

BCBC Councillor's Annual Report Guidance Notes

Background

The Councillor's Annual Report is a mechanism for improving communication between Councillors and the local electorate. The Welsh Government identified that Annual Reports would help improve local people's understanding of what their Local Councillor does, and the important role they serve.

Local Authorities are expected to provide a format and mechanism for Annual Reports to be published; however the content (in the main) is the responsibility of individual Councillors.

Bridgend County Borough Council has developed a process which it is hoped will be factual, interesting and non-political. The BCBC 'Model' allows the completion 4 specific areas of activity as follows:

- 1. Role & Responsibilities**
- 2. Constituency Activity**
- 3. Initiatives & Special Activities**
- 4. Other Activities & Issues**

- **Role & Responsibilities**

Previously the Authority provided a list of committees and other bodies to which each councillor was appointed. This was very labour intensive for officers to accurately compile and insert into each annual report. This information is now available to the public on the BCBC website therefore its inclusion in the report has been replaced by a link to the Councillors profile page.

It is proposed that the revised paragraph in the report template will be updated by Democratic Services to include any specific information and links on completion of the report.

- **Constituency Activity**

This is where Councillors have an opportunity to detail any work that they have undertaken on behalf of their local constituents. It can include details of regular surgeries held, key referrals made to Council departments, together with their outcomes. It can include the support that Councillors have provided to local residents on a range of topics of high interest.

- **Initiatives & Special Activities**

This is where Councillors have the opportunity to describe any major initiatives or special projects that they have been associated with on behalf of BCBC which have a direct impact on local constituents. Examples of this could include being part of a working party associated with a particular topic or issue, part of a regeneration project, proposals and activity associated with improved leisure facilities for part of the community.

- **Other Activities & Issues**

This is an opportunity for Councillors to offer information on themselves which they believe would be of interest to their constituents of which constituents should be made aware.

Examples of this could include promotion of Welsh Language Skills across the local community, the role that they have undertaken in fund-raising events, support for specialist local business or areas of personal special interest (eg support for local sports clubs, events, or organisations). It is the opportunity to show the 'personal' aspect of your role as a local Councillor.

Process

Democratic Services will provide the report template as a word document to each Elected Members at the end of April each year. This will then enable Elected Members to complete their initial draft of their report for the period from 1st May of the previous year until 30 April of the current year. Initial Drafts will be requested to be returned to Democratic Services by 30 June.

One of the most important aspects of the BCBC Model is that Councillors are encouraged to provide as much or as little information within the 500 word limit. Staying within the word count limit will provide some consistency and to maintain the focus on the key issues of your report. It will also enable the translation costs necessary when publishing these reports to be managed.

Reminders will be provided by Democratic Services to return completed initial draft reports. It will be assumed that any Elected Member not returning their report by the 30 June will not be completing an annual report for the period.

Democratic Services will review the report and finalise any formatting before returning it to the elected Member for approval. A copy of the finalised Annual Report may be reviewed by the Group Leaders (if required).

Democratic Services will liaise with the Communications team to advertise and promote the publication of the Annual Reports.

The approved reports will be translated and both documents will be linked from the Elected Members profile page on the BCBC website by 01 September each year.

Welsh Government Guidance

Welsh Government Statutory Guidance states that the 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.

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. It provides the example that whilst it might be acceptable to record information such as "made representations on behalf of the campaign to save the local hospital in the following ways", it would not be acceptable to say "succeeded in saving local hospital by my efforts on my constituents' behalf".

Similarly, care should be taken to avoid including in reports information concerning activities when the member concerned is not operating in the role of councillor. The example provided states that it would be acceptable to include information concerning, for instance, a speech made at a conference where the member was attending because of their council role, however it would not be acceptable to refer to a speech made to, for instance, a Party conference, where the member was a delegate from their local party organisation.

Care should also be taken not to include information which could be interpreted as critical of another member. For instance, it would not be acceptable for a member to compare his/her attendance or activities with that of another member or members.