

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Standards Committee
Date:	13 December 2023
Title of report:	Democratic Services Update
Purpose of report:	To update the Committee on the work of the service following the Committee meeting in June and further discussions over the summer.
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Background

1. A report was presented to the Committee in June on arrangements for members' annual reports and we consulted with the Committee over the summer on revising the Protocol for Hybrid Meetings and members wellbeing arrangements.
2. This report provides an update on the following matters:
 - a. Protocol for Hybrid Committee Meetings
 - b. Wellbeing of members – training and support
 - c. Elected members annual reports
 - d. Job descriptions for members and group leaders
 - e. Members register of interests.

Protocol for Hybrid Meetings

3. The Protocol was revised over the summer in order to combine two documents and to provide clear and current guidance to members of Council committees. During the process of developing the new protocol, we consulted with the Democratic Committee; Group Leaders and the Standards Committee.
4. The aim of the Protocol is to support and complement the guidance and procedures contained in the Council's Constitution, by providing additional information on hybrid meeting arrangements. It also aims to support the Member Code of Conduct by explaining the expectations on Members when they take part in remote meetings.

5. The Protocol was shared with members in October and was published on the Council's intranet. Following this, the statement at the start of each committee meeting which is read by the Chair was also revised to reflect the main changes / messages in the Protocol. For example, it highlights the requirement for members attending remotely to keep their cameras on during meetings and to inform the Chair if they need to leave the meeting for whatever reason.
6. We intend to review the Protocol after six months to consider if there's a need for further revisions or to raise awareness among members.

Member Wellbeing

7. With increasing concerns about abusive comments and threatening behaviour towards elected members at all levels, it's important that county councillors receive adequate training and support to protect their wellbeing.
8. Information was shared with members in the lead up to the mental health awareness week in May about the support that is available, e.g., targeted training for members; corporate e-learning modules; and a confidential counselling service.
9. Democratic Services work closely with the Council's Training Team on the annual member development plan. The plan for 23/24 includes mandatory training on Health and Safety, including personal safety. Elected members may also take advantage of the wellbeing modules that are available for staff in general.
10. We aim to further develop wellbeing provision for members during 2024 and we will continue to work with WLGA on this subject. We expect to receive the new Member Development Self-assessment Framework from WLGA in the new year and this will be the basis for new discussions on training priorities.

Elected members' Annual Reports

11. A report was presented to the Standards Committee in June providing an update on this issue and explaining the effort that had been made to increase the number of reports received.

12. It was explained at the time that 19 out of 35 reports had been received by members. A total of 26 were received in the end for the 22/23 period. This is a significant improvement on 21/22.
13. All the reports have been published on the Council's website and we have included a note to explain if a member has not presented a report. It should be highlighted however that there is no statutory requirement on members to present a report.
14. Over the last weeks, we have had discussions with other authorities on their experiences and we have started to revise the template report for 23/24 to make it as easy as possible to complete.

Job descriptions for members and group leaders

15. Following the Committee's discussions with group leaders over the summer, we were asked to research into the need to have a better definition of the role of group leaders.
16. Job descriptions and person specifications have been published on the Council's website for a number of elected member roles, including:
 - a. Elected member
 - b. Committee member
 - c. Committee chair
 - d. Member of the Executive
 - e. Leader and Deputy
 - f. Political Group Leader
17. Therefore, information about the role and responsibilities of group leaders already exists and we have compared the information with WLGA's recommendations about the role. They correspond closely.
18. So, we will consult with group leaders over the next few weeks to ensure that they are satisfied that the job description and person spec are suitable.

Member register of interests

19. The register of interests for each member has been published on the Council's website.
20. A Message from democratic services was sent to all members in September reminding them to check and review the information regularly to ensure that it is correct. Members were also reminded to register any changes in their circumstances within 28 working days.

21. We intend to send another message to remind members in the new year.

Recommendation

22. For the Committee to note the content of the report.