

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

05 NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES

SERVICE & PERFORMANCE UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report.

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Democratic Services Committee with performance information relating to the support 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 The Democratic Services Committee considers matters relating to the provision of support services provided to them in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Act 2011.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 Member Referrals

4.1.1 Service Performance – Member Referrals

4.1.2 The following table shows the overall monthly completion statistics for referrals between 01 April 2015 and 30 September 2015.

Month	Referred	Completed	Ongoing	Percentage
April	177	177	0	100.00
May	165	164	1	99.39
June	192	190	2	98.96
July	212	210	2	99.06
August	124	119	5	95.97
September	170	145	25	85.29
Totals:	1040	1005	35	96.63

4.1.3 The following table details the number of Member Referrals made to Directorates / Departments created between 01 April 2015 and 30 September 2015.

Directorate	Total Referred	% In 10 Working Days	% In 20 Working Days	Total Completed	Total Percentage Completed
Childrens	28	70.83%	79.17%	24	85.71%
Communities	762	47.98%	78.43%	738	89.23%
Resources	54	71.82%	95.45%	53	99.40%
SS & Wellbeing	44	76.19%	95.24%	42	95.45%
LARS	76	51.69%	78.50%	73	87.95%
External	76	92.11%	62.73%	75	99.35%
Totals:	1040	68.44%	82.59%	1005	96.63%

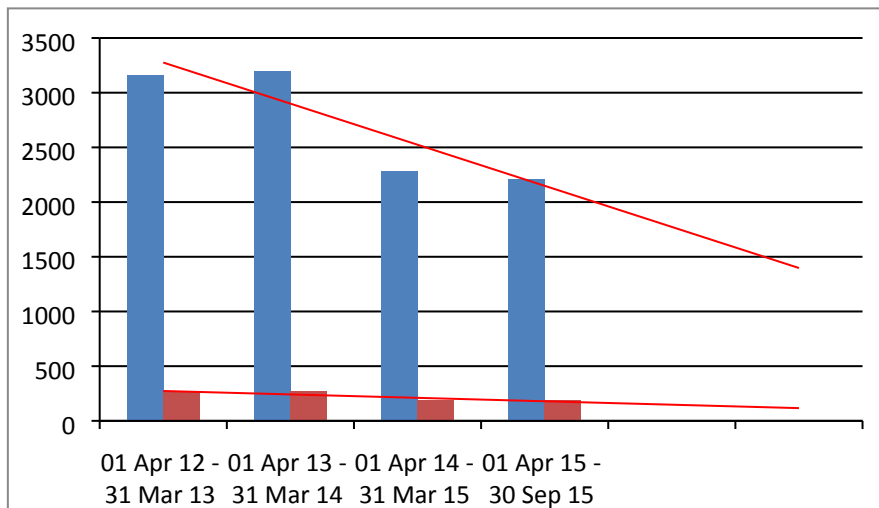
4.1.4 The completion data for Member referrals has exceeded the benchmarking levels established in 2013 for the 10 day completion rate and is within range of the 3 monthly average completion rates.

Completion Rates	Benchmark	Current
10 Day	45%	68.44%
3 Month Average	90-95%	93.44%

4.1.5 The Corporate Management Board recently requested data regarding the number of referrals that had been made as it appeared that the number of referrals being made was increasing. The referral data was checked and the following information was identified.

Year	Total Referrals	Monthly Average
01 Apr 12 - 31 Mar 13	3159	263
01 Apr 13 - 31 Mar 14	3195	266
01 Apr 14 - 31 Mar 15	2285	190
01 Apr 15 - 30 Sep 15	2210*	184*

*denotes projected figures



- 4.1.5 The graph above shows the trend lines for the number of total referrals and the average number of monthly referrals. The reasons for these downward trends may include:
- Members are not using the referral system because it is ineffective.
 - Members are making enquiries directly to officers and these are not being recorded retrospectively on the referrals system.
 - Members are receiving a reduced level of constituent queries due to:
 - the effectiveness of the BCBC website and the Customer Service Centre.
 - the preference of constituents to use online services rather than their local Councillor to address their queries.
- 4.1.6 Members are requested to assist in identifying the reasons for this downward trend in the use of the referrals system and to consider whether any changes are needed.
- 4.1.7 Members have also expressed their frustration that they are now commonly receiving a “when resources allow” response to their referrals. The perception is that it is a stock answer for which a definitive answer is unlikely to be provided. However, with the financial limitations placed upon the Council, there is now a greater chance that some referrals which are not considered a priority will not be resolved in the foreseeable future.
- 4.1.8 Previously, we have advised members that we could keep the referrals open if requested until the issue is addressed. However, the resources to administer this process are limited and with the increasing number of referrals falling into this category we may be unable maintain unresolved referrals indefinitely.
- 4.1.9 Following discussions with the Monitoring Officer it is considered that if an appropriate response has been made to a referral, even if that is to inform the member that there is insufficient funding to progress this referral, then it should be closed as the referral has received a response.
- 4.1.8 The Member Referrals system is planned to be updated during this year to align the workstreams and reporting processes to the current corporate structure. It should be noted that the Democratic Services Team has limited resources and any opportunities to streamline the systems and reduce the workloads will be considered.

4.2. Pre-Council Briefings (PCBs)

- 4.2.1 The following PCB’s have been held since the last meeting of the Democratic Services Committee in May 2015:

17 Jun 15	Trans gender Awareness
15 Jul 15	Corporate Assessment
07 Oct 15	European Funding

- 4.2.2 The following Pre-Council Briefings have been scheduled:

25 Nov 15	-	Local Transport Plan
16 Dec 15	-	Social Services & Wellbeing Act Update
20 Jan 16	-	To be confirmed
17 Feb 16	-	To be confirmed

02 Mar 16 - (Provisional) Budget briefing with political groups
 13 Apr 16 - To be confirmed

4.2.3 The following PCB topics have been identified:

- a) Update on the Cultural Trust - (Democratic Services Committee)
- b) Domestic Violence Update - (Democratic Services Committee)
- c) Addressing Bullying in Schools - (Democratic Services Committee)
- d) National Autistic Society Cymru - (Cabinet Member Resources)
- e) Ty Elis Counselling Service - (Cabinet Member Resources)
- f) S Wales Fire and Rescue Service - (Chief Executive)
- g) Dark Skies - (Cllr E Venables)
- h) Lessons from Fukushima - (Cllr EP Foley)
- i) Digital Transformation - (Corporate Director – Resources)

4.2.4 The Committee is requested to identify any additional topics other than those listed in paragraph 4.2.3 to be delivered as Pre-Council briefings and to prioritise those topics for delivery accordingly.

4.3 Member Development

4.3.1 The following Member Development sessions have been held since the last meeting of the Democratic Services Committee in May 2015:

Delivering effective scrutiny in times of austerity	09 Jun and 06 Jul 15
Scrutiny of Partnerships and Corporate Effectiveness	09 Jun and 06 Jul 15
Scrutiny Charing Skills	09 Jun and 06 Jul 15
Universal Credit	26 Jun and 03 Jul 15
Child Sexual Exploitation	16 Jul and 15 Sep 15
Corporate Assessment Update	02 Sep 15 (x2)
MTFS Workshop	07 Oct 15

4.3.2 The attendance at these events was as follows:

Delivering effective scrutiny in times of Austerity	13	(27.65%)
Scrutiny of Partnerships and Corporate Effectiveness	16	(34.00%)
Scrutiny Charing Skills	9	(19.14%)
Universal Credit	14	(25.92%)
Child Sexual Exploitation	28	(51.85%)
Corporate Assessment Update	28	(51.85%)
MTFS Workshop	15	(28.30%)

4.3.3 The following topics have been identified for delivery in the near future either as a twice repeated hour session or a part of a round robin event

- Elective Home Education,
- Highways & Depot Rationalisation
- Equalities Data
- Equalities and Diversity
- Data Protection
- Procurement Portal
- Libraries Update

4.4 Annual Reports

4.3.1 All Elected Members are provided with the opportunity to complete an Annual Report in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Act 2011. The Annual Report details the Councillors' activities over the previous year and are published on their individual webpages on the BCBC website. It should be noted that Senior Salary holders are expected to complete annual reports each year.

4.3.2 For the 2014-15 period, 18 Elected Members (33.96%) completed and submitted their Annual Reports for publication on the Bridgend County Borough Council website. Details of the number of members who have their annual reports published was reported on 14 October 2015 to the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for Wales as requested by the Minister for Public services.

4.5 Personal Development Reviews (PDR)

4.5.1 Elected Members also have to be provided with the opportunity to undertake PDR's. The completion of PDRs is carried out as part of a peer review process with the allocation of appraiser and appraisee co-ordinated by political groups. Once PDR's are completed they are requested to be copied to the Head of Democratic Services to assess any training identified and which could be included in the Member Development Programme.

4.5.2 It was hoped that all PDRs would be completed by 01 September 2015. To date, 11 completed PDRs have been received by the Head of Democratic Services. Members will be reminded to send in their PDRs as soon as possible,

4.6 Modern.gov Update

4.6.1 The development of the Modern.gov committee administration system is continuing with a pilot for the implementation of a corporate electronic report approval process. This pilot is being undertaken using this and 3 other committees until December when the outcomes of the pilot process will be reviewed with the intention to roll out the system to all Committees by May 2015. There is a possibility the process will be brought forward to meet the requirements of the revised Welsh Language Standards at the end of March 2016.

4.6.2 Other developments have included:

- Immediate notification and access to the reports and agendas for meetings when published.
- Public access to the Modern.gov App for those wishing to use tablets or smart phones
- Meeting documents can be viewed in PDF format which is easier for OWA users
- Minutes are available in draft on the system and once approved are updated on the webpage
- Member attendance figures are now recorded online meeting by meeting for the formal committees

4.6.3 Further developments are planned which include:

- Find Your Councillor Postcode search
- Enhancement of the Welsh elements of the website
- Configuring individual outlook calendars using Modern.gov

4.7 Welsh Language Standards

4.7.1 The new Welsh Language Standards were published on 30 September and are currently being assessed. Initial indications suggest that:

- all minutes and agendas must be published in Welsh
- website content must be mirrored in Welsh and English
- public meetings will be required to have simultaneous translation on request or if the appropriate criteria are triggered

4.7.2 Action plans are being developed with the intention of implementing any necessary changes to meet the target date for the delivery of the revised standards by 30 March 2016.

4.8 Webcasting

4.8.1 The webcasting facilities have now been installed in the Council Chamber to enable the delivery of 150 hours of webcast material over the next 3 years. The planned implementation of webcasting was put on hold until clarification regarding the requirements of the revised Welsh Language Standards were known.

4.8.2 Once confirmation is received regarding the detailed implications of the standards relating to the webcasting of meetings an appropriate implementation plan will be submitted to Council for approval.

4.9 Members ICT Forum

4.9.1 The Members ICT Forum met on 17 September 2015. The meeting considered the existing and future ICT support for elected members including the development of bring your own devices and the refresh of Members ICT equipment in 2017.

4.9.2 The Forum is scheduled to meet on the following dates:

- 17 December 2015
- 17 March 2015
- 16 June 2016

4.9.3 Members are requested to contact either the ICT Service Desk or their respective Group representative if they have any issues relating to the provision of ICT facilities

4.10 Democratic Diversity

4.10.1 The Head of Democratic Services attended the launch of the Diversity in Democracy Project on 17 September 2015. The project aimed to take forward the diversification of democracy initiated by the Welsh Government's Expert Group on

Local Government and Diversity and set out in *On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales*.

4.10.2 The project will run for a period of 12 months and several Elected Members are already involved with the project and are acting as Mentors for individuals from under-represented groups interested in participating in the democratic process as an Elected Member.

4.10.3 There are currently more mentees than mentors. Any Elected Members interested in participating in the project as a mentor are requested to inform the Head of Democratic Services.

4.11 Member Support Officer(MSO) Network.

4.11.1 On 23 September, the Head of Democratic Services attended the MSO Network facilitated by the WLGA. This meeting provides an opportunity for representatives from all Local Authorities in Wales to receive updates in respect of policy and the development of good practice.

4.11.2 At the meeting the following matters were considered.

- a) A Welsh Government Policy Update from F Cuthbert who outlined the plans being developed in preparation for the re-organisation of Local Government. These included the:
 - i. Enablement for the Boundary Commission to review the proposed new Local Authority areas to achieve a target representation of 1:4,000 between elected members and the constituents.
 - ii. Empowerment of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales
 - a. to determine remuneration for the Shadow and new Authorities
 - b. review the salaries of Chief Officers and other Statutory Officer roles
 - iii. establishment of shadow authorities in 2019
 - iv. Intention to make Local Authority Constitutions more transparent by introducing a New Model Constitution similar to one in operation with [Lambeth Council](#)
 - v. The establishment of Area Boards
 - vi. Additional powers for Standards Committees to allow them to deal with issues relating to Councillors and in respect of unethical behaviour, failure to perform and attend meetings.
 - vii. Enhance the duty on Local Authorities to have public participation in decision making.
 - viii. Mandatory Webcasting for new councils
 - ix. Freedom for Councils to publish notices, archive meeting and other information electronically for 6 years rather than in hard copy.
 - x. Introduce a duty for Council Leaders to take diversity into account in the appointment of cabinet members
- b) A WLGA update which provided information on:
 - i. Updated Role Descriptions
 - ii. Leadership Academy
 - iii. WLGA led Member Development activities

- a. Wellbeing & Future Generations Act
 - b. Safeguarding
 - c. Social Service's & Wellbeing Act
 - d. Housing equalities Act
 - e. Disabled People
 - iv. Support for new members including a Candidates Guide and induction packages for local delivery.
- c) A Democratic Diversity briefing from the lead project officer who informed the meeting of the anticipated outcomes of the project and the progress that had been made to date. It was agreed at the meeting that all Councils would co-ordinate their preparations and publicity for the 2017 elections during Local Democracy Week in 2016. Further updates on the project would be provided in due course.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

- 5.1 There are no effects on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules in respect of this report. However, there may be subsequent changes which will be presented separately to Council in respect of the Welsh Language Standards and webcasting.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equalities issues relating directly to this report.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 The financial impact of achieving the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards is still to be finalised. However, the initial indications are that it is significant in both one off and recurrent costs
- 7.2 The delivery of the Webcasting facilities will be funded from the existing grant from the Welsh Government. Therefore, there should be no other incremental costs other than the provision of translation facilities.

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 The Democratic Services Committee is requested to:
- a) assist in identifying the reasons for the downward trend in the use of the referrals system and establish whether any changes are needed to the system.
 - b) Identify and prioritise topics to be delivered as:
 - a. Pre-Council Briefings
 - b. Member Development Sessions
 - c) Note the content of the report

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Background documents: None