

Meeting of:	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	8 JUNE 2023
Report Title:	REVIEW OF ELECTED MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT PROCESS
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
Responsible Officer:	RACHEL KEEPINS DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules
Executive Summary:	<p>The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires Local Authorities to make arrangements for all Elected Members to produce and publish an Annual Report about their activities during the previous year.</p> <p>This report sets out this process, provides guidance and a completed example and asks Members of the Committee to consider any potential amendments or improvements to the process.</p>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Democratic Services Committee with:
- a) Information relating to the Annual Report Process for Elected Members; and
 - b) An opportunity to review the process and make any suggested amendments or improvements, specifically how to encourage Member take up and promote the final reports.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under Section 5 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Local Authorities are required to make arrangements for all of their Elected Members to produce and publish an Annual Report about their activities during the previous year.
- 2.2 Any reports produced by Members must be published by the Council, but the Council may set conditions or limits on what is included in a report.
- 2.3 There is no mandatory duty on Members or Cabinet Members to make an Annual Report on their activities. However, all political groups will be requested to actively promote the completion of Annual Reports by all of their Members.

- 2.4 When initially introduced, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) as an Authority, took the lead in Wales regarding the development and introduction of Annual Reports. The original template was adapted from the “Luton model” by officers from BCBC and the template was trialled for suitability and Elected Members assisted in developing the format and guidance for the completion of the report.
- 2.5 The template, exemplar and guidance were presented to the Member Support Officer (MSO) Network, who praised BCBC on the quality of the final model. The template was adopted as an All-Wales model for Annual Reports.
- 2.6 This process was later reviewed in 2018 to reflect changes such as the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards and to minimise the resources necessary to create, administer and publish Elected Member Annual Reports in English and in Welsh.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The current process consists of provision of the report template as a word document from Democratic Services (**Appendix 1**) to each Elected Member towards the end of each municipal year. This template has been translated into Welsh and provides the framework which will be common to all Annual Reports and used to minimise translation costs.
- 3.2 Those Elected Members who wish to produce an Annual Report can complete the initial draft of their report for the period 1st May of the previous year until 30th April of the current year. Elected Members can use the revised guidance (**Appendix 2**) and the sample report (**Appendix 3**) to complete their reports.
- 3.3 Initial draft reports need to be returned to Democratic Services by 30 June 2023. Reminders will be sent from Democratic Services but it will be assumed that any Elected Member not returning their initial draft report by the 30 June will not be completing an Annual Report for the period.
- 3.4 Democratic Services will review the report and finalise any formatting before returning it to the Elected Member for approval. Any concerns regarding the content of the report will be discussed with the author if necessary or passed to the Group Leaders for review.
- 3.5 The approved reports will be translated and both the English and Welsh report will be linked from the Elected Members profile page on the BCBC website by 1 September each year.
- 3.6 Democratic Services will liaise with the Communications Team to advertise and promote the publication of the Annual Reports, however the Committee may wish to consider other ways Members can publicise their reports.

Welsh Government Guidance

- 3.7 Welsh Government Statutory Guidance states that the Annual Report should contain only factual information relating to the work of the Councillor; should avoid promoting political achievements; be written in the past tense and be limited to two sides of A4. Members are therefore encouraged to provide their information within the 500 word limit to ensure that a consistent approach is established for all Annual Reports.
- 3.8 The Statutory Guidance also suggests that in the main, reports focus on aspects such as meetings, events and conferences etc. attended as well as training and development received.
- 3.9 In addition, care should be taken to avoid including in reports information concerning activities when the Member concerned is not operating in the role of councillor, such as a party conference and also to not include information which could be interpreted as critical of another Member.
- 3.10 The following areas are proposed as standard items to be included:
- Role and responsibilities – to include details of membership of committees and outside bodies, attendance records for these and full council.
 - Local activity – details of surgeries held, representations made on behalf of electors and the results of these
 - Major projects – involvement in local, county or regional initiatives or projects.
 - Learning and development – details of training and development events attended or undertaken, conferences and seminars attended.
- 3.11 There is no requirement for Elected Members to complete an Annual Report. However, all political groups will be requested to actively promote the completion of Annual Reports by all of their Members.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.
- 4.2 The publication of the Annual Reports on the BCBC website fulfils the requirement to make documents available in a bi-lingual format and accessible to those with hearing and visual disabilities.

5. Well-being of Future Generations Implications and Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there is no significant or unacceptable impact upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no Climate Change implications as a result of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no Safeguarding or Corporate Parent implications as a result of this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 For all Elected Members to complete a 500 word Annual Report, the translation costs are approximately £50-£55 per 1000 words equating to a total of approximately £1,275 - £1,402.50. This cost would have to be met from existing budgets within Democratic Services.

9. Recommendations

9.1 The Democratic Services Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Consider the Annual Report process and provide any comments or suggested amendments,
- (2) Consider how to encourage Member take up of the process and how to promote the final reports.

Background documents

None