

MEETING	Sub-group (training) DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
DATE	13 November 2012
SUBJECT	Members' Reports
PURPOSE	To submit the requirements and to discuss how Gwynedd deals with the requirement.
AUTHOR	Vera Jones, Democratic Services Manager

1. What are the requirements?

1.1 The Welsh Local Government Measure (2011), notes the following:-

(1) A local authority must make arrangements -

(a) for each person who is a member of the authority to produce an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the authority during the year to which the report relates,

(a) for each person who is a member of the authority's executive to produce an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the executive during the year to which the report relates, and

(c) for the authority to publish all annual reports produced by its members and by members of its executive.

(2) The arrangements may include conditions as to the content of a report that must be satisfied by the person making it.

(3) A local authority must publicise its arrangements.

(4) In exercising its functions under this section, a local authority must have regard to the guidelines provided by Welsh Ministers."

1.2 The purpose of the Annual Report by Elected Members is to improve communication between Elected Members and the public. The Minister for Local Government notes that the reports will be a means of improving the public's understanding of what local members do and the important role which they have. He has also noted that every local authority will be free to choose its own format for the reports.

1.3 In addition to the Measure, the Welsh Government has also published a guidance document to assist local authorities in incorporating the act, namely, "*Statutory Guidance for the Local Government Measure 2011 – June 2012*". – See **Appendix A**.

2. What have other authorities done thus far?

- 2.1 'Annual Reports' by elected members have existed in England for some years but every authority has a different interpretation of what should be included and what format should be used. It varies from giving elected members a clean sheet to write anything they consider to be of interest to the public about their work. In the case of a clean sheet, some elected members have used the reports for political propaganda and for discrediting other political parties. Consequently, several local authorities have favoured more structure to the reports.
- 2.2 It is always useful to seek good practice and to consider current developments in other local authorities. In Wales, Bridgend is currently the authority which has invested the most time in investigating and developing arrangements. We have asked other authorities about what they are planning with regards to the annual reports, and are still awaiting responses.
- 2.3 Bridgend has developed a model to complement the guidelines below:
- A factual, interesting and non-political document
 - Two pages in length at the most
 - To report on five specific fields
 - Role and responsibility
 - Events within the electorate
 - Initiatives and special activities
 - Learning and Development
 - Other events and Issues
- 2.4 A sample document by Bridgend is in **Appendix B**.

3. Considerations for the sub-group

- 3.1 The Democratic Services Committee decided during its meeting on the 11th September to establish a sub-group to look at training and requirements for the future.
- 3.2 With regards to the elected member's annual reports, the sub-group discussed whether a template should be provided for elected members to use. The group decided to recommend the development of a template for the members wishing to produce an annual report as it would be of assistance to the member and reader, would be uniform, and would ensure members reported on facts. The group also noted that members could include further information should they deem it important, as long as it is within the legal guidelines.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee develops a template based on the Penybont template along with specific guidelines to assist members in producing their annual reports rather than all members developing their own reports.

ANNUAL REPORTS BY MEMBERS OF A LOCAL AUTHORITY

Introduction

Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (“the Measure”) contains provisions intended to strengthen local democracy. Chapter 1 of that Part concerns the support provided to members of a local authority and section 5 within that chapter provides for the production of annual reports for these members.

This statutory guidance is issued under section 5(4) of the Measure. The guidance relates to local authorities making arrangements for the production of annual reports.

What the Measure requires.

Section 5 requires county and county borough councils (local authorities) to ensure that all their elected members are able to make an annual report on their council activities during the previous year. This includes enabling any member of the council’s executive to be able to report on their executive activities also. Any reports produced by members of a county or county borough council must be published by that council.

A local authority is free to set conditions/limits on what is included in a report.

A local authority must publicise what arrangements it has for publishing annual reports and in drawing up these arrangements must have regard to this guidance in so doing.

Guidance

Duties of a local authority

A local authority must make the arrangements enabling its members to produce annual reports. This means it must tell its members how and by when to do this. The Measure, at section 8 *et seq*, provides for a Head of Democratic Services (HDS) to carry out democratic services functions as defined in section 9. This includes the provision of support and advice to members to assist them in the carrying out of their functions and organisation of the annual report process would fall within this. The Measure prevents the HDS from providing support and advice to a member of an executive in relation to the carrying out of that member’s executive functions, but production of an annual report, even if it made reference to the member’s executive activities, is not an executive function in itself.

It is anticipated that the first annual reports would be published no later than the end of June 2013.

Publication of reports

How a local authority decides to publish is a matter for that authority to decide upon. The minimum requirement would be for the authority to include a link to a member's annual report on that part of the authority's website which carries details of individual members. There is no requirement for any publicity beyond this, and authorities should be careful that, if they decide to provide any further publicity for the reports, the same provision is provided for all members. Therefore, should a member request that his/her report is given any greater publicity, that request should be declined unless carried out in respect of all members.

Local authorities should ensure also that their website includes information about the introduction of annual reports and how members of the public can access them.

Content of reports

The central purpose of the reports is for members of the public to find information about their local councillor's activity.

Local authorities may place their own restrictions on content in reports. Annual reports should include only factual information. In the main that would suggest information on meetings, events and conferences etc. attended, training and development received. While 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. So, whereas 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, 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.

The following areas are proposed as standard items to be included:

- Role and responsibilities – to include details of membership of committees and outside bodies, attendance records for these and full council.
- Local activity – details of surgeries held, representations made on behalf of electors and the results of these

- Major projects – involvement in local, county or regional initiatives or projects.
- Learning and development – details of training and development events attended or undertaken, conferences and seminars attended.

BCBC Councillor's Annual Report ~ Sample

This is the report by the Councillor below regarding their key activities over the year ending 30th April 2012. It is provided for the information of all constituents and for no other purpose.

Completion instructions.

Councillors are free to include as much or as little information as they wish in each section, however the report is to be kept to this 2 page (maximum) format.

Councillor: A N Other

Party: Central Party

Ward: Southtown

Section 1: Role & Responsibilities

I sit on the following committees:

Town & Community Council Forum	Attendance X/X*
Community Safety & Governance Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Attendance X/X*
Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Attendance X/X*
Corporate Resources & Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Attendance X/X*

I sit on the following external committees

Bridgend Town Hall Trust	Attendance X/X†
Local Service Board Scrutiny Panel	Attendance X/X†
Southtown Comprehensive School Governing Body	Attendance X/X†
Westview Community Council	Attendance X/X†
Southtown Community College Management Committee	Attendance X/X†
Southtown Litter Management Group	Attendance X/X†
Bridgend Citizens Advice Bureau Steering Group	Attendance X/X†

† figures supplied by Councillor

* figures supplied by BCBC

Section 2: Constituency Activity

I hold weekly constituency surgeries on Friday Lunchtimes between 1pm and 3pm in the Westview Community Centre

Attendance at the local PACT meetings regularly and am able to address any complaints or queries in a timely manner.

I compile and deliver a quarterly newsletter to each address in my constituency - this is based on the topics which I believe my constituents would like information on.

I support individuals who contact me on a wide range of issues and have acted as an advocate in Planning matters, Neighbourhood disputes involving the Police and Bridgend Council, the Environment Agency, Highway matters and Social Services requests.

I receive a considerable number of telephone calls from residents seeking advice and assistance on a range of personal issues and I am always prepared to listen to their concerns and offer appropriate support.

I have given a talk at the Southtown Town & Community Council meeting on 'My role as a Councillor' and have taken part in 'What's your Opinion' as a member of a panel.

Section 3: Initiatives and Special Activities

Through communications with the Vale of Glamorgan Transportation Committee I have been successful in generating a new bus service between Corporation Street in Southtown and the Central Bus Station in Bridgend. The service runs 4 times each weekday morning affording residents public transport into Bridgend and the same frequency in the early evening.

I was requested to organise a survey regarding the potential introduction of a one-way system for Cardiff Road and Town Square in Southtown. The response to the survey was not large in terms of numbers in favour of the proposal which has subsequently been shelved. I wrote personally to each of the residents who responded to the survey conveying my thanks for their efforts and outlining the results.

With the help of local youngsters and BCBC's Leisure Department I have supported the development of the new skateboarding zone within Southtown Park, between May and September each year.

I have also supported the renovation of the outdoor Bowling Green at Southtown Community Centre which now has more than 120 regular members of Southtown Bowling Club. The club is aiming to open a junior section during the summer months of this year - so constituents should keep an eye open for more news on this subject in the local press and publications.

Section 4: Learning & Development

I have attended the following Learning & Development initiatives during the past year:

Corporate Parenting Training

Risk Assessment for Children's Directorate Training

Night-time Economy Training

ICT - Internet & Intranet Training

Project & Programme Management Training

Media Awareness Training

Budget Analysis & Interpretation Training

I have attended the following pre-Council Briefings:

Rota Visits for Residential Care Establishments

Bridgend Care & Repair

Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

Section 5: Other Activities and Issues

There are serious concerns amongst the residents of Southtown that the land adjoining Southtown Park will be developed as a Retail Park. I have supported local residents in protest against any such development as I believe it would fundamentally alter the characteristics of the local community and cause considerable impact on the existing traffic problems in the area. I have attended both appeal enquiries and will continue resisting any such plans for development along these lines.

I am a strong supporter of the 'Keep our Playing Fields' action group and have gone on record in opposing the recent sale of part of the Southtown School Playing Fields for a new Residential Estate. Whilst the sale will result in a small number of affordable housing opportunities I believe other local sites would have been a better option and could have afforded the opportunity to develop brown-field land.

I plan to support the Southtown Community Council in its efforts on fund raising for new festive lights in the town this Christmas. I will be approaching local businesses for modest contributions to this worthy cause in the next few months which provides a welcoming sight on cold winter nights.

Signature of Councillor:

Date: