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

Cyfarfod / Meeting

**PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD**  
**DEMOCRATIC SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Dyddiad ac Amser / Date and Time

**10.00 a.m. DYDD MAWRTH, 18 MAWRTH, 2014**

**10.00 a.m. TUESDAY, 18 MARCH, 2014**

Lleoliad / Location

**SIAMBR HYWEL DDA**  
**SWYDDFEYDD Y CYNGOR/COUNCIL OFFICES**  
**CAERNARFON**

***\*Noder y man cyfarfod os gwelwch yn dda/Please note the venue\****

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Dosbarthwyd/Distributed 10.3.14

**PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD  
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**AELODAETH / MEMBERSHIP (15)**

**Plaid Cymru (7)**

Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors

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

**Annibynnol / Independent (4)**

Y Cynghorwyr / Councillors

Lesley Day	Tom Ellis
Jean Forsyth	Anne Lloyd-Jones

**Llais Gwynedd (3)**

Anwen Davies	Jason Humphreys	Gweno Glyn
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**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 / Councillors Huw Edwards a / and Dewi Owen

## **AGENDA**

### **1. APOLOGIES**

To receive any 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 11 December, 2013 be signed as a true record (copy herewith – **yellow** paper)

### **5. REVIEWING THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION**

To consider the report of the Monitoring Officer, (copy herewith – **blue** paper)

### **6. WEB-CASTING**

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, (copy herewith – **pink** paper)

### **7. WEBSITES FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, (copy herewith – **cream** paper)

### **8. ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS**

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, (copy herewith – **lilac** paper)

### **9. ACCESSIBILITY OF THE COUNCIL'S HEADQUARTERS**

To consider the report of the Senior Manager - Corporate Property, (copy herewith – **green** paper)

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## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE, 11.12.13

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**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, Michael Sol Owen, Gareth Thomas.

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Customer Care).

**Officers:** Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service) and Ioan Hughes (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**Apologies:** Councillors Annwen Davies, Jason Humphreys, Dilwyn Lloyd, Dilwyn Morgan, Mandy Williams-Davies.

### 1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

The following members declared that they were members of town/community councils in relation to item 8 on the agenda, (Websites for Town and Community Councils):

Councillors: Lesley Day, Thomas G. Ellis, Jean Forsyth, Evan Selwyn Griffiths, Anne Lloyd Jones, Michael Sol Owen, Gareth Thomas and Ioan Ceredig Thomas.

It was confirmed that they did not need to deal with this as a 'personal interest'.

### 2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 10 September, 2013 as a true record.

### 3. RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MEMBERS' WORK

(a) Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services – Strategic and Improvement updating the Committee on the resources that were in place and to consider the main matters that required addressing in order to plan resources for the future.

(b) Reference was made to the challenging financial situation that must be faced over the coming years. In general, the Head of Department was of the opinion that the Service, to date, had succeeded to meet the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2011. However, he noted that they should continue to give consideration to being more efficient and achieving more with fewer resources.

(c) Within the 'Designated Persons Order' the Welsh Government would place a new duty on Local Authorities to scrutinise providers of other public services in their area. In response to an enquiry, it was noted that they had not received definite guidelines to date.

(ch) In terms of providing information for members, a request was made for timely information regarding the meetings of the Planning Committee to be included on 'Rhaeadr', since this did not always happen due to the timing of the distribution.

(d) A member expressed a view that they should focus on front line services rather than scrutinise other service providers if the Welsh Government would not provide financial support.

The member added that the matter of the accessibility of the Council's buildings should have been considered years ago.

(dd) In response to an enquiry about work costs, it was noted that the number of core staff was included in the appendix and that the cost of staff salaries was £286,000, with members' salaries and expenses totalling £1.4 million. Also noted was the need to try and have balance between ensuring efficiency and the emphasis on ensuring savings. The members were called on to contact the officers to submit any suggestions where the support for members could be reduced, and therefore the cost.

(e) In relation to the main activities and the support for members, it was noted that a link would be effective when sending information about reports via e-mail. A member also noted that there was particular value to the training provided for members, such as seminars on planning.

**RESOLVED to accept and note the contents of the report.**

#### **4. SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL**

(a) Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services along with the initial draft of a social media policy for councillors.

(b) The policy document offered guidance to councillors on the use of social media. Following a further meeting of the established Task Group, it was aimed to provide a second draft and consult thoroughly with all the Council members through 'Rhaeadr'.

(c) The Public Services Ombudsman had accepted that criticising ideas and opinion was part of a democratic debate. However, it was noted in the initial draft protocol that the 'Gwynedd Standard' stated clearly that individuals should not behave in an insulting or disparaging manner even in these 'political' debates. This was endorsed by the members of this Committee and they emphasised that members should adhere to the value of 'respect', which was considered an essential basis for the Council's work.

(ch) The members were invited to submit observations. They agreed that the draft protocol offered a good starting point to consult upon, and they made the following main points:-

- It should be noted that the Protocol was for the whole of Gwynedd;
- Members should be aware that they should not state anything through social media that they would be unwilling to state in a letter or verbally;
- Upon adopting the protocol, training should be prepared for members so that they could avoid pitfalls when using social media;
- There was a clear responsibility on the Council to encourage people to take an active part in local democracy – misconduct on social media militated against this;
- There was a need to think hard what the ‘penalty’ of not complying with the protocol was, and of failing to attend training on it;
- Members were councillors at all times and they should be aware of standards of conduct even when establishing and running sites in their own names.

**RESOLVED to accept the report and convey the observations made on the initial draft protocol for the attention of the Task Group.**

## 5. WEBCASTING

(a) Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services.

(b) It was explained that a grant that would be sufficient for about two years had been received, and that preliminary work had highlighted:-

- the need for detailed planning in advance, which crucially allowed enough time to trial the system before it became live;
- the importance of minimising the work involved with ‘running’ the system when a meeting was underway;
- the need to raise members’ awareness of the sensitivity of such systems.

(c) A member noted the need to deal with simultaneous translation as there were some meetings where translation for the members was not required. It was considered that the situation with regard to the system’s non-Welsh language stream should be assessed once the system was operational.

(e) In response to enquiries by members, it was noted:-

- That the cameras used in Siambr Dafydd Orwig for a short while some time ago had been a pilot scheme by Aberystwyth University, and that they were no longer in operation;
- That the cameras and audio equipment had been installed by the Council, and that the only cost would be to upload everything on the web;
- That no recordings of any meetings would be edited in any way, and neither did this happen at present with recording sound when meetings were recorded;
- Some meetings would need to be prioritised for webcasting based on the likely interest in the matters to be discussed;

- That consideration would be given to the problems experienced with echo in Siambr Hywel Dda;
- There was no intention to end the procedure of holding the Planning Committee meetings in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd as well as in Caernarfon;
- Social media and the Council's website would be methods of providing information regarding what would be broadcast;
- Meetings would be broadcast live, but there would be an archive available for the public to turn to;
- That work was being carried out on reducing administrative costs and the situation could be reviewed when the opening contract with a broadcasting company ended;
- There was no hope of holding discussions with the Assembly with regard to increasing the amount of grant released;
- The identification card system which was available in Siambr Dafydd Orwig would be valuable;
- The system would ensure better connection with the public;
- Other councils' experience showed that meetings ran more smoothly, with debates being more concise since the webcasting system had been established;
- With the system in place, the camera would point at the person speaking at the time;
- Arrangements needed to be made to trial the system.

**RESOLVED to continue to support the introduction of webcasting, subject to adequate funding, and request a report back to the next meeting on the detailed work plan for its introduction.**

## **6. WEBSITES FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

(a) Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services outlining the response of Town and Community Councils to receiving a grant of up to £500 to develop a website.

(b) With options of establishing an individual website or a joint website under consideration, it was seen that 10 had stated that they were not interested and nine had not responded.

(c) It was noted that there had been a change in relation to the uncertainty with regard to releasing a grant to councils who had established their own websites. In order to ensure that every council was aware of the latest situation, it was suggested that the Council could contact the 19 Councils who had either stated that they were not interested in the offer or who had not responded at all again, giving them a further opportunity to apply for the grant.

### **RESOLVED:**

**a) that the Economy Department contacts once again the 19 Councils who have either stated that they are not interested in the offer or who have not responded at all, giving them a further opportunity to apply for the grant;**



**b) to continue to support the work of facilitating the development of a web presence for Town and Community Councils, and to receive an update on the numbers who have applied for the grant at the next meeting of this Committee on 18 March, 2014.**

## **7. ANNUAL REPORTS BY ELECTED MEMBERS**

(a) Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services.

(b) It was noted that no pressure was being put on members to provide annual reports. However, as encouragement and support for members to prepare these reports, it was suggested that a standard template could be provided as a starting point for the work.

(c) It was noted that eight reports had been submitted last year and that they could be of assistance. It was added that observations about officers were made in them in a respectful manner.

(ch) A member noted that it was frustrating at times to record the information regarding the meetings or training they had attended, and that it would be beneficial if such information was provided for them.

(d) In order to avoid any suggestion of putting pressure on members, another member suggested that members should be asked before hand whether they were considering providing a report, with the template being sent to them as required.

(dd) In terms of the response given to the reports, it was noted that the total number of responses on the website was 119, and that these varied from 9 to 50 per individual report.

### **RESOLVED:-**

**a) to accept the proposal of creating a template to include data about the number of committee meetings attended and the number of training sessions attended by each individual councillor as a way of supporting members to prepare annual reports in 2013/14**

**b) that a request is made for members to note whether they intend to complete a report, and that the template is then offered to all members so that they can consider whether they are going to prepare a report or not.**

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.50am.

MEETING	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
DATE	18 MARCH 2014
SUBJECT	REVIEWING THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION
AUTHOR	DILYS PHILLIPS, MONITORING OFFICER
PURPOSE	To take the Committee's views on amendments to the Constitution

## Introduction

1. In reporting on revisions to the Constitution to the full Council on 2 May 2013, it was explained that work was in progress under the auspices of the association which represents Monitoring Officers in Wales, with the support of the Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Government, to draw up a standard constitution for the Welsh unitary authorities.
2. The motivation for this work was the fact that every council in Wales now operates executive arrangements (Leader and Cabinet), and that significant differences are appearing between the legal requirements in Wales compared with those in England as a result of Welsh Government legislation.
3. The standard Constitution is now ready and it is timely to consider adopting it. The Constitution still allows for local variations from council to council, but the hope is that it will provide better consistency in interpretation of the Constitution across Wales and that the format of the document will be easier to understand.
4. The role of reviewing and assessing the Authority's arrangements for corporate governance and making recommendations on the sufficiency and effectiveness of those arrangements rests with the Audit Committee. It is considered that the Council's Constitution and its contents are an integral part of the Council's arrangements for good corporate governance, and that the appropriate committee to consider the constitutional document was therefore the Audit Committee. The right to adopt the Constitution rests with the full Council.
5. The Audit Committee established a Working Group of seven members to undertake the task and the Working Group has met three times with another two meetings programmed. The Working Group adopted a working method which meant that they considered different sections of the Constitution in detail in every meeting, having sought the views of and consulted with relevant stakeholders (e.g. various committees, the Leader).

6. Wherever possible, the Working Group has retained the Council's current governance arrangements and few changes of significance will be recommended although the format of the Constitution is quite different to the present one. Where there are changes which depart significantly from current arrangements, members will need to be informed of these before the Council meeting on 1 May and the Working Group decided that this should be achieved through the area forums.
7. At its next meeting the Working Group will consider the sections of the Constitution which deal with the powers and operation of the full Council together with the rules on members' rights to access to information. To assist it in its deliberations, the Working Group wishes to receive the views of members of this Committee on the following matters.

### **Matters for consideration**

8. Legislation now allows for the separation of the civic role of the Council Chair from the work of presiding at meetings of the Council by creating two posts – the Civic Chair and the Presiding Member. Both posts qualify for a senior salary but both would count towards the quota. What is the Committee's view on including this provision in the Constitution?
9. The new rules of procedure contain a clause imposing a time limit on meetings of the full Council e.g. 3 hours. Does the Committee consider this to be advantageous?
10. Legislation allows members to join committees via video link ("remote attendance") and a procedure rule is required to comply with this. Does the Committee agree that the ability of members to attend remotely should be confined to some committees only and that a failure of technology should not invalidate a vote on any matter?
11. The new rules of procedure require a motion to dismiss the Council Leader to be signed by 15% of members including members from at least two political groups, and that a majority of two thirds is required for the resolution to pass. What is the Committee's view on this?
12. The Committee's view is sought on the new arrangement whereby a Cabinet Member presents a report in front of the Council and responds to questions on it (e.g. the budget report).
13. The new rules of procedure allow questions from members of the public at meetings of the full Council, within strict conditions such as the question to

be submitted in advance, a time limit and a limit on the content of questions. Is the Committee supportive of such arrangements?

14. The new rules of procedure propose a rule allowing filming and the use of social media at meetings of the Council and its committees. What is the Committee's view on this?
15. Legislation now allows members to be absent for family reasons i.e. maternity absence or absence to care for young children. In practical terms this means that periods of family absence will not count towards the 6 month absence period which leads to a member being disqualified, that the salary remains payable and that permission is required for the member to undertake any duties during the family absence. A procedure rule will be required to deal with this situation. Does the Committee have a view on the contents of such a rule?
16. The access to information procedure rules require one forward work programme for the Cabinet, the Scrutiny Committees and the Council. Does the Committee have any comment on the value of such a forward work programme and how it should be created?
17. No changes are proposed to the procedure for decisions by individual Cabinet Members – a procedure which involves consultation with local members on the proposal producing a report or a draft decision notice, allowing a three day period for consultation with the chairs of the scrutiny committees and then publishing the decision notice on the web. Does the Committee have any comment on the suitability of this procedure?
18. Council members have a right of access to information which are in addition to the rights of the public. The arrangements include an appeal process which mean that a member who is dissatisfied with any department's refusal to release information can ask the Monitoring Officer to adjudicate on the matter and, if he/she remains dissatisfied, refer the matter to Cabinet for decision. Is the Committee of the opinion that this procedure remains suitable?

### **Recommendation**

19. The Committee is asked to submit a view on the matters discussed in paragraphs 8 – 18 above together with any other matter it wishes to convey to the Working Group reviewing the Constitution.

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>18 March, 2014</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Web-casting</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>To present the latest information on web-casting developments</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Geraint George Head of Democratic Services</b>

## **BACKGROUND**

1. At the last meeting of this Committee, an update on discussions regarding the introduction of web-casting to the Council was submitted. The Committee decided “to continue to support the introduction of webcasting, subject to adequate funding, and request a report back to the next meeting on the detailed work plan for its introduction.”

2. The purpose of this report is to present the proposed work programme for introducing the system and also to report on the latest situation with regard to funding arrangements.

## **THE WORK PROGRAMME**

3. Here is the proposed work programme for introducing the system:-

<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
End of March 2014	Receipt of final tenders on proposals for the submission of web-casting services for the Council
End of April 2014	Award of a two year contract for the successful company
May to September 2014	Period of piloting including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A demonstration for committee members and others</li> <li>• Training sessions on the system for members and officers</li> <li>• Testing by recording meeting without their broadcast</li> </ul>
September to December 2014	Broadcasting meetings of the full Council and Planning Committee (when that meeting is in Caernarfon)
January 2015 onwards	Implementing a full programme of broadcasting the following regular meetings:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full Council</li> <li>• Planning Committee (when that meeting is in Caernarfon)</li> </ul> Reviewing the work programme for the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees to use the remainder of the Council’s web-casting “hours” Considering whether there are any specific issues about which the Council would like to web-cast – eg very important messages

September 2015	Starting the process of regular review of the use of the service in order to start to assess its continuation at the end of the current contract
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NB It should be noted, during this period, that we will be starting to offer members the opportunity for “remote attendance” at some committee meetings by video-link between meetings in Siambr Dafydd Orwig and Siambr Hywel Dda and the Dolgellau and Pwllheli offices

#### **FUNDING THE DVELEOPMENT**

4. The Welsh Government Grant is likely to be enough for the two year contract but we have also identified a potential funding budget that could be used if a decision is made, post review, that it offers value for money.

#### **RESPONSE**

5. The Committee’s views are sought on the proposals for the work programme and the funding arrangements.

<b>MEETING OF</b>	Democratic Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	18 March 2014
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Websites for Town and Community Councils
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To submit an update on the scheme to support Town and Community Councils to develop a website.
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Geraint George, Head of Democratic Services

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In 2013/14 the Welsh Government provided funds to enable Local Authorities to provide a grant of £500 each to Town and Community Councils to establish a website.
- 1.2 The purpose of this grant was to assist Town and Community Councils to prepare for the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Measure. This Measure includes a provision which requires Town and Community Councils to publish information on a website; the purpose of this grant is to enable them to meet this requirement.
- 1.3 In order to achieve this, Gwynedd Council signed a grant agreement with the Welsh Government. This grant was £32,000 for issuing grants of up to £500 each for the county's Town and Community Councils to establish a website.

## **2. UPDATE ON THE TIMETABLE AND THE FUNDING SITUATION**

- 2.1 On 5 February 2014, correspondence was received by the Welsh Government confirming that Lesley Griffiths AM, the Minister for Local Government and Government Business has agreed to allow any funds received for web casting council meetings, remote attendance and websites for Town and Community Councils to carry over into the 2014/15 financial year.
- 2.2 The Welsh Government acknowledges that progress with regards to developing websites for some community councils has been slow. Therefore permitting the funds to carry over, allows the opportunity for further flexibility to enable them to better prepare for the requirement upon them to have a website once the appropriate sections of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Measure 2013 will come into force, as intended in 2015.

## **3. UPDATE ON THE GRANT IN GWYNEDD**

- 3.1 In July, the Town and Community Councils were invited to express an interest in receiving a grant of up to £500 to develop a website. As the sum available is comparatively low, it was resolved to offer two options, namely:

- a) Option 1  
Council to establish an individual website, committing to maintain the website for a minimum of three years.
- b) Option 2  
Work with other Town and Community Councils in the county to set up a new joint website that would include a section for every individual Council with a joint commitment to maintain the website for a minimum of three years.

**3.2 Option 1**

It was resolved that Cist Gwynedd would administrate the grant process for developing Town and Community Council websites in Gwynedd.

3.3 In September, further clarity was received from the Welsh Government that Town and Community Councils would be able to use the grant for the following purposes:

- a) create a new website
- b) develop an existing website

3.4 In November 2013, application forms by Cist Gwynedd were sent to those Town and Community Councils which expressed an interest in Option 1; 26 Town and Community Councils in total; with the closing date for the application process on 10 January 2014.

3.5 16 applications by Town and Community Councils have been received up to now, and of these applications it is foreseen that the majority will have fulfilled the requirement of having a website by the end of July 2014.

**3.6 Option 2**

The IT Unit, in the Customer Care Department is leading on Option 2 in collaboration with the Democratic Services Department.

3.7 The intention of the IT Unit is to create a brief and invite providers to submit applications in response to the brief by mid April 2014; and then determining the successful applicant by beginning of May 2014.

3.8 The successful applicant will be expected to collaborate with Town and Community Councils to establish a joint website and convene a meeting with them in June 2014; the exact date to be confirmed.

3.9 Correspondence has been sent to Town and Community Councils informing them of the above intentions and timetable for Option 2.

**4. RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:-

- a) continues to support the work of facilitating the development of a website for Town and Community Councils during 2014/15.



<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>18 March, 2014</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Engagement with Members</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>To report on recent discussions and initial proposals on improving engagement with members</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Geraint George Head of Democratic Services</b>

## **BACKGROUND**

1. Improving communications and engagement with members has been identified by this committee and other forums as a subject requiring attention for some time.

2. In line with the promise given at this committee, a consultation was held about the Council's engagement arrangements in general (that is an issue for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee) and also on engagement with councillors, that is part of that broader picture (that is a matter for this committee).

3. The response to the questionnaire was a little disappointing in terms of numbers but the main messages that came out of that consultation were:-

- Members' views on the way in which the Council engages with the public and with members - 6 out of 10
- Generally good collaboration with members but it is inconsistent
- A failure to use members' local knowledge effectively
- There is a real need to make proper use of councillors in the dialogue with the public that is going to be harder over the coming years

4. In addition, two workshops were held with members (in Porthmadog and Bethel) to address the issues more fully. At those workshops, several suggestions were made to improve arrangements.

5. The remainder of the report addresses the different main issues and our initial proposals in response to those needs.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS**

6. There is an appreciation of Rhaeadr as a means to share information but there was a view that a simpler set-up similar to that of the Welsh Local Government Association bulletin would be better – We plan to review Rhaeadr with that in mind

7. Departments arrangements for contacting members when work is happening or is planned within their wards **must** be improved.– We plan to talk to Heads of

Departments to identify what are the obstacles to that happening to establish new arrangements or improve on what is in place.

8. Sending every press release to every councillor for information would help in sharing information – using the tablets for doing so would cost nothing – We plan to distribute a link to every pro-active press release, starting that immediately

### **COUNCILLOR CENTRED**

9. Councillors have an important role in bridging between the Council and the people of Gwynedd by being able to receive and share information with their electorates on behalf of the Council, as well as transferring messages back from their electorates for consideration by the Council.

10. To enable Councillors to implement this role effectively, a joint understanding needs to be established between officers and councillors about the role, and the advantages of implementing that role for the Councillor and the Council. As a first step, it is intended to hold discussions with the Council's Management Group based on the main messages of the 2 workshops held, and following that, consideration will be given to the possibility of bringing councillors and officers together to hold further discussions and to jointly plan any further steps.

### **THE AREA FORUMS**

11. At the meeting of the full Council on 28th February, 2014, it was decided to move to a system of Area Forums after the Annual Meeting in May, 2013. However, it was noted in the debate that this should be reviewed again in a year.

12. By the end of the year, the four Area Forums will have met on 5 occasions, including one being a special session to discuss the proposed content of the Strategic Plan for 2014/15 and an information session on re-cycling and composting.

13. It is fair to say that the experience of the four areas has been different with different agendas and also different attendance levels in each area.

14. There will be a discussion at the next meetings of the individual Area Forums to collect members' views on the future of the area forums now that the first year is coming to an end. In addition, we also plan to use Rhaeadr to seek the views of all members in order to get the views of those members who have not been attending the forums.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

15. The Committee's views are sought on the above proposals.

<b>MEETING:</b>	Democratic Services Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	18 March, 2014
<b>TITLE:</b>	Accessibility of the Council's Headquarters
<b>AUTHOR:</b>	Dafydd Gibbard, Senior Manager - Corporate Property
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Adopt the programme of further improvements to improve access to the Council's Headquarters .

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 For many years the Council has invested in its buildings to improve accessibility and to conform with the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010.
- 1.2 Our main public buildings have already seen improvements such as automatic doors, accessible toilets etc.
- 1.3 Recently a substantial investment was made to establish a new One Stop Shop which not only offers better provision generally for our customers but also to be an integral part of our access strategy for visitors. It offers an accessible entrance, appropriate welcome desk, accessible interview rooms and an accessible toilet.
- 1.4 However, it has been obvious for some time that further work will be needed to improve accessibility in other areas in the main offices in Caernarfon for the benefit of staff, Members and the public.

## **2.0 CURRENT SITUATION**

- 2.1 A detailed survey was commissioned into every aspect of accessibility in the main offices, concentrating mainly on all the areas that visitors would use i.e. One Stop Shop, Dafydd Orwig Chamber, Hywel Dda Chamber, the meeting rooms on the first floor of the Headquarters and the two present Members' Lounges.
- 2.2 A specialist company was appointed to assist with this work. Access All Areas is a company which advises public and private institutions throughout the Country on how to conform with the statutory accessibility requirements. They have extensive experience in the field and they have personal experience of the accessibility challenges that face people with disabilities.
- 2.3 After receiving their comprehensive report, their recommendations were discussed on with Councillor Peter Read who gave advice and direction on some of the matters noted. Following the consultation a final list of improvements were agreed as seen in Appendix A.
- 2.4 Finance has already been identified in the Asset Management Plan for programming these improvements over a period of two years.
- 2.5 The report has also identified one area that needs specific attention. At present there are two Members' Lounges near the Dafydd Orwig Chamber. The Lounge on the first floor is accessible as there is a lift nearby. The Lounge on the lower floor is not accessible at all. Substantial adaptations would need to be made in order to allow accessible access which would cost around £40,000.
- 2.6 Use of both Lounges is comparatively rare, especially the lower floor lounge. The Members' post boxes are in this Lounge and it has better tea and coffee facilities.
- 2.7 Because there is not accessible access to these facilities at present, the Council is discriminating against any Member with disabilities.

- 2.8 This can be remedied either by identifying revenue to fund the adaptations at a cost of £40,000 or by designating the Lounge on the first floor as the main Members' room and relocating the post boxes to it together with the better tea and coffee facilities.
- 2.9 As this Lounge is a much more pleasant room than the one on the lower floor, it would seem that this change would be a much better use of resources than searching for revenue for the adaptations.
- 2.10 This would not mean that the room on the lower floor would be lost. It would continue to be available for Members' use. On days when there aren't any committee meetings, the space is used occasionally by staff for informal meetings. There is likely to be an opportunity to formalise this if Members make more use of the lounge on the first floor in its new form. This would not be possible on committee days, of course.

### **3.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1 As a public body, the Council has a statutory and moral duty to ensure that we make our buildings as accessible as possible and that we do not discriminate against disabled people.
- 3.2 The Council has recognised its responsibility in this field over the years by investing in its main buildings.
- 3.3 By adopting the programme of improvements and adaptations in Appendix A, the Council can be confident that the Headquarters is accessible to visitors and Members.
- 3.4 Redesignating the Members' Lounge on the first floor as the main Lounge would also ensure accessible access to the facilities we should be providing for each Member and we would not be discriminating on the basis of disability.

### **4.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 That the Council adopts the programme of recommendations in Appendix A in order to ensure that our Headquarters is accessible to visitors.
- 4.2 That the Council redesignates the Lounge on the first floor as the main Members' Lounge which will ensure that every Member will be able to access its' provisions.

## ATODIAD A

Rhan o'r adeilad	Argymhelliad
Tu allan i'r adeilad	Blaen pob gris i fod yn llachar
	Canllawiau lle mae dwy neu fwy o risiau
Parcio Anabl	Creu o leiaf dri man parcio sy'n cydymffurfio'n llwyr ac sydd mor wastad â phosibl.
Mynedfeydd Adeiladau	Arwyddion allanfa uwchben y drysau allan diwethaf
Coridorau a Llwybrau	Arwyddion gwell ar allanfeydd
Adnoddau Toiledau Anabl	Sicrhau fod y cortyn argyfwng o fewn cyrraedd wrth eistedd ar y toiled ac o'r llawr
Mynedfa Adeilad Siambr y Cyngor	Golau cryfach neu sicrhau fod y golau presennol ymlaen yn ystod oriau swyddfa.
	Mae'r mat tywydd allanol o ddeunydd cnau goco, ystyried newid am fatiau eraill craidd isel ond dim ond wrth adnewyddu
Llawr Gwaelod Siambr y Cyngor	Gosod rheiliau llaw o boptu'r grisiau at y man uwch lle mae'r cyhoedd yn eistedd
	Gosod breichiau ar y seddau i helpu'r rhai sy'n cael trafferth i godi. Sicrhau fod yna gymysgedd o seddau yn cynnig y cymorth hwn.
	Ymchwilio i ddarparu lle i gadeiriau olwyn i'r cyhoedd ar lefel hygyrch, gallai hyn fod yn rhywle ar y lefel hon ond, o ddewis, mor agos â phosibl at fan gwastad wrth ddod i mewn a gadael. Creu o leiaf ddau le gyda seddi arferol ar gyfer gofalwyr os bydd angen
	Ymchwilio i'r posibilrwydd o osod ramp yn lle'r ddwy ris sy'n arwain i lawr at lefel isaf y siambr. Byddai hyn yn agor lefel ychwanegol cyfan at ddefnydd rhai mewn cadair pe bai angen.
Grisiau	Gosod arwyddion cyfeirio clir ar bob gris yn arwain at yr allanfeydd terfynol.
Adnoddau Toiledau Anabl	Canfuwyd fod y canllawiau braidd yn uchel i ddefnyddwyr cadeiriau olwyn ac nad oedd fawr o le i allu gafael. Ystyried newd y canllaw ochr chwith ar i lawr am un hirgrwn neu grwn a ddim uwch na 750mm o'r llawr. Ni fyddai'n rhesymol gosod canllaw newydd ar yr ochr dde.
Coridorau a Llwybrau llawr cyntaf bloc J	Gosod canllaw, hirgrwn neu grwn, ar yr ochr chwith wrth fynd i lawr ar uchder o 750mm i helpu defnyddwyr cadeiriau olwyn a'r rhai sy'n cael trafferth cerdded.

## APPENDIX A

1	Part of building	Recommendation
2	Building approach	All step nosings to be highlighted
3		Handrails should be included on all steps of two or more risers
4	Disabled Parking	create a minimum of three fully compliant disabled bays in areas that are as level as possible.
5	Building Entrances	Exit signage is located above final exit doors
6	Corridors and Passageways	Improve exit signage
7	Disabled WC Facilities	Ensuring that the emergency pull cord is reachable from both the WC seated position and floor area
8	Council Chambers Building Entrance	Increase lighting or ensure that current lighting is switched on during office hours
9		External weather matting is of a coconut material, consider replacing with alternative low core matting only if renewing.
10	Ground Floor Council Chambers	Placing handrails offering support on steps either side of the raised public seating area
11		Seating is accompanied with arms to assist those that may have difficulty rising. Ensure that a mixture of chairs offer this support
12		Investigate providing wheelchair space for public members on the accessible level, these can be located anywhere on this level but preferably nearest to a level entry/exit point. Create a minimum of two spaces with standard seating nearby for carers if needed.
13		Investigate replacing the two steps which currently lead down to the lowest level of the chamber with a ramp. This would open up an additional whole level for wheelchair users.
14	Steps and Stairs	Install clear directional signage on all stairs leading to final exit points
15	Disabled WC Facilities	The handrail supports were found to be high for wheelchair use and offered little area of grip. Consider replacing the left hand descending handrail with a compliant oval or round design and at a height of no greater than 750mm from the floor. It would not be seen as reasonable to replace the existing right hand side descending rail.
16	Corridors and Passageways - 1st floor Bloc J	Install a handrail to the left side descending at a height of 750mm and of a round or oval design to offer assistance to wheelchair users and those unsteady on their feet.

Lolfa'r Aelodau	Ymchwilio i'r posibilrwydd o osod un ai lifft llwyfan neu lift fertigol i gadeiriau olwyn gyda chymorth cwmni lifftiau cymwys y Ddeddf Cydraddoldeb. Byddai ail ddynodi'r Lolfa Aelodau ar y llawr cyntaf yn brif lolfa hefyd yn opsiwn.	17	Members Lounge	Investigate the viability of installing either a wheelchair platform lift or a vertical wheelchair lift with the assistance of a competent Equality Act compliant lifting company. Sdesignating the Lounge on the first floor would also be an option.
Diangfeydd	Cynllun cyfeillio, byddai'n ddoeth profi adeg ymarferion tân pa mor effeithiol yw system fel hyn.	18	Means of Escape	Buddy system, the effectiveness of this system would be advised to be tested within regular fire drills.
Coridor llawr cyntaf bloc B	Edrych i ledu agoriad rhai o'r drysau dwbl yn y coridor.	19	First floor coridor, bloc B	Look at widening the opening of some the double doors in the corridor