

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Standards Committee
Date:	6 February 2025
Title of report:	Democratic Services Update
Purpose of report:	To update the Committee on the work of the service in relation to member support and governance.
Author:	Dyfan Sion, Head of Democratic Services

Background

1. The Committee was last given a formal update on the work of democratic services at its meeting on December 2023. No update was given in 2024 largely due to work on the administration of the May and July elections.
2. Following the Committee's review of member register of interests in 2024 and a letter from the Committee's chair to the chief executive in the summer, an improvement plan was shared with the Committee which dealt with some of the democratic issues that had arisen during the review. This report also provides an update on the improvement plan.

Improvement plan

3. The plan was developed to implement the Standards Committee's recommendations from its review of member interest registers that were relevant to democratic services. A copy of the plan was shared with the Committee in autumn 2024.
4. Fifteen of the twenty actions have now been completed. Of the remaining 5, two are ongoing work, namely "15. Keeping track of members' well-being" (a further update in this report) and "17. Ensure that the length and format of reports is manageable". Another, "20. Linking webcasts to agenda items" is an additional action to the Standards Committee's recommendations, and while not yet complete, there has been significant progress.
5. That leaves two actions to which there is currently no solution, namely "1. Enable Members to complete the Welsh side of the standing register of interests in

MyGov if they wish to do so" and "3. Enable Members to complete their registration of interest form during on-line meetings ". Through the Council's IT officers, we have raised action 1 with the software provider Mod Gov. The software does not currently allow input from the Welsh side but has been added to the list of developments. In the meantime, we are happy to support members' language choice by translating text on their behalf if necessary. There is no technical solution to action 3 at the moment either, but we make sure that members receive an electronic form, and the response rates are good.

Protocol for Hybrid Meetings

6. The Protocol was amended in 2023 to provide Council committee members with clear and up-to-date guidance on how to operate at hybrid meetings and when joining remotely. During the process of preparing the protocol the Democratic Committee and the Standards Committee were consulted.
7. The Protocol is intended to support and complement the guidance and rules contained in the Council's Constitution by providing more information on hybrid meeting arrangements. The chair of each committee refers to the Protocol at the beginning of meetings.
8. We are keeping the Protocol under review and will update it if necessary.

Member Well-being

9. Messages have previously been shared with members about the support available to them including the confidential counselling service and e-learning modules. As part of the member development plan, the Training Team will also be looking for suitable training.
10. Further to that, we are aware that elected members are subject to threatening behaviour and offensive comments at times. North Wales Police has an officer who advises on the affairs of elected members. We have contacted the officer, and a meeting has been arranged in February.

Elected Member Annual Reports

11. A total of 26 annual reports were received by members for 23/24, which is the same number received for 22/23 and a significant increase on the previous year. All reports have been published on the Council's website.
12. We will remind members of the annual report process shortly and share the report template for 24/25. Democratic officers will be available to assist in the usual way.

Registering and declaring members' interest

13. The register of interests of all elected members is published on the Council's website. Democratic services sent a message to all members in October reminding them to register any changes in circumstances within 28 working days. Guidance on how to update the online register was shared with members and further support is available from democratic officers.
14. Following a recommendation from the Standards Committee, and in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct, a further effort has been made to ensure that members give written notice of declarations of interest at meetings by completing the appropriate form.
15. Chairs remind members to do so as part of the opening statement in committees and forms are available from the committee clerk. It is the responsibility of individual members to ensure they complete the form.

Gift and Hospitality Register

16. A review was undertaken over the summer of members' gift and hospitality registers to ensure the information on the website was complete.
17. There is a duty on members, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, to notify the authority of donations and hospitality in excess of the threshold in the Gift and Hospitality Protocol, within 28 days of receipt and the information will be published on the Council's website.

Training Records

18. Member training records on the Council's website have been revised and updated. To ensure they are consistent and up to date training updates are inputted by democratic officers.
19. Quarterly updates on member training will be sent to relevant group leaders. This facilitates the monitoring of attendance at training, and mandatory training specifically.

Recommendation

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