43 feedback forms)

1. About you? Please tick as necessary**a. Gender**

Male	29	67%
Female	14	33%
Other please describe	0	

b. Age – Which of the following reflects your current age

18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 65
1	5	5	11	11	8
2%	11.6%	11.6%	25.6%	25.6%	18.6%

2. Where did you learn about the event? Tick whichever are appropriate

	No	%
a. Glamorgan Gazette	1	2%
b. BCBC Website	13	26%
c. Political Party	5	10%
d. Bridge FM	2	4%
e. Flyer	2	4%
f. Your Town or Community Council	4	8%
g. Word of Mouth	5	10%
h. Facebook	15	30%
i. Twitter	3	6%
Total Responses	50	100%

3. Did the event meet your expectations?

Yes	40	93%
No	1	2.3%
No response	2	4.6%

If you answered No please could you explain why your expectations were not met.

No responses were provided

4. What did you think was the most useful aspect, e.g. hearing from councillors etc.?

- Responsibilities of Councillors
- Valuable to hear Members opinions - Good information provided by officers
- How the council works and the dedication of Council Members
- Hearing from the panel the reality of the as opposed to perceptions
- Learning about the actual procedures and methods of working
- Expectations of constituents and what is expected of a councillor
- Electoral Commission and how to run for election
- Listening to Councillors describing their experiences was very interesting
- The personnel accounts from serving Councillors gives an insight into the workload and responsibilities
- Helped me make my mind up to stand
- Getting a better understanding of the roles of councillors and the Council and the interaction between the two
- The commitment that is expected and the available support
- The explanations from the officers were very clear
- The election roles and responsibilities, campaigning etc.
- It was interesting
- Positives of council work - examples of responsibility
- How you are trained - mentoring
- Very informative - the amount of diversity involved
- Understanding the role and how to become a councillor
- All aspects were good
- Structure of the council
- Good presentation by officers comprehensive coverage Good video by Councillors
- All very informative
- Comparing what support I had last time I was a councillor this was far superior and very though Enjoyed it very much
- Understanding of the commitment involved
- Yes I was well informed
- That they found it rewarding to be a councillor and able to represent their community
- The whole event was very informative
- Time management
- Explanations of the workload of being a councillor
- The commitment required
- Interesting facts

5. Is there any aspect of the event that you think could have been improved?

No/Not really/ None/ No very interactive/ good/ informative (x 17)

Attendance

- More attendees
- More elected members involved in the programme

Member Topics

- A bit more about how a councillor/backbencher can influence strategic decisions would be welcomed
- More emphasis on the code of conduct and the impact on yourself and families
- Ideas on engaging with the community
- Clarification as to how much authority a councillor truly has over the decision made by the council

Electoral

- Only that expenses for election could have been explained as to where you would get funding etc.
- Clarification as to where prospective councillors can stand. Could a prospective councillor stand in BCBC outside of their ward

Duration/Content

- Too many small details induction etc.
- Too long - cut by half
- Build a stronger message either you want people to stand or scare them

Facilities

- Could water be provided at the desks

6. Was there any specific issue not covered by the event that you would have liked to have seen included?

- No/ Not really (X 16)

General

- I liked the event it was enlightening
- A very comprehensive and informative course

Officer Roles

- Oversight of Council Officers
- Making and prioritising referrals contact with officers during the referral

Political

- A breakdown of the percentages of male female councillors was mentioned their average age ethnic diversity and disabilities but there was no mention of LGBT representation
- Expectation of the political make-up of the council and its whips system and ability to control your views as an individual
- Party roles, next council meeting etc. How can I learn more

Town & Community Councils

- Would have like a bit more about Town and Community Councils too maybe just a slide
- The link to community Councillors

7. How has this session influenced your decision to stand for election

- Wish to progress
- Confirmed my decision
- With current personal commitments I probably could not devote as much time as I would like
- It has enthused me
- Yes but probably not on the forthcoming instance
- Made me more determined to stand for election and represent the community
- It has given me a very good insight and food for thought I am going to have to think very carefully about the commitment required
- Yes now that I am more informed about the role of a councillor
- It has been a tremendous help to learn more about the whole process
- Has made me want to stand
- It has given me far greater understanding of the extent of the duties of Councillors and the time and commitment involved with the role
- Yes commitment issues may be problematic
- Yes (x 4)
- Made me more positive that this is something that I need to do
- No
- The session was inspiring but I feel I need more time at local council level as suggested. I will stand in the future but will develop my knowledge and skills locally in the first instance
- I'm seriously considering
- To stand as an independent as to represent all of your community who not always in line with political party view
- Need more research in regards to money etc.
- Yes it has
- Yes - almost convinced to stand
- In the positive I hopefully will be standing in next year's election
- Very Good
- Very Much
- I am determined to stand and found the sessions fully supporting my decision
- Still reflecting but feel much better informed
- I am wavering but I think this session has clarified the matter for me
- Still Undecided
- No
- Seriously considering being a candidate for Council election
- Very Interesting - has really reinforced the level of commitment needed
- Commitments e.g. work, business and family etc.
- Given a better understanding of the duties
- Very helpful

8. Are there any other comments you wish to make?

- Excellent evening Very Informative and positive Thank you

- My thanks to the Members and officers for planning and attending this event. I believe meeting such as this are essential for prospective Councillors
- It has given me an insight onto how hard communities work. I will take this back to others in a positive response(RESPLECT)
- I really enjoyed the evening. It provided me with an insight I did not know before tonight
- No/None (x2)
- Thank you for the opportunity to learn more about becoming a councillor
- Valuable session very informative interesting to meet other potential candidates. Thank you BCBC for hosting this event
- A very interesting and informative experience. I am now better informed about the role
- Thank you
- On balance a very well-conceived and well delivered session
- Everybody was extremely welcoming and friendly particularly Huw David and Gary Jones. Thank you
- Thanks to all the officers and councillors
- Was great Thanks
- Difficulties of attending the council offices due to works and difficulties re:- parking
- Very Good presentation
- Good an informative evening Nice to have the opportunity to ask questions
- Enjoyed
- Many thanks for the event - very informative
- Pretty comprehensive event More elected members needed at the presentation although video was good There was no back bench members represented
- Thanks really informative
- I enjoyed the session - pitched just right
- Really enjoyed the session, confirmed my thoughts
- Very Worthwhile
- More information on current councillors and ward information
- Thoroughly enjoyed well done!