



Gwasanaeth Democraidd
Democracy Service
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Cyfarfod / Meeting

PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Dyddiad ac Amser / Date and Time

10.00 a.m. DYDD MAWRTH, 10 MEDI, 2013

10.00 a.m. TUESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER, 2013

Lleoliad / Location

SIAMBR DAFYDD ORWIG

SWYDDFEYDD Y CYNGOR

CAERNARFON

Pwynt Cyswllt / Contact Point

EIRIAN ROBERTS

01286 679018

maireirianroberts@gwynedd.gov.uk

Dosbarthwyd: 2.09.13

**PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

AELODAETH / MEMBERSHIP (15)

Plaid Cymru (7)

Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors

Selwyn Griffiths	Charles Wyn Jones
Michael Sol Owen	Linda Ann Wyn Jones
Dilwyn Morgan	Gareth Thomas
Mandy Williams-Davies	

Annibynnol / Independent (4)

Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors

Lesley Day	Tom Ellis
Anne Lloyd-Jones	Jean Forsyth

Llais Gwynedd (3)

Endaf Cooke	Anwen Davies
Jason Humphreys	

Llafur / Labour (1)

Y Cynghorydd / Councillor Sion Wyn Jones

Aelodau Ex-officio / Ex-officio Members

Cadeirydd ac Is-Gadeirydd y Cyngor / Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council
Y Cynghorwyr / Councillor Huw Edwards a / and Dewi Owen

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

To receive apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman shall propose that the minutes of the last meeting of this committee held on 4 June 2013 be signed as a true record (copy attached).

5. SOCIAL MEDIA

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services (copy attached).

6. WEB CASTING AND REMOTE ATTENDANCE

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services (copy attached).

7. ANNUAL REPORTS BY ELECTED MEMBERS

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services (copy attached).

8. INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services (copy attached).

9. MEMBERS TRAINING

To consider a verbal report by the Head of Democratic Services.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE, 04.06.13

Present: Councillor Lesley Day (Chair)
Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones (Vice-chair)

Councillors: Thomas G. Ellis, Jean Forsyth, Evan Selwyn Griffiths, Charles W. Jones, Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Michael Sol Owen, Gareth Thomas, Mandy Williams-Davies.

Officers: Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department), Gwenan Parry (Head of Customer Care Department), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and Ioan Hughes (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Annwen Davies, Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Customer Care).

1. CHAIR

Resolved: To confirm the Council's resolution at its meeting on 2 May 2013 to elect Councillor Lesley Day as Chair of this Committee for 2013/14.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2013/14.

3. WELCOME

Councillor Jean Forsyth, who was attending her first meeting of this Committee, was welcomed.

4. CONGRATULATIONS

It was confirmed that Debbie Anne Williams Jones had been appointed as the temporary Democratic Services Manager. The officer was congratulated and best wishes were extended to Vera Jones who would be absent on maternity leave.

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 19 March 2013 as a true record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

a) In response to an enquiry, it was explained that the term 'information portal' referred to the work carried out to have a single specific area on the internet to keep information for elected members.

It was added that this was what was meant by 'information portal' and although the existing technology did not match the Council's requirements, it was noted that further research was being undertaken towards achieving this ambition.

It was noted that the 'member bulletin' developments addressed this on a temporary basis.

Furthermore, it was noted that the term 'exchange' mainly dealt with upgrading the email system.

b) A member noted that she had not received information regarding the majority of the 13 training sessions on electronic information for members. She added that she was aware that one had been held on 24 April, but that this had been unsuitable for her as it had not been held bilingually.

In response, it was noted that the sessions included sessions such as an introduction to the i-pad. Afterwards, sessions would be arranged to deal with specific matters as needed. A further request was made to hold an additional session in the south of the county as well as an English-medium training session. It was intended to arrange dates for these sessions in the near future.

6 WEB CASTING AND REMOTE ATTENDANCE

Submitted – the report of the Head of Customer Care Department and the Head of Democratic Services outlining the latest information regarding the requirements of web casting, remote attendance at meetings and developments in relation to the grant for Community Councils.

The work done thus far was expanded upon and it was noted that the risk was that the Welsh Government provided a grant for starting up a web casting and remote attendance procedure, but the Council would be required to fund any costs to continue with the scheme. It was noted that research was being undertaken at present into the minimum that could be done without revenue costs.

The total grant was £72,000 and upon receipt of the money, the Council would commit to:-

- Broadcast all or some Council meetings;
- Provide some finance, namely a total of £32,000 to community councils to support them to prepare their own websites;
- Arrange remote attendance for members

In response to observations made by members, officers highlighted the following main points:-

- That the cameras located in the Council chamber, prior to the renovation works, had not been working for many years;
- That the matter of allocating grants to community councils was completely separate to the work of broadcasting the Council's meetings.;
- That 'up to' £500 grant would be released to individual community councils;
- That there was a need to consider criteria and look into many things in terms of community councils that had already faced the costs when completing or starting to prepare websites;
- That it would not be reasonable for Gwynedd Council to receive additional workload in terms of updating the community councils' websites;
- That updating the website of each community council was one of the grant conditions;
- That web casting would not call for the creation of a new post.

A member expressed concern that the advantages of acting within the grant conditions would be very limited and that community councils would have to place further pressure on the ratepayers in order to achieve the required work.

In response, it was explained that the intention of the Welsh Government was to promote the work of providing information to residents on the activities of community councils.

Resolved: (a) **Approve to:**

- (i) **Move ahead with the web-casting provision at Siambr Dafydd Orwig and Siambr Hywel Dda and, subject to the scale of the costs, to provide for any establishment and running costs, over and above the value of grant monies from the Democratic Costs budget;**
- (ii) **Not to make simultaneous translation provision for web-casting beyond the Council's current translation provision at the meeting rooms themselves;**
- (iii) **Move ahead with the provision for remote member access, subject to the conditions in paragraphs 7(a) and 7(b) in the report;**
- (iv) **Continue to support the work of facilitating the development of websites for Community Councils.**

Following the discussion, it was reported that the officer had only just received a consultation document regarding remote attendance at Council meetings.

It was explained that the members would receive a copy of the draft guidelines and it was suggested that they could submit observations through the Chair. Then, they could be relayed to the Cabinet Member, Customer Care, who would send a response to the draft guidelines on behalf of the Council.

Meanwhile, initial steps could be taken in accordance with the abovementioned decisions.

It was emphasised that risks existed and that there was a need to assess the guidelines so that the process could be coped with relatively securely.

It was noted that the complexities could be associated with technological shortcomings that could occur at any given time; quorum; public attendance and exempt items; the demand for many translators and the size of rooms.

RESOLVED that members should study the draft guidelines and submit observations to the Chair so they can be relayed to the Cabinet Member, Customer Care.

6. ELECTED MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORTS

Submitted – the report of the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services outlining the latest situation regarding developments with member reports for 2012/13.

It was noted that 10 members had expressed an interest in preparing a report and that two reports had been received to date. Members were called to voice their opinions on the matter and to draw attention to any problems arising and how improvement could be ensured in future.

A member stated that no effective procedure had been followed to advertise the reports and thus, a very strict timetable was now associated with this.

In addition, the member believed that strict guidelines had been set and that the specific boundaries as to what could be included in the report had made some consider that it was pointless to prepare a report.

In response, it was noted that the Welsh Government had set out the guidelines and that the aim was to create a further opportunity to communicate with the electors. It was added that the guidelines had been adapted, and according to the amended version, reports could be submitted at any time but that the Council adhered to the end of June for the 2012/13 pilot as the timing of the reports would otherwise make them lose value.

The Council's intention was to stick to the end of May as a closing date as this had been a pilot scheme.

Despite accepting that the situation of each member was different, another member noted that the guidelines were very challenging and that the need to restrict the report to two pages underlined this.

A member objected to the idea of preparing a report as he believed that councillors should not have to write about the work they did within their community.

Officers explained that members were not obliged to prepare a report and that it would be beneficial if submitted reports could be viewed. It was confirmed that the reports submitted would be published on the Council's website.

Resolved: a) To accept the report and that the reports submitted by members would be published on the Council's website;

b) That an explanation be placed on the Council's website that this is a pilot scheme.

7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEASURE (WALES) 2011 – MEMBERS' TRAINING

Submitted – the report of the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services outlining the requirements of the abovementioned measure in order to reach a decision on the way forward.

It was noted that the aim was to consider the best way of providing for the needs of all members, excluding Cabinet members, to enable them to receive a review of their training and development needs, should they so wish.

In response, members made the following main observations:-

- That Area Forums created the best opportunity for all members to receive information and voice their opinions;
- That there was a need to consider the skills required as councillors as well as the skills they wished to have.

In response to an enquiry, it was noted that the response to various courses varied.

Resolved: (a) To ask the Head of Democratic Services to write to all elected members (excluding Cabinet members) and give a brief presentation at the Area Forums initially to explain the requirements of the Local Government Measure in the context of Personal Development Plans, and ask them to express an interest in receiving an annual review or not;

(b) To adapt the principles and guidelines developed for prioritising and allowing Members to attend external seminars etc, and to make them relevant to training courses and adopt them as part of the above.

8. MEMBER TRAINING CHARTER

Submitted – the report of the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services presenting information on the Member Training Charter in order to reach a decision on the way forward.

Members and officers were of the view that the Council already met a number of the Charter's requirements and it was noted that the idea was to be welcomed as a method of obtaining status to elected member training.

In addition, it was noted that there was room to develop and that the Charter created an opportunity to do so.

Resolved: To approve to express an interest in applying for the Charter in 2013/14 and report this recommendation to the next full Council on 19 September 2013.

9. ELECTED MEMBER BULLETIN

The Head of Customer Care Department reported that the 'Member Bulletin' had been launched for some weeks and she called for initial feedback from members.

Attention was drawn to the following main points:-

- That the bulletin was beneficial to members but that the information on it needed to be kept brief;
- No single piece of information should be on the 'bulletin' for too long;
- It could be beneficial for members to receive suitable training;
- That the bulletin was a summary of what was taking place and that further information could be obtained on a specific website;
- That the Highways Department seemed to be making full use of the bulletin and there was possibly a need to encourage other departments to do the same.

It was agreed that there was a need to fill gaps before a completely effective system could be obtained and it was noted that the members had a prominent role in the work of ensuring consistent development.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.25am.

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	10 September 2013
SUBJECT	Social Media
PURPOSE	Present the Welsh Local Government Association's guidelines on social media to councillors
AUTHOR	Geraint George, Head of Democratic Services

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A revolution is taking place in how we communicate. We are now experiencing the greatest ever change in the way information is created and owned, and the speed at which information can be shared. This leads to a change in the way we live, work, and possibly in the way we talk and think.
- 1.2 The all-inclusive term social media is used to refer to a range of online multi-media methods that are used to create content and for two-way communication. They can be accessed through a smart phone, a laptop, a tablet or a smart television.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA: A GUIDE FOR COUNCILLORS

- 2.1 On 16 August 2013 the Welsh Local Government Association published the Social Media: A Guide for Councillors document on their website. A copy of the document is available in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The purpose of this guide is to provide guidance to councillors who are keen to use social media as a method of sharing information, opening new discussions with people in their community and beyond, and attracting the interest of their electorate in a productive two-way discussion. The guide focuses mainly on the social media Facebook and Twitter.
- 2.3.1 The guide lists a number of benefits to councillors of using social media, such as:
- increasing numbers of people are using Twitter and Facebook as their preferred method of communication, leading to the potential to establish two-way communication with all of them;
 - it's a useful method of finding out what people are talking about locally, their concerns and their interests;
 - it's a good way of making the electorate more aware of the work being done by councillors;
 - it allows you to have a conversation with a range of people that you would not be able to physically meet and who do not traditionally seek out their local representatives;
 - it's a method of immediate communication, where you can receive immediate feedback on your ideas and manifesto to allow you to adapt the proposals in line with local opinion.

3. SOME CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 In considering the contents of the *Social Media: A Guide for Councillors* document (WLGA), it seems there are areas within the guidance which are relevant to the Democratic Services Committee remit e.g.

- the use of social media in committees, and what the constitution states;
- the Welsh language, and the guidance given in the Council's Language Scheme;
- training in terms of facilitating councillors to
 - start using social media
 - make wider use of social media;
- the successful use already being made of social media by some elected members in Gwynedd as an example of good practice;

and matters that are relevant to the remit of the Standards Committee e.g.

- the code of conduct and the legal implications of using social media;
- steps taken in cases of misuse of social media.

These are only suggestions, and further considerations could arise from the committee's discussions.

3.2 Based on these initial considerations, it is believed that more detailed consideration should be given to the above and to the contents of *Social Media: A Guide for Councillors* (WLGA), amending them specifically for Gwynedd and/or creating a specific protocol for the use of social media by councillors. It seems appropriate for this work to be achieved jointly between the Democratic Services Committee and the Standards Committee.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:-

- a) recommends to the Standards Committee that Gwynedd should adopt its own guidelines on the use of social media.
- b) recommends establishing a sub-group jointly with the Standards Committee to collaborate on drawing up guidelines on social media for councillors in Gwynedd (with the exact process for achieving this to be agreed between the Chairs of both committees).
- c) nominates [3] members of the committee to serve on the sub-group

Social Media : A Guide for Councillors.

ISBN
Further Information ST

DRAFT

An introduction from Cllr Peter Fox

I'm delighted to present this useful guidance on social media which gives councillors a clear idea about what these tools are and how we can use them. There are some great ideas to help us think about how we make the most of these effective and cheap forms of communication.

Social media has changed the way we work in Monmouthshire. All of our employees and members have permission to use social media at any time so that they can make the most of what channels like Twitter and Facebook offer. <http://acedigitalcomms.wordpress.com/2013/05/29/unrestricted-staff-access-to-social-media-access-a-roundup/>

In short, they're an easy way to talk and to listen to our residents, local businesses and other partner organisations. Without access to these tools we would be a weaker organisation as we would not hear what people in our communities care about, what they want to get involved with and what they think of their council.

Social media has given us a chance to be creative and try new things. Our foster carers in Monmouthshire use Yammer to stay connected and learn from each other

<http://monmouthshirecc.wordpress.com/2012/03/12/rewind-story-fostering-communication-using-yammer/>

We use YouTube for our budget consultations

<http://digitalmon.wordpress.com/2013/01/13/youtubing-a-budget-consultation-and-how-a-great-blogger-helped-us-get-better/>

We even recruited our current head of children's services using YouTube Twitter and LinkedIn.

<http://acedigitalcomms.wordpress.com/2011/07/11/social-care-recruiting-using-social-media-how-monmouthshire-council-is-recruiting-a-head-of-childrens-services-using-youtube/>

I use Twitter and my blog to connect with residents, other councillors and farmers and people who share my interests. I really see the value of this form of communicating –social media is now a legitimate business tool

<http://digitalmon.wordpress.com/2013/01/12/councillor-peter-fox-leader-of-the-council-talking-about-social-media/>

I hope you enjoy this very informative guide.

Councillor Peter Fox

A revolution is taking place in how we communicate. The world is experiencing the biggest ever change in how information is created and owned, as well as the speed in which it can be shared. This is changing the way we live, work and even how we speak and think.

This guide is for Councillors who would like to use social media as a tool to share information, open new dialogues with the people in their community and beyond, and engage their electorate in productive two-way conversation.

We live in an open, accessible and dynamic communications world. The use of social media will help ensure your voice is heard.

1. What is social media?

Social media is a blanket term applied to a range of online multimedia tools that are used for creating content and two-way communication. They can be accessed via your smartphone, PC, laptop, tablet or smart TV. All social media accounts are free of charge and can be set up quickly and easily from an Internet page. Although this guide will focus on Facebook and Twitter, some useful examples of social media include:

Blogs which are like an online diary journal where you can share information. Examples are Wordpress, blogger, simplesite.

Here is an example of a typical Councillors
Blog page
<http://hughevans.wordpress.com/>

Top tip: share your thoughts and activities, and comment on the issues that mean the most to you. Maintaining a regular blog could make compiling your annual report all the easier.

Micro blogs allow users to share shorter pieces of information. *Twitter* is an example of a micro-blog. Short messages which you post on Twitter are called "Tweets" – they are each limited to 140 characters (letters, numbers and spaces). Tweets are not a private means of communication and can be seen by anyone who is "following" you. Twitter also has a message facility where you can send messages directly to other Twitter users. However, all such personally directed messages can also be viewed by all of your other followers. You can even forward other Twitter users' Tweets to your own followers, by using the Re-Tweet function.

Here is an example of a typical Tweet

Tweeting is a good way of promoting local events, live tweeting @council meetings and to give links to longer posts. #Jaynecowan

Top tip: follow and be followed. Twitter is a great tool for finding out what is happening, what people think of local and global issues. Listen first and then simply join in the conversation.

Social Networks such as **Facebook** are like having your own small website which can include pictures and text and can provide information and photos. Typically these sites allow you to update people on what you are doing or thinking through a 'status' update and allow you to talk about who you are, what's important to you, what you have done and your plans. You can invite people to be your 'friends' and also set different level of access to your account, so some people can see all information about you or you can make less detail available to others. You can also use Facebook to communicate with groups or individuals. People who find your page, comments or proposals of interest can "like" you, which encourages further use, and is a useful way of taking a straw poll of your ideas.

A typical Facebook page

Linked-IN is a professional equivalent of Facebook. You can provide information about your career history and skills, and people with whom you are "linked" can endorse you for particular skills. This is a handy site for finding expertise and keeping up-to-date with business developments in your ward or area.

Flickr, Vimeo, Instagram and **You Tube** are examples of platforms for sharing videos and photographs. Don't forget to seek permission before taking photos to upload to, or copying images from these sites. **Snapchat** is a photo messaging application for photo, video, drawing and text.

Communities of Practice are a way of like minded people joining a community where they can share knowledge and discuss issues relevant to the Community for example the LGA knowledge Hub.

2. Why Should You Use Social Media?

Social media will allow you to open new conversations with the people you represent, and the potential for councillors using social media is huge. Your Council will already have official accounts on Twitter and many also have Facebook accounts. Scrutiny Committees may also be using social media to undertake service reviews.

So what are the benefits to councillors of using social media?

- Increasing numbers of people are using Twitter and Facebook, as their preferred method of communication. If you have a presence on these platforms you have the potential to establish two- way communication with all of them.
- It's a useful way of finding out what people are talking about locally, their concerns and interests.
- It's useful for finding out about breaking news, the latest research or publication or the latest policy announcements from political parties
- It's a good way of making the electorate more aware of the work you do personally.
- It's an effective way of coordinating campaigns for example allowing campaign workers access to your Facebook account.
- Social media allows you to have a conversation with a range of people that you would never be able to physically meet and who do not traditionally seek out their local representatives.
- Social media allows for immediate communication. You can pass on information and receive opinions in minutes. You can forward information from other people equally quickly. "Going Viral" is not necessarily a bad thing, and refers to a mass spreading of a piece of information around the world.
- The local and sometimes national press will follow Councillors' on Twitter or Facebook. This means that they know what you are talking about the minute you talk about it.
- Social media is mobile. You can take it around your community, on the train, to a coffee shop or coffee morning or even in bed.
- You can upload pictures and videos, showing for example your role in local events, pictures of potential sites for development, new buildings, local eyesores - a picture tells a thousand words.
- Its free, accounts costs nothing, you probably already have the equipment you need. All you need is time.
- You can receive immediate feedback on your ideas and manifesto to allow you to modify your proposals in line with local thinking.
- Above all, it can be a lot of fun!

3. How to Use Social Media effectively

- Choose your medium and sign up. This is very straightforward and will take you less than five minutes!
- Facebook and Twitter are good places to start. You might want to begin with a trial personal account (rather than calling yourself "Councillor Jones") and experiment with family and friends. Make sure that you understand how people find you and who can access your material. Remember:

- On Facebook you can control who has access to different parts of your account. You can manage what the world sees and what your "friends" see.
- On Twitter the whole world can see everything you Tweet. Even the messages that you Tweet directly to other people can be viewed by anyone unless you have locked down your account to followers.
- When you are ready to set up your final account, consider the identity you use. The name you give yourself online is important as it allows people to find you. Prefacing your Twitter account with Cllr lets people know exactly who you are and indicates that the Code of Conduct will apply
- You might want to consider setting up a separate personal and "professional" account - you can talk about the amazing food in the restaurant around the corner to your friends and followers in your informal account, and the plans for the new bypass to your friends and followers on your professional account. However, many councillors think that some of their personal comments about food, places they've visited, football matches or TV helps break down perceptions of councillors and proves that they are normal like everyone else!

I use Twitter to speak with residents and engage more broadly. Also to twitter on about books, music, trains and ale Almost human
 @LukeOHolland Cardiff Councillor

- Make it easy for people to find you online. Many people will start their search for the area that you represent, so make sure you mention your location frequently as that this will then be picked up by search engines. You will also want to make sure that your social media account details are on your business cards, posters and flyers.
- On Twitter, sign up to Tweety Hall and other sites where councillors can be found by their electorate.
- Increase your web presence by linking to other people and sites, leave comments on others posts and encourage others to link with you. The more you are mentioned, the more people will find you.
- Choose your friends on Facebook and who you would like to follow on Twitter. Bear in mind that people know who follows them and will often follow you in return. Find people on Twitter with links to your community, county or region by searching using the 'hashtag' (#) symbol to prefix your search-term for example #Reynoldston, #Gower, #Swansea, #South West Wales, #Wales.

- Be disciplined about making time available to write new content and answer your “friends” and “followers”. A regular time each week to update your Facebook status and throughout the day to check Twitter.
- Decide on what you are going to talk about and how. This could be
 - Weekly updates of your own activities as a councillor - don't forget your pictures! This works better on Facebook as you can include more detail. Remember Twitter is only 140 characters and tends to be more instant and timely
 - Regular updates on council policies and actions of interest to your community
 - Links and re-tweets of other relevant national activities
 - Issues on which you would like feedback
 - Notice of events and public meetings

Remember using social media is all about two-way communication, it's good for providing information to your community or flagging up press statements, but it's better as a tool to get useful feedback. You will get feedback and you should expect some people to challenge your ideas or enter into a debate with you online. This is part and parcel of social media.

4. Etiquette and style

- Keep your communications clear, positive, polite and professional. Plain language helps. Many people use abbreviations on Twitter – you'll pick these up as you go along!
- Avoid being ironic or sarcastic, it can be misinterpreted.
- On Facebook, you will need to monitor and, if necessary, censor the contributions that other people make to your site; delete them if they do not match your required standards of behaviour or language. Defamatory and offensive language will be attributed to the publisher as well as the original author and could incur financial liability. It is up to you to decide if you want to remove posts that disagree with your political position, however if you do remove them you may be accused or censoring contributions on political grounds.
- On Twitter, you can block people who are habitually offensive or vexatious. Remember however, blocking them only stops them engaging directly with you, their tweets will continue to be public to all of their followers.
- Bear in mind that constituents may find party political point scoring tedious and prefer to hear information about what you are achieving.
- If you don't have anything to say...don't say anything. Even though it's tempting to let your followers know how busy you are they will soon become bored with constant updates on your day without some relevant or interesting information.

5. Support from the Council

Councillors are generally provided with the ICT equipment that they need to do their job. The Independent Remuneration Panel expects that this will include ICT equipment, support and training.

It is also reasonable to expect that you should also have access to social media sites to enable you to carry out your councillor role more effectively. You do not need the council to set you up with a personal social media account but you should take advantage of any training or guidance provided to help you use it properly.

Most councils have a Social Media policy. You will need to abide by this and any Social Media protocols that may have been agreed when using your "councillor" account.

It's worth remembering that the council is responsible for any information provided on its website and is subject to legal responsibilities. **You** are personally responsible for the material that you broadcast via your own social media accounts or websites – but more of this later.

Advice will be available to you from a number of council officers. The Monitoring Officer, Head of Democratic Services, the Communications Team and the ICT Manager are likely to have useful advice.

6. Social Media and Council Meetings

Recently, especially with the advent of webcasting there has been an increase in interest in the use of Twitter in Council meetings. Clearly you will need to be guided by your council's constitution. Other than what your constitution or social media policy says, there is no legal reason why you shouldn't use social media from meetings. However, some common sense does need to apply.

- Tweeting on meeting progress and receiving comments from the community can be helpful for transparency and engagement BUT excessive use of Twitter may give people the impression that you are not concentrating on the business in hand or are even relying on guidance from outside the meeting. For that reason, it is probably sensible not to use Twitter during a planning or licensing debate
Committee chairs may want to decide how to address this in their meetings and you should abide by the rules set out in your constitution.
- Remember, you may not need to tweet about the detail of a meeting - some councils are introducing new arrangements for webcasting meetings and many also have "official" twitter feeds for live on-line conversations to run alongside the meetings.
- If your council webcasts your meetings, this provides a useful way of the public viewing what is happening at first hand and ensures that any video recordings are accurate. Filming meetings informally, whether this

is done by councillors or the public may cause difficulties and is usually covered by the Constitution. It may provide a distraction to the proceedings and if an edited version of events appears on You Tube it might create a false impression.

- Remember that you should not tweet or communicate in any way the content of exempt or confidential business dealt with by local authorities in closed session.

7. The Welsh Language

You can use social media in the language of your choice; you do not have to translate your personal tweets or Facebook accounts.

Councils' social media streams might however be available either separately in Welsh and English or bilingually. The Welsh Language Commissioner feels that there is no need for social media streams to be bilingual as the two separate streams will be accessed by and sufficient for different communities.

8. Golden rules

Think before you tweet or post on Facebook. Do not say anything, post views or opinions that you would not be prepared to:

- Discuss face to face with the person you are speaking about
- Write on a placard and carry down your high street and discuss and defend with anyone who sees it.
- Be prepared to have minuted in a public meeting – remember, twitter or Facebook effectively publicly minutes everything for you as you go along!

Remember that once you have said something it may be seen by millions - friends, supporters, political opponents and the press and could be re-tweeted around the world in minutes.

Keep your messages professional, polite and positive.

Remember to try to keep tweets and texts separate – many people tweet comments that they would previously have texted someone privately; this may be about meeting up later (do you want all your followers knowing your plans and gatecrashing your lunch!?) through to 'in' jokes that could be misinterpreted.

Don't follow an individual unless you know them or have a good reason for doing so. Some people, such as constituents or council employees, might find it a bit uncomfortable to have their local councillor hanging on their every word.

If you make a mistake admit it. Mistakes happen so don't try to cover it up as there will always be a record of what you've said.

Don't enter into unhelpful online arguments; remember all of your followers or friends will be witnessing this online. Ignore people or block them if they persist in vexatious comments.

Don't Tweet or post on Facebook when you are "tired" it's probably sensible to turn off your phone at any time when you think your judgement may be impaired.

Bear in mind that it is possible for your followers and friends to be seen. If you follow or are Facebook "friends" with council employees, contractors who have been procured to provide services to the council, a company or member of the public making a planning application or pressure groups. This *might* be construed as having a close personal association with them and therefore a personal interest.

As with your own leaflets or newsletters, always ask permission before taking a picture that you intend to use. NEVER take photos of children without the express permission of their parents based on an understanding of what you intend to use the picture for. Your council will have a policy on taking pictures of children, take advice on this before taking or using pictures.

Do not allow anyone else access to your Social Media accounts, protect your passwords especially if you use a public computer.

Just like email, you can get spam in social media! Be wary about direct messages via twitter, even from people you know, with messages such as 'Hi, have you seen this photo of you on Twitter?' Delete these before opening, as the spam could then be sent to all of the people you are following...

9. Possible Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

9.1 Time and Commitment

Maintaining your social media accounts can take time. Many people start enthusiastically and then allow their accounts to lie fallow. This is risky as friends and followers may think that you are inactive or, worse, unresponsive.

To avoid this:

- Only set up accounts that you can manage, choose either Twitter or Facebook if necessary. It is possible to set up links between the two which will save you duplicating information.
- Set time aside regularly for updates and get used to communicating 'on the hoof'

9.2 The Law

Councillors new to social media tend to be concerned about the legal implications. It is an important consideration, and some councillors and other politicians have fallen foul of the law, but with careful use and following some ground-rules you will be fine!

The style of communication employed in the social media environment tends to be fast and informal. Messages can appear lightweight and transitory.

Whenever you post something on social media, it becomes a publication, you have effectively made a broadcast. As it is now in the public domain, it is subject to both the **Code of Conduct** and to various **Laws**.

9.3 Code of Conduct

If you conduct yourself on twitter or Facebook as you would in person on the street or in your leaflets, then you will be fine.

Remember that according to guidance from the Ombudsman, the Code of Conduct applies to you whenever you are "Conducting the business of your authority, acting, claiming to act or give the impression you are acting in your official capacity as a member or representative of your authority" Also the Code applies if you "conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or your authority into disrepute" If you can be identified as a councillor when you are using social media, either by your account name or how you describe yourself or by what you comment upon and how you comment, the requirements of the Code of Conduct apply. Also if you say something that could be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute the Code applies even if you are not apparently acting in your official capacity or do not identify yourself as a member. Remember that the Ombudsman's guidance states that "Making unfair or inaccurate criticism of your authority in a public arena might well be regarded as bringing your authority into disrepute"

In the same way that you are required to act in council meetings or in your communities you should:

- **Show respect for others** - do not use social media to be rude or disrespectful

- **Not disclose confidential information about people or the council**
- **Not bully or intimidate others** - repeated negative comments about or to individuals could be interpreted as bullying or intimidation
- **Not try to secure a benefit for yourself or a disadvantage for others**
- **Abide by the laws of equality** - do not publish anything that might be seen as racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or anti faith. Even as a joke or "tongue in cheek"

9.4 Predetermination

As a councillor, you are aware that when you act in a quasi-judicial capacity, for example on a planning or licensing committee, you should not make up your mind about an issue that is to be formally decided upon before you had heard all the relevant information. You are allowed to be predisposed to a particular view but not to have gone so far as to have predetermined your position. It is important to remember therefore that anything relevant you might have said about particular issues on social media could be used as evidence of your having made up your mind in advance of hearing all the relevant information.

9.5 Criminal Offences

Don't panic! These generally apply to you already in your conduct as a councillor, but it is worth considering them as they apply to Social Media:

Harassment - It is a criminal offence to repeatedly pursue a campaign against someone where this is likely to cause alarm, harassment nuisance or distress.

Data Protection - It is illegal to publish personal data about individuals unless they have given you their permission. This might apply to your constituents or service users.

Incitement - It is a criminal offence to incite any criminal act.

Discrimination and Racially aggravated offences (or any other protected Characteristic) - It is a criminal offence to make a discriminatory remark about anyone based on a "Protected Characteristic" as defined in The Equality Act (such as their race, religion, sexual orientation etc).

Malicious & Obscene Communications - It is a criminal offence to send malicious or obscene communications.

9.6 Civil Law

This is where things get more risky for anyone who uses Twitter or Facebook, whether they are councillors, members of the public or celebrities...

Defamation - It is against the law to make a false statement about someone which damages their personal or professional reputation. Crucially - even if you simply retweet or pass on information originally posted by others, you may still be held equally as responsible as the original commentator. This can also apply to publishing images. If found liable to another person, you could be ordered to pay large sums of money as damages.

LINK TO BBC COVERAGE OF SALLY BERCOW

Copyright - The legal ownership of the contents of documents, photos, videos and music belong to the person who created them. You could be in breach of copyright if you reproduce such material without the owner's permission. Always ask for written consent before you use someone else's material.

Political comment and electioneering - Remember that although it is acceptable to make political points or canvass votes via your own social media accounts this will not be permissible if you are using this via council supplied computer equipment, certainly in the run-up to elections. The Electoral Commission has further information about the return on expenditure that candidates need to provide on advertising or campaign literature.

10. Further Information, interesting sites and Sources of Help

Bear in mind that information, sites and terminology change quickly. Facebook is already reporting a drop in users. However, the next big social media platform with soon be on its way. Here are some current examples of information and useful sites but bear in mind that they may be quickly out of date.

Sign on to Twitter here

<https://twitter.com/>

Sign up to Facebook here

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/>

Tweety Hall. A platform that gathers all the Councillors that have Twitter accounts in the UK together so that all their posts can be read in one place and the public can easily find their local councillor. All you have to do to join them is send them a Tweet.

<http://tweetyhall.co.uk/>

Twent-first century councillors

<http://socialmedia.21st.cc/>

Useful guidance for members using Social Media

<http://kindofdigital.com/>

an online innovation agency helping organisations engage online with citizens, communities and stakeholders. Has useful examples of social media guidance.

LGA's Knowledge Hub is an example of a community of practice. This one was set up specifically for people working in and with local government and has online fora, libraries full of materials and details of events.

<https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/>

Social Media and Online collaboration community. Join this Community of the Knowledge Hub to talk to other councillors and officers working with Social Media.

11. Glossary

Blog. Term derived from Weblog i.e an internet log or diary

Blogosphere all the Blogs on the Internet

Community of Practice group of people who are members of an online 'club' because they have a role or an interest in an area of work.

Direct Message a message sent via Twitter to someone who follows you or who you follow.

Facebook an example of Social networking

Flickr photo sharing site

Follower someone who has chosen to follow you on Twitter

Friend someone who you have allowed to access your facebook page. Not necessarily a real friend.

Forum a virtual discussion area

#Hashtag. A hashtag or # is a way of denoting a keyword which can be used as a search term on Twitter.

Instagram a platform for sharing photos and videos

Instant Messaging. A conversation with one other person via for example Microsoft Live Messenger or Yahoo messenger. A conversation which, if you indicate that you are available for a chat is more immediate than e mail and easier to type than a text.

Microblog short blog eg Twitter using a maximum of 140 characters.

Pinterest a virtual pinboard for creating and sharing images.

Retweet to forward a tweet received on Twitter

RSS feeds or Really Simple Syndication feeds. Messages from Websites informing you that new information is available so that you don't have to keep checking the website for updates.

Social Bookmarking a way of saving and sharing all your favourite sites on the web for example **Delicious**

Social networking Facebook etc

Snapshot a photo messaging application for photos, videos, drawings and text.

Spam electronic junk mail

Trending current popular people or conversations as in *trending on Twitter now...*

Troll Someone who disrupts online communities or discussions through unhelpful or irrelevant posts.

Tweet a message sent on Twitter

Tweety Hall a virtual gathering place for councillors with Twitter accounts

Twitter an example of microblogging

Vimeo

Wikis - a tool which enables anyone to add or edit content on a website.

Wikipedia online Encyclopedia which works using this method and is therefore not always accurate.

You Tube a platform for sharing videos and photographs.

Bibliography and acknowledgements

Public Service s Ombudsman for Wales

Kevin O keefe Solicitor

Contributing members and Monitoring officers

The Welsh Language Commissioner

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	10 September 2013
SUBJECT	Web Casting And Remote Attendance
PURPOSE	To submit the latest development regarding the requirements of web casting, remote attendance and developments relating to the grant for Town and Community Councils
AUTHOR	Geraint George, Head of Democratic Services

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the Democratic Services Committee meeting on 4 June 2013, the latest information was submitted in response to the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 in the context of:
- remote attendance of meetings
 - webcasting; and
 - working with town and community councils to develop websites.

- 1.2 It was also reported that the Council has signed an agreement to receive a grant of £72,000 with the spending to be allocated as follows:
- £40,000 for web casting Council meetings and allowing remote access by elected members
 - £32,000 for issuing grants of up to £500 each for town and community councils in the County to establish their own websites.

- 1.3 In receiving the grant, Gwynedd Council will commit to:

Delivering	By when	Evidence
Provision to enable remote attendance for members	31 March 2014	Written report noting how many meetings were held and the success of the exercise
Broadcasting all or some of the Council's meetings	31 March 2014	Broadcast presence on the Council's website
Providing finance to town and community councils to support them to develop their own websites	31 March 2014	Number of town and community councils with their own website

2. UPDATE

2.1 Remote attendance of meetings

- 2.2.1 At the last meeting, in the absence of any guidelines, the Committee formed an initial opinion on remote attendance, namely:
- a) Propose that the provision be made available in the Council's video conferencing rooms in Dolgellau and Pwllheli only (in order to seek assurance on the reliability of the provision).

b) Not to offer the provision for meetings where operational decisions are made (Cabinet, Council, Planning Committee and Licensing Committee) initially in order to avoid any constitutional questions should the equipment fail and as a result a member would not be able to exercise his/her voting rights (It is hoped that this matter will be resolved by the guidelines, when available).

2.2.2 On 29 May 2013, the Welsh Government published the consultation document *Remote attendance* : Statutory guidelines issued under Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2011. The closing date for the consultation was 21 August 2013. A copy of the consultation document is included as Appendix 1.

2.2.3 An invitation was extended to the Council's elected members through Rhaeadr to submit observations on the consultation document by 31 July 2013. On the grounds of the observations received, a response was compiled on behalf of Gwynedd Council to be sent in the name of Ioan Thomas, Cabinet Member for Customer Care. A copy of this response is included as Appendix 2.

2.2.4 It is believed that there is nothing within the contents of the Remote Attendance consultation document that would change the initial opinion of this Committee on Gwynedd's conditions for the remote attendance of meetings.

2.2.5 In terms of the Council's arrangements to enable remote attendance, the latest situation is that we are awaiting confirmation from the Information Technology Unit on the capacity of the video conferencing equipment in Dolgellau and Pwllheli to connect with Siambr Dafydd Orwig and Siambr Hywel Dda.
Auditel - how far are we from implementing remote attendance?

2.3 Web casting.

2.3.1 The developments at Siambr Dafydd Orwig are already completed, and the work is nearly completed in Siambr Hywel Dda.

2.3.2 The work soon to be completed in both Chambers means that we will be in a situation where we are able to produce material to be broadcasted. However, there is a need to arrange support for broadcasting material on the web.

2.3.3 We are now in the process of inviting and meeting with companies who are able to 'host' our broadcasts live on the web. We are also seeking specifications from Authorities who already provide web casting such as Carmarthenshire Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

2.3.4 As noted at the last meeting, there will be revenue costs associated with the costs of maintaining the service annually following the initial

set-up costs. In discussions with providers, there will be a need to carefully consider the most effective and efficient method of providing web casting.

2.4 Website development for town and community councils

2.4.1 Cist Gwynedd is administrating the grant process for developing town and community council websites in Gwynedd.

2.4.2 In July, town and community councils received an offer to:

- a) apply for a portion of grant funding to develop their own website
- b) develop joint websites for a more reasonable price.

They were asked to express an interest before the end of October 2013.

2.4.3 There has been slippage in the timetable compared to the brief timetable that was submitted at the last meeting. This is mainly due to the fact that the town and community councils do not convene during August, and a number of them convene every month or every other month. Consequently, there was a need to provide a sufficient window for all of the town and community councils to convene before the closing date for the expressions of interest.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:-

- a) Approves proceeding with the provision for remote attendance, subject to clauses 2.2.1a) and b) above.
- b) Approves proceeding with the webcasting provision from Dafydd Orwig and Hywel Dda Chambers and, subject to the costs of providing for any set-up requirements and maintenance costs that exceed the grant funding from the Democratic Costs budget.
- c) Continue to support the work of facilitating the development of websites for Community Councils and to receive and update on the numbers who have expressed an interest in establishing a website at the next meeting.

Number: WG18799



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

Welsh Government

Consultation Document

Remote Attendance at Council Meetings

Date of issue: **29 May 2013**

Action required: Responses by **21 August 2013**

Overview

Statutory Guidance made under Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

How to respond

Please submit your comments on any aspect of the Regulations or the Guidance by **21 August 2013** in any of the following ways:

Via the response form on our website:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/localgovernment/?lang=en>

E-mail: LGDTMailbox@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Or post to the address in the contact details below.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.

Useful References:

Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/contents/enacted>

Contact details

For further information:

Scrutiny, Democracy and Participation Team
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

e-mail: LGDTMailbox@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Tel: 029 2082 5194

Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

REMOTE ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Draft Statutory Guidance made under Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (“the Measure”) was intended to strengthen local democracy by, in particular, introducing reforms which support councillors outside of the executive or executive members when acting in a non-executive capacity. One of these reforms, at section 4 of the Measure, was the introduction of the possibility of remote attendance at council meetings. This was intended to make it easier for those who, for instance, may have to travel long distances, those with domestic responsibilities and those in employment to attend.

This guidance is statutory guidance under section 4(6) of the Measure, to which a local authority must have regard, in relation to meetings of an authority attended remotely in accordance with section 4.

What section 4 of the Measure says

Section 4 provides that attendance at a council meeting is not limited to a meeting of persons who are all present in the same place. By “council meeting” we include any committee or sub-committee of the council as well as the full council itself. However, the section places certain limitations as to what constitutes remote attendance.

Any member attending a meeting remotely (“remote attendee”) must, when they are speaking, be able to be seen and heard by the members who are attending the meeting at the place where the meeting is held (“members in actual attendance”) and the remote attendee must, in turn, be able to see and hear those in actual attendance. If there are any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting, they must also be able to see and hear the remote attendee who, in turn, must be able to see and (should they be entitled to address the meeting) hear them. If there is more than one remote location, all the members attending remotely must be able to hear – but not necessarily see – the other remote attendees.

Meetings can only take place remotely if not prohibited by the local authority’s standing orders/rules of procedure. The standing orders/rules must also secure that any meeting with remote attendees is not quorate if there are more remote attendees than members in actual attendance.

Each local authority may make other standing orders/rules in relation to remote attendance at meetings and must have regard to any guidance given by Welsh Ministers. Our intention is to publish this guidance at the same time as the section of the Measure is brought into force.

It should be noted that remote attendance at meetings is only permitted for elected members and not co-optees. This is because the aim of making it easier to attend meetings is linked to the general aim of encouraging more people to consider becoming councillors, which is not progressed by making such facilities available to co-optees.

Supporting remote attendance

The Welsh Government accepts that there are technical and staffing implications connected with the introduction of remote attendance. Where a number of councillors are expected to attend remotely, probably though not necessarily in a different council office from the place where the meeting is held, there will probably need to be an officer present, both to support the members attending remotely but also to ensure that the equipment needed for remote attendance to function is operating correctly.

Local authorities will need to decide whether or not they wish to permit members of the public to be able to be present at a remote location. If so, an officer presence would be required to make arrangements for them.

There will clearly be a need to provide appropriate training for officers who might become involved in remote attendance, both to familiarise them with the requirements of the legislation and to cover the practical issues involved. The WLGA should be able to assist in this process.

The need to recognise equality between the Welsh and English languages has great significance when considering remote attendance. Local authorities will have their own Welsh language schemes but it is likely that facilities will exist – or could be made available – to cater for members who are unable to understand Welsh.

This could be problematic when remote attendance is being used. Modern communications facilities, such as those used for webcasting council proceedings, may well include an associated facility so that when a member decides to speak in Welsh, those watching the broadcast at another location hear the English translation dubbed over this rather than the speaker's words.

This may not be altogether to the liking of a Welsh-speaking member attending a meeting remotely without a translation facility as the remote attendee would be obliged to listen to an English translation dubbed over any Welsh spoken.

If a remote attendee wished to speak in Welsh, it would not pose a problem for those in actual attendance at the main meeting centre with the translation facilities because they would have the choice of listening either to the Welsh speaker or to the translation into English. But for non-Welsh speakers at the remote location, there would need to be another translation facility available for Welsh spoken at the place of the meeting.

In the case of a sole remote attendee, attending at home or work, for instance, the situation is eased because, should they wish to speak Welsh it will be translated at the main location. There is still the issue that a Welsh speaking sole remote attendee would probably have to hear any member speaking in Welsh at the main location dubbed in English.

It is proposed that standing orders should contain a provision that members should, whenever possible, be able to participate at a remotely attended meeting in either Welsh or English. However, it is the Welsh Government's policy that remote attendance should not be permitted if, for technical or other reasons, it would not be possible to *provide simultaneous interpretation for non-Welsh speakers attending a meeting where both Welsh and English will be used*. As such, local authorities may wish to ask members *to note their language preference (in terms of speaking at meetings) and whether or not they would require simultaneous interpretation should any other participant speak in Welsh*.

The Welsh Government does not take for granted that local authorities will possess the equipment or technological know-how to make remote attendance work to suit everyone. Someone attending remotely at home or work may have bandwidth limitations which affect their ability to take part fully. Local authorities will need to decide for themselves the extent to which they will invest or assist members to have the necessary facilities to attend remotely.

There are times when council meetings are not open to the public, when confidential, or "exempt" issues – as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – are under consideration. It would be important to ensure that there are no members of the public at remote locations able to hear or see the proceedings during such meetings. Any member in remote attendance who failed to disclose that there were in fact persons present who were not so entitled would be in breach of their Code of Conduct responsibilities.

Local authority standing orders can determine which types of meetings can be attended remotely. In the first instance, practical issues might dictate that the number of meetings which could enjoy this facility would be quite limited, though over time it would be hoped that the number of meetings where remote attendance were possible would increase.

It is the view of the Welsh Government that it would not, however, be appropriate for a local authority's standing orders to rule out entirely the prospect of remote attendance. The intention of the Measure was to introduce flexibility and some councillors, because of distance from the centre, health, caring or employment responsibilities, might benefit from being able to attend meetings remotely.

The Measure requires that, for a remotely attended meeting to be quorate, a certain proportion of councillors must be in actual attendance at the meeting. Should this be disturbed by members in actual attendance at the main

meeting place leaving the meeting before it is finished, bringing about a higher than permitted proportion of councillors attending remotely, the chair would have no choice but to close the meeting.

Standing orders should also make provision about what should happen if a technical difficulty results in the breakdown of the communications facility. Such occurrences are not unknown in video conferenced meetings. If this occurred, it is the Welsh Government's view that the chair should declare a recess while the fault is addressed. If necessary, the meeting would have to be abandoned and the meeting should not continue without the involvement of the remote members. Standing orders could, however, make different provision for different types of meetings etc, for example that a meeting taking an urgent decision or one which is time-limited, might either not be allowed to take place with remote attendees or that the meeting would proceed in the event of a communications failure, so that those attending remotely would be aware and accept that the meeting would continue and a vote would be taken without their attendance in the event of a communications failure.

Finally, there is the issue of voting. Local authorities will have to build into standing orders arrangements to provide for voting to take place simultaneously at the main and remote location(s). The counting of the votes can be performed by the chair of the meeting as he/she will have to be able to see all members voting. There may be difficulties for any council which has introduced electronic voting systems. Unless technology can be introduced to allow for electronic voting at remote locations, it is anticipated that a show of hands would be required at each location to prevent unfair treatment of those at remote locations, i.e. it would be seen which way they voted, which would not be the case for those voting electronically.

This is draft guidance for consultation purposes. Your comments are invited on the matters addressed above and any other issue which you feel needs to be addressed within this guidance.

**Aelod Cabinet dros Gofal Cwsmer;
Democratiaeth a Chyfreithiol; Y Gymraeg •
Cabinet Member for Customer Care;
Democracy and Legal; Welsh
YCynghorydd / Councillor
Ioan Thomas**

The Scrutiny, Democracy and Participation Team
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

20 August 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE:

CONSULTATION: REMOTE ATTENDANCE OF MEETINGS

Statutory Guidelines issued under Section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2011.

Gwynedd Council's Response

A discussion was held on the consultation document Remote Attendance of Meetings at a meeting of Gwynedd Council's Democratic Services Committee on 4 June, 2013. Subsequently, all of the Council's elected members were invited to submit their observations on the consultation document. This response submits a summary of all the observations received.

Generally, due to the substantial size of the county of Gwynedd, and the time it takes to travel from one end of the county to the other, we agree with the intention of the amendments in section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2011 to include the possibility of the remote attendance of meetings. However, there is some concern regarding the risk of losing the atmosphere of meetings and the intensity of discussions by not being present in the principal location of any meeting.


Despite the general support for this proposal, there are some concerns regarding the practicality of implementing the requirements, specifically:


The right to see and hear

In order to ensure equality for elected members who are part of a meeting, along with members of the public who attend meetings, any member who wishes to remotely attend a meeting should be able to:

- Be seen and heard by the members who attend the meeting in its principal location
- See and hear those members who are in the principal location of the meeting
- Hear and be heard by other members who are remotely attending
- Be seen and heard by any member of the public who has a right to attend the meeting

Strade
65 Cae Gwyn
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1LL

 01286 673828

 07810 648647

**Aelod Cabinet dros Gofal Cwsmer;
Democratiaeth a Chyfreithiol; Y Gymraeg •
Cabinet Member for Customer Care;
Democracy and Legal; Welsh
YCynghorydd / Councillor**

Ioan Thomas

It is acknowledged that realising this poses a technical challenge, and that a good quality technical system is required, and this of course will have financial implications. On the grounds of the above, in using video conferencing to enable the remote attendance of meeting, it is believed that the following circumstances are not suitable:

- When there are a substantial number of members and officers present as the equipment does not allow for every one to be seen, such as full Council meetings, planning committee meetings and scrutiny committee meetings.
- when the public are present

Training and support for the remote attendance of meetings

In the consultation document, the need for training for those officers who could remotely attend a meeting is acknowledged in order to assist them with the requirements of the legislation in addition to dealing with any practical matters. However, it is believed that it is crucially important to secure the appropriate training for the Chairs of any meetings of committees that permit remote attendance also, in order to ensure that those meetings can be held effectively, and that those members who remotely attend receive a fair hearing and are able to contribute fully. In addition to training, it is believed that there is a need to change the culture and mindset of officers and elected members in order to implement the request for the remote attendance of meetings.

It should be noted that officer support would only be available to members wishing to use the remote attendance facility in the Local Authority's locations, and not in any location the elected members may choose to exercise their right to remote attendance i.e. not in the personal property of any member.


Information Technology and Communication Policy


It is acknowledged that some circumstances will arise where the technology is unreliable that could lead to loss of connection with the meeting in the principal locations. Under such circumstances, a clear protocol will need to be followed, that will enable the meeting to continue despite the absence of any member who wishes to use the remote attendance facility. Clear and firm procedural rules will be required along with the understanding of the chairs and all members (regardless of the means of attendance) of the implications of implementing this.

Translation

In the consultation document it is acknowledged that there is a need to recognise equality between the Welsh and the English languages when considering remote attendance of meetings on the one hand, and on the other hand it is noted that Welsh speakers who view the broadcast from another location will be required to listen to an English translation of the discussions being held in Welsh. This does not display linguistic equality neither does it correspond to the commitments made in the Local Authorities' Language Plans.

Strade
65 Cae Gwyn
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1LL

 01286 673828

 07810 648647

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Democratiaeth a Chyfreithiol; Y Gymraeg •
Cabinet Member for Customer Care;
Democracy and Legal; Welsh
YCynghorydd / Councillor
Ioan Thomas**

The Welsh Government needs to consider and acknowledge the complexity of providing a translation service when remote attendance is available. When meetings with remote attendance are held within Council offices it is possible to provide translation in all locations, thus ensuring linguistic equality. Nevertheless, consideration must be given to the resources investment (equipment and staff) needed to provide translation for one meeting that is held in a number of locations simultaneously, especially when resources are diminishing.

It is suggested that the Welsh Government should strengthen the need for Local Authorities to meet the commitments of their Language Plans in the most appropriate way by enabling the remote attendance of meetings, and that this facility should not be made available under circumstances where the Authority would not comply with the commitments of its Language Plan. It is acknowledged in reference to this that Gwynedd Council's situation might possibly be unique as Welsh is the Council's official language of administration.

These observations are submitted in a constructive manner by supporting the basic principle and the intention of enabling the remote attendance of meetings for members. The obstacles to overcome are:


- The right to see and hear
- Training
- ITC
- Translation


It is also acknowledged that Local Authorities have a long way to go to achieve the aim in terms of the resources that are available, the technology, and the change of culture and mindset required in order to enable the effective remote attendance of meetings, which promotes democracy, participation and equality for all.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ioan Thomas
Customer Care Cabinet Member
Gwynedd Council

Strade
65 Cae Gwyn
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1LL

 01286 673828

 07810 648647

MEETING OF	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	10 September 2013
SUBJECT	Annual Reports by Elected Members
PURPOSE	To learn lessons from the members' experience of producing Annual Reports this year
AUTHOR	Geraint George, Head of Democratic Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Democratic Services Committee is already aware that the Local Government Bill (Wales) 2011 notes that:

A local authority must make arrangements for:

- each person who is a member of the authority to make an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the authority during the year to which the report relates,
- each person who is a member of the authority's executive to make an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the executive during the year to which the report relates, and
- the authority to publish all annual reports produced by its members and by the members of its executive.

- 1.2 The purpose of the Annual Reports by Elected Members is to improve communication between Elected Members and the public. The Minister for Local Government said that the reports will be a means of improving the public's understanding of what local members do and the important role that they have and will enable the public to discover information about the activity of their local councillor.

2. ACTION TAKEN

- 2.1 Following a discussion on the matter at the Democratic Services Committee on 19 March 2013, correspondence was sent to every member on 8 April 2013:
- reporting on the committee's decision to undertake a pilot of the arrangement for 2012/13
 - noting that any member is entitled to produce an annual report
 - asking members to state their intention to produce a report; and
 - notifying members that more detailed guidelines would follow.
- 2.2 In a meeting of this Committee it was agreed that there would be an opportunity for any member to produce a report, but for 2012/13 the Cabinet Member for Customer Care and the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee would produce an annual report in order to guide the remainder of the Council members to produce their report for 2013/14 onwards.

3. GWYNEDD ANNUAL REPORTS 2012/13

3.1 In accordance with the arrangement noted above, annual reports were received by eight elected members in Gwynedd for 2012/13; one member of the executive and seven front line members, namely:

- Ioan Thomas
- Lesley Day
- Elwyn Edwards
- Selwyn Griffiths
- June Marshall
- Mair Rowlands
- Angella Russell
- Eirwyn Thomas

3.2 The annual reports of these members have been published on the Council's website, and up to now the annual reports' web page has received a total of 119 hits.

Data is also available for the number of people who have opened the pdf documents on the annual reports page, and on the individual page of every councillor. The data shows that the number that has been opened varies from 9 for one member to 50 for the member who has received the highest number of hits.

3.3 The Communication Unit would like to draw attention to the fact that changes to the cookies system mean that the figures appear to be slightly lower than they are in reality i.e. if the individual who visits the website does not accept cookies the visit is not recorded on the Council's systems.

3.4 In addition to this, detailed analysis of the figures noted above are not available, therefore it is difficult to interpret their value, particularly in terms of justifying the original intention of the annual report, namely to improve the public's understanding of what their local member is trying to achieve.

4. THE SITUATION ACROSS WALES

4.1 Comparative data regarding the number of annual reports which have already been published is limited, and information about the situation of other local authorities across Wales that is available is presented below:

LOCAL AUTHORITY	NUMBER OF ANNUAL REPORTS	% OF ALL COUNCILLORS
Caerphilly	73	100%
Conwy	15	25%
Gwynedd	8	11%
Bridgend	27	50%

- 4.2 A number of Local Authorities are yet to publish their annual reports, therefore the data presented above is a small sample.
- 4.3 Due to the size of the sample noted above along with the lack of information on the data's context i.e. what type of expectations were set as well as what type of guidance and what level of support was given to elected members to publish their annual reports; nothing more can be done except present this data as it is not possible to consider this further and draw significant comparisons between the sample and Gwynedd.

5. LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

- 5.1 Given that this is the first time elected members have been required to produce and publish annual reports, lessons need to be learnt from this initial experience.
- 5.2 A short questionnaire has already been distributed to eight elected members asking:
1. How easy was the process of producing the report?
 2. Did you feel that you had received enough guidance and support?
 3. Have you seen the value of producing such a report?
 4. Have you used the report or its contents in your ward work in any way?
 5. In the future do you think preparing a standard template for each councillor to follow would be useful?
- 5.3 Initial messages from these questionnaires generally suggest that:
1. the process of drawing up these reports has been relatively easy on the whole having received guidance before hand.
 2. the guidance and support that was given was sufficient on the whole.
 3. the process of producing the annual reports had highlighted the importance of retaining a record of events.
 4. no extensive use has been made of the reports thus far.
 5. a template would be useful but not necessary.
- 5.4 It is also suggested that there is a need to gain an understanding of the mindset of those members who decided not to draw up an annual report this year, and if they were to draw up annual reports in the future, what type of support would they need to achieve the aim.
- 5.5 The initial data of other Local Authorities across Wales relating to the number of annual reports that were published, possibly reflect the variation in terms of what the different counties expected of the elected members. In addition, it shows the variety in the level of support and guidance that was available to the elected members when producing and publishing their annual reports in different counties across Wales.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended:

- to hold discussions with the elected members who did not publish annual reports this year to identify what support and guidance they would need to publish annual reports in 2013/14

- to submit a report in the next Democratic Services Committee following these discussions, including clear and definite recommendations that would facilitate the process of enabling elected members to draw up and publish annual reports in 2013/14.

MEETING OF	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	10 September 2013
SUBJECT	Information for Members
PURPOSE	To submit the members' feedback on <i>Rhaeadr</i> and to discuss methods of communicating with elected members.
AUTHOR	Geraint George, Head of Democratic Services

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The way in which elected members access information needs to be considered in order to be able to fulfil their roles successfully. To meet this need, *Rhaeadr* was established as an easy to use information portal for members to access regularly.
- 1.2 It is now timely to consider the use made of *Rhaeadr* as well as other methods of disseminating information to members whilst also considering other methods of collecting observations and responses from members on various topics.

2. PRESENTING INFORMATION THROUGH RHAEADR

- 2.1 In August 2013, the Council's Communication Officer contacted elected members directly over the phone in order to receive feedback from them on *Rhaeadr*.
- 2.2 The observations received about *Rhaeadr* represent a sample of 28% of all the Council's elected members.
- 2.3 From the whole sample, the main messages received about *Rhaeadr* are presented below:
 - 29% of members questioned felt that *Rhaeadr* was easy to use
 - 29% of members questioned used *Rhaeadr* regularly
 - 29% of members questioned felt that the information on *Rhaeadr* was concise and useful and were satisfied with the content
 - 14% of members questioned wanted more timely information about things going on in their local wards
 - 10% of members questioned were keen to receive training on how to use *Rhaeadr* on the iPad
 - 19% of members questioned stated that they did not use *Rhaeadr*
- 2.4 It is concluded from the information above that the elected members, on the whole, felt that *Rhaeadr* was useful in terms of presenting information to them.

3. RECEIVING OBSERVATIONS AND/OR RESPONSES THROUGH RHAEADR

- 3.1 However, evidence shows that *Rhaeadr* is not as successful to seek observations and/or responses from elected members on any particular topic. Recent experience has shown that responses to such requests are received very rarely.
- 3.2 This raised doubts regarding the suitability of *Rhaeadr* as a medium to seek observations and responses, despite being an acceptable medium to present information.
- 3.3 Therefore, consideration needs to be given to the best way of seeking observations and responses from elected members in future.

4. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

- 4.1 A questionnaire has been drawn up for elected members involving several different matters including communication.
- 4.2 It is intended to use this questionnaire to receive information from members regarding any problems or difficulties they have in terms of communication.
- 4.3 Consideration needs to be given to the best way of ensuring responses from the members to this questionnaire, in order to ensure comprehensive feedback which will convey clear messages regarding the future communication needs of members.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:-
 - a) gives guidance on any further developments for *Rhaeadr*
 - b) gives guidance regarding the next steps that should be taken in terms of looking at methods of receiving observations and/or responses from elected members
 - c) gives guidance regarding the best methods of receiving responses from elected members to the questionnaire that has been drawn up for them.