

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Democratic Services Committee
Date:	19 March 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 report updates the Committee on governance and member support developments since the last meeting in November.

Hybrid Meetings

2. The Council has a protocol to provide committee Members with clear and up-to-date guidance on how to conduct themselves in hybrid meetings when joining remotely. The chair of each committee refers to the Protocol at the beginning of meetings.
3. As part of the review of scrutiny arrangements, and following requests from members, it has been agreed to hold hybrid scrutiny panel meetings from now on rather than virtual only.
4. Therefore, all Council committee meetings and scrutiny panels will be hybrid meetings. Pre-committee meetings and member briefing sessions will continue to be held virtually, with some exceptions.
5. Hybrid meetings are more resource intensive than virtual meetings, but the above practice provides an appropriate balance between legal requirements, member requirements and service capacity.

Web casting committee meetings

6. Improvements have been made recently to the live streaming site on the Council's website. Meeting programmes are connected to the recording, so that it is possible to click to go directly to specific agenda items.

7. We continue to collect and monitor web casting viewing data and publicise meetings through the Council's communications team. The data is generally positive. For example, on average, over 300 watch planning committee meetings and around 200 watch Executive and County Council meetings.

Member Well-being

8. The Council's counselling service, Medra, is available to staff and Council members. It is a professional and confidential service and available in English or Welsh. Information has previously been shared with members and we will be in contact again shortly about the service.
9. 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 matters related to elected members. Arrangements are being made through the Police to provide training to members on safety.
10. We will also be producing signposting guidance for members on personal safety over the coming weeks to provide further information on the subject.

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. A message will be sent to members during March, with instructions and a template for completing the 24/25 report. We will be asking for the reports to be submitted by the end of May, so that they can be published in June. Democratic officers will be available to assist in the usual way.

Members / group leaders annual review

13. It is good practice for group leaders to hold an annual conversation with their group members to discuss their development and work over the year. We have provided a template as a basis for the conversations.
14. If training requirements arise from the conversations, we ask to be notified by the end of April in order to discuss with the training team and consider the requests for the 25/26 member development plan.

Gift and hospitality and member interests' registers

15. The register of interests of each elected member is published on the Council's website and any changes in circumstances need to be recorded within 28 working days.

16. 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. 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.
17. With gift and hospitality registers, members have a duty, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, to notify the authority of gifts and hospitality in excess of the threshold in the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol within 28 days of receipt and the information will be published on the Council's website.
18. Democratic officers are available to help if there is any uncertainty about these arrangements.

Recommendation

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