



# Complete Agenda

Democracy Service  
Swyddfa'r Cyngor  
CAERNARFON  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1SH

Meeting

**DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Date and Time

**10.00 am, TUESDAY, 29TH JUNE, 2021**

Location

**Zoom**

Contact Point

**Natalie Lloyd Jones**

**01286 679780**

(DISTRIBUTED 21/06/21)

# **DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MEMBERSHIP (16)**

### **Plaid Cymru (8)**

Councillors

Annwen Daniels  
Linda Ann Jones  
Judith Mary Humphreys  
Mair Rowlands

Annwen Hughes  
Olaf Cai Larsen  
Edgar Wyn Owen

### **Independent (5)**

Councillors

Anne Lloyd Jones  
Hefin Underwood

Dewi Wyn Roberts  
Eryl Jones-Williams

### **Llais Gwynedd (1)**

Councillor Anwen J. Davies

### **Gwynedd United Independents (1)**

Councillor Dewi Owen

### **Propel (1)**

Councillor Dylan Bullard

### **Ex-officio Members**

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council

# **A G E N D A**

## **1. ELECT VICE CHAIR**

To elect a vice-chair for this committee for 2021/22.

## **2. APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence.

## **3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

## **4. URGENT ITEMS**

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

## **5. MINUTES**

4 - 9

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the last meeting of this committee held on the 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2021, be signed as a true record.

## **6. MEMBER SATISFACTION REPORT**

10 - 12

To share the responses to the Member Satisfaction with the Democracy Services Team Survey.

## **7. PREPARATION FOR 2022 ELECTIONS**

13 - 17

To present the draft work programme.  
To ask for guidance on the direction for IT provision following the election

## **8. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY**

18 - 19

To present a draft of the Diversity Declaration to the Democracy Services Committee for comments prior to presenting for adoption by the full council.

## **9. ACCESS TO THE PUBLIC**

20 - 29

To approve a draft policy on ensuring access to the public, to be submitted to the full Council on 08/07/2021  
Trialling the webinar arrangements

# Agenda Item 5

DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE, Thursday, 18 February 2021

---

## DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE THURSDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2021

---

### PRESENT:

#### Councillors:

Anne Lloyd Jones (Chair), Annwen Daniels, Annwen Davies, Anwen Hughes, Judith Humphreys, Eryl Jones-Williams, Linda Ann Jones, Cai Larsen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Robert Dewi Owen, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Mair Rowlands.

**Officers:** Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department), Vera Jones (Democracy Services Manager), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader), Carey Cartwright (Learning and Organisational Development Manager), Cara Williams (Members Development Officer) and Natalie Lloyd Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Hefin Underwood.

### 2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

### 3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent matters.

### 4. MINUTES

It was agreed that the minutes of the previous committee meeting on 17/11/2020 were accurate.

### 5. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

A draft annual report was submitted by the Head of Democratic Services to receive any observations from the committee before its submission to the Full Council in May 2021.

A foreword was provided noting that the Head of Democratic Services, the Democracy and Language Manager and officers had a role to review the support available for members continuously.

It was reported back on a challenging year, emphasising and congratulating that all elected members had now become familiar with virtual committees.

A brief overview of the contents of the report was provided, drawing attention to the successes of the department, which included:

- Adapting to allow remote access to officers and members in order to realise the requirements of the local government act.
- A direct reference to the Translation Team Leader and translators for adapting to new methods.
- A direct reference to the I.T. team, with a particular reference to the Programme Office Manager for his commitment and assistance.
- Discussing the projects such as Members' Portal and the Intranet, which ensured that the important information is easily available for members.
- Members were asked whether the contents of the report met their needs.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:

- Gratitude was expressed for the report and the comprehensive information, noting that receiving these allowed members to be informed about the department's procedures.
- It was noted that the members' portal was not completely ready to be used but enthusiasm was expressed to be able to use it in the near future.
- The new way forward of continuing with virtual committee meetings for the vast majority of them was welcomed, reasons in favour of this was noted such as saving on travel time and promoting more people to stand in future elections.
- Attention was drawn to the need to consider securing Councillors' information.
- It was noted that it had to be ensured that members had full access to resources, including devices and proper internet connection if procedures would become virtual on a more permanent basis.
- Assistance to upgrade resources
- It was enquired whether all elected Council members had registered with the information commissioner.

In response to these observations, the Head of Democracy Services noted that the I.T. service was in the process of examining the Members' Portal to ensure access for all, as minor amendments were required prior to its launch.

She agreed that securing information was an important element for them to consider, especially as officers and members worked from home and continued to deal with information. She reiterated that securing information would be a subject that would require more attention in future and that more information would be reported back in future.

## **DECISION**

To accept the report and it was agreed to submit the report to the Full Council in May 2021.

## **6. COMMITTEE FRAMEWORK**

An overview of the logic behind the report was provided by the Head of Democracy Services. It was noted that the purpose of the report was to introduce a framework to hold committee meetings in the future. It was explained that the vast proportion would be held

virtually; however, it was recognised that some would occasionally be required to be held on a face-to-face basis.

The report was submitted by the Democracy and Language Manager, who discussed the draft principles to hold committees and meetings in the current and future position. The different types of potential situations were discussed and which committees would be likely to return to a face-to-face basis when it would be possible to do so. It was noted that the exceptions to virtual committees and meetings would be the meetings of the Full Council, Employment Appeal Committees (depending on the appellant's wishes), Licensing Subcommittee (depending on the appellant's wishes) and the Chief Officers' Appointment Committee (when conducting interviews).

The need to reinforce the right and duty of members to speak Welsh at each meeting was added. It was added that this was vitally important, especially within regional committees and meetings as others needed to be promoted to use the Welsh language in order to normalise it.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:

- The members expressed their thanks for the report and it was noted that this was a huge change as Council committees and meetings had been held on a face-to-face basis since the start.
- Some concerns were raised, especially the situation for new members. It was added that the office and chamber environment was an opportunity to network and chat with fellow members; this may be a loss to some such as new members who needed to get to know members and officers at the beginning of their term.
- It was asked whether officers would experience the same changes in their methods of working as members, i.e. would they continue to meet virtually after restrictions lifted?
- It was proposed that it would be essential to meet on a face-to-face basis occasionally in order to challenge and scrutinise.
- It was noted that the availability of Teams facilitated contact with officers during the current period as it was more personal than a telephone call.
- It was enquired whether it would be possible to arrange a training session for members on using Zoom?
- The importance of reminding organisers of the right to use the Welsh language within virtual meetings was reiterated. This was reinforced by proposing that it should be added to the virtual meetings protocol.
- It was noted that the availability of officers needed to be ensured before formally changing to virtual arrangements, as they were not always available via a quick e-mail.
- It was asked if everyone, including members and officers, had been asked about their personal opinion on moving to a permanent virtual method in future.

The following responses were received to the observations:

- It was confirmed that requests would be considered if there would be a need to hold face-to-face meetings, especially in cases when it would be necessary.

- It was noted that officers would not return to former arrangements in the office where there was no need to do so. It was reiterated that services were in the process of identifying what functions could be undertaken from home just as successful as in the office.
- It was accepted that it was not appropriate for everyone to adapt their work model; however, managers were in the process of assessing this.
- It was confirmed that it would be possible to work beyond the proposed framework, for example, following an election to induct new members. This would be necessary in order for them to hold conversations and meetings with returning members, officers and new members.
- In response to an observation regarding the availability of officers, it was noted that contact numbers remained the same, therefore, it was possible to contact officers directly should the e-mail method be too slow.
- It was ensured that the service would commit to review the framework should the need arise.

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report.**

## **7. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES CONSULTATION**

The report was submitted by the Monitoring Officer, noting that the Ombudsman was consulting on new draft guidance on the Code of Conduct for County Council and Town and Community Council members.

It was noted that the document explained the code for members in a coherent manner and in order to ensure better understanding among members of what was included. Attention was drawn to the main aspects of the body of the report and committee members were then asked for their observations. It was reiterated that the main points to consider were how useful was the document to personally assist them to understand the requirements of the code of conduct and whether the document was of use to them as members.

It was explained that the observations on the consultation would be submitted to the Standards Committee on 22 February, 2021.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:

- It was noted that the document did not discuss any potential penalty that would fall on members should they breach the code of conduct.
- The observation was made that the code of conduct emphasised a presumption that councillors needed to be thick-skinned and to accept that you would be open to personal criticism.
- This was reiterated, asking where was the line for criticism as this could prevent people from standing as councillors.

- It was noted that the code of conduct did not mention community council clerks and it was noted that it could be a cause for concern regarding the duties of clerks to declare interests where appropriate.

The Monitoring Officer responded to the observations as follows:

- It was noted that it was difficult to identify where the line was regarding criticism; however, only political criticism was acceptable and personal abuse was unacceptable.
- In response to the concern about community clerks, it was noted that they had a direct code of conduct, namely the code of conduct for statutory officers. It was reiterated that the rules differed but it was implemented in the same manner as the code of conduct for elected members.

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report.**

## **8. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The proposed calendar was submitted by the Democracy Team Leader. It had been submitted to the committee in order to receive observations prior to its submission to the Full Council in March. It was added that the calendar before the committee today had already been circulated among officers to ensure that it was in line with statutory and budgetary requirements.

During the discussion, one observation was made by a member stating that no dates could be seen for area forums.

In response, the Democracy Team Leader noted that area forums were not part of the calendar in question; however, meetings of the area forums would recommence in the near future.

## **DECISION:**

**To accept the report and submit the recommendation to the Full Council in March, 2021**

## **9. TRAINING FOR MEMBERS**

A report was submitted by the Learning and Development Manager to update the committee on training that had been available for members since the previous committee meeting. The committee was reminded how training provision methods had been adapted during the COVID-19 period. It was added that this had been an opportunity to trial a new method of receiving feedback via an on-line method.



A summary of recent events was provided, reiterating that a quiet period was in the pipeline before the election. Reference was made to the latest programme for information for committee members and a request was made for any input from members on potential training areas for the future.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:

- Members gave thanks for the good provision of virtual training that had been available and it was reiterated that the report was an accurate picture of the provision.
- It was noted that many more seemed to be attending the virtual sessions as opposed to sessions in the past
- A member noted that a feedback form on paper would be useful as members received a number of e-mails and there was a possibility for the feedback e-mail to get lost in their midst.
- It was stated that the training programme included a balanced number of training as well as personal development opportunities.
- It was asked whether it would be possible to upload recordings of the training sessions for members who could not attend.
- A request was made for I.T. sessions in order to develop information in the field and it was reiterated that these would be more useful in smaller groups or on a 1:1 basis.

In response to the above observations, the Members Development Officer noted:

- It would be possible to ensure that forms were circulated in order to receive members' feedback following training sessions.
- It was explained that a number of recent sessions had been to raise awareness, therefore, no feedback collecting method had been shared.
- It was confirmed that a series of I.T sessions in small groups had been arranged for March.

**DECISION:**

**To accept the report.**

The meeting commenced at 10:30 and concluded at 12:17

---

**CHAIR**

# Agenda Item 6

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>29 June 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Member Satisfaction Survey</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>To share the responses to the Member Satisfaction with the Democracy Services Team Survey</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>The Democratic Services Committee is asked to note the observations and accept the report.</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Annes Sion Democracy Team Leader</b>

1. In April, the Member Satisfaction Survey was sent out via e-mail to all Council members. Members were able to respond to the survey until mid-June.
2. A range of questions were asked in terms of satisfaction with the work of the team, any developments the team could make to the future, as well as being an opportunity for Members to give their opinion on future committee arrangements.
3. 38 responses were received, and this report outlines the main messages highlighted by the members.
4. In terms of satisfaction with the service offered to members, 92% stated that the service was very good or good, with 8% stating it was acceptable. A number of additional responses were received, which included the following:

"It can be peace of mind knowing that someone is available to assist us if needed and always willing to help"

"Since becoming a Gwynedd Councillor I have learned from a number of sources. The assistance and guidance have been excellent. Your professionalism is there for all to see."

"In light of covid, the Council must be praised for the way things are arranged under difficult circumstances."

5. Members were asked if there were any developments or changes the team could implement to further support members in their role as Councillors. Among the observations, dissatisfaction with the Cabinet system was noted once more, but it must be emphasised that this is the statutory system and that there are no steps the Team can take to change this system.
6. The need for training sessions on time management and developing self-confidence was noted. The observations have been sent to the Learning and

Development Service. Members also asked about support with work in the community, and the team will consider the possibilities in terms of such support, starting with asking the Welsh Local Government Association about any support they can provide.

7. Attention was drawn to the need to ensure regular contact with members. The team will look at various options for keeping in contact, particularly at a time when meetings continue to be held virtually. Informal sessions have been held with female Councillors, and it may be possible to add similar sessions for all members. They will be an opportunity to raise any questions, discuss any problems and to socialise.
8. The need for further sessions on the use of Zoom, Teams and the Members Intranet was highlighted, and sessions have already been arranged by the IT and Democracy teams.
9. Once again, a few members requested phone numbers to be able to contact Council officers directly. Although a list of useful contacts appears on the new members intranet, the department, as well as the IT department, are looking at the possibility of creating an internal directory on the Members Intranet which will list generic e-mail addresses.
10. One member noted that the cost of using a mobile phone has increased substantially over the past year - we do not have arrangements to respond to this at present, but it will be considered in the future.
11. This year, as a result of changes to working arrangements due to Covid-19, members' opinion was sought on holding future committees. 84% of members noted the desire for committees to be a combination of meetings in the Chamber and virtual meetings, with 8% noting Chamber meetings only and 8% noting virtual meetings only.
12. The team is working on solutions for holding hybrid meetings in accordance with the requirements of the act, and this matter will be discussed further during item 6. Inevitably, there was a difference of opinion regarding this matter. The following are some of the observations received from Members:

"It is obvious that the system will change in the future and virtual committees have worked well. Looking to the future, it would make sense to hold committees that do not last long virtually, as has been said, it can take longer to travel by car to Caernarfon than the time spent at the committee. It is clear that it would be better to hold large meetings e.g. Full Council in the chamber due to the numbers present (although Officers need to be praised for the work undertaken to hold meetings of the Full Council virtually)"

“There is definitely a place for Virtual meetings, They have their advantages. No traveling, Money saved on traveling expenses. Attend from virtually anywhere. But, there is no interaction between members and a lack of dynamics that a live meeting has. I think a mixture of both is here to stay”

"The Planning Committee should be in the chamber in fairness to all including the applicants. All Committees should possibly meet in the chamber once a year in order to keep in contact and network. The Full Council in the chamber again to ensure contact and networking."

"I think that doing things virtually is much more convenient, especially for someone who works full time, and it means that you don't have to travel which adds to the time. Mainly, I would prefer for most meetings to be virtual, but it would be good for the Full Council to be held face-to-face in the chamber possibly."

"I think that a 'hybrid' system could be beneficial but it would need to be trialled carefully to ensure fairness for virtual attendees"

"Virtual meetings do not give Members an opportunity to look into the eyes of contributors and this deprives them of the ability to fully appreciate the direction of the discussion"

"sometimes it's good to have a face-to-face meeting"

13. We will consider the observations when developing our arrangements for holding hybrid and fully virtual meetings in future.

14. DECISION SOUGHT

**The Democratic Services Committee is asked to note the observations and accept the report.**

# Agenda Item 7

<b>MEETING</b>	Democracy Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	29/06/2021
<b>TITLE</b>	Local Government Elections May 2022
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To present the draft work programme</li><li>• To ask for guidance on the direction for IT provision following the election</li></ul>
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<p><b>The Democracy Services Committee is asked to</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>approve the general work programme and request an update at the Committee meeting to be held in November. (16/11/2021)</b></li><li>• <b>support</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>The direction outlined in this paper for the IT provision for elected members following the 2022 election</b></li><li>• <b>That the Democracy and Language Service collaborate with the IT and Learning and Development teams to fine-tune the arrangements outlined above</b></li><li>• <b>A further report to the next meeting of the Democracy Services Committee in November 2021</b></li></ul></li></ul>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Vera Jones, Democracy and Language Services Manager

## FOREWORD

1. We are all aware that Local Government elections are to be held in May 2022. As a result, there are considerable preparations to be made - by you as elected members, by the political groups, and by us as officers.
2. Work is already underway, with four main themes to consider. The identified themes are as follows:
  - Preparation (including promoting diversity)
  - Information technology provision
  - Results / election day
  - Induction and training programme
3. Preparation.  
Naturally, there are many sub-sections to each theme. The work programme for the preparation element includes:

Action	Details
Ensure comprehensive information for prospective applicants on the website	The work includes building on the work done prior to the 2017 elections, and updating the current information and making it easier to find.
Communication / democracy week to promote diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will proceed to create simple videos to explain the role of a councillor whilst also encouraging diversity in democracy.</li> <li>Democracy week activities in October, including an information fair and a campaign on social media.</li> </ul>
Electoral Wards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will ensure that we comply with the requirements of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales (we expect their guidance by the end of September 2021)</li> </ul>
Information - intranet and handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the members' intranet to ensure that it contains suitable information (especially for the new members in 2022)</li> <li>Produce a short handbook that includes the main information required by newly elected Councillors.</li> </ul>

4. It was noted above that preparation was underway for democracy week. In addition, work continues jointly with the elections team to promote awareness of democracy and diversity with young people, with 'visits' to schools currently being piloted. In addition, a report is being submitted to the committee today outlining the Council's draft Diversity Statement, which will be submitted to Full Council in July 2021.
5. Information technology provision  
The committee's views are sought on the matters raised in the paper in **Appendix A** (attached).
6. Results / election day  
Considerable appreciation was shown for the work done for the 2017 elections, particularly the success in announcing the election results per ward as they were declared. We will ensure that arrangements are in place for comparable success in 2022.
7. Induction and training programme  
There are two main elements to induction work, being the induction days, and the training programme for the first year.
8. The arrangements following the 2017 election were praised, in particular for the welcoming days. However, it was noted at the time that there were lessons to be learnt. Workshops were held soon after the elections to learn lessons whilst matters were fresh in the mind. We have also received comments over the years, which will help in drawing-up different and better arrangements for 2022.
9. Naturally, we will give full consideration to the comments that have arisen regarding our current situation of working virtually as a result of the restrictions, and the need to try and

ensure that new members have an opportunity to meet each other, meet returning members and chief officers, in a room or in a chamber.

10. The main actions for this element of the work are noted below.

Action	Details
Welcome day / days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on the lessons learnt from 2017.</li> <li>• Draw up a draft programme to respond to the improvements from 2017.</li> <li>• Ensure that priority is given to the matters requiring attention on welcome days, thus empowering members to refer to the members' intranet, on-line training, etc. for further information.</li> </ul>
The first year induction programme	Priority given to necessary training, aiming to strike a balance between ensuring that members, particularly new members, are armed with the necessary information to fulfil the role, whilst not drowned in excessive training. We will also consider different ways of training.

11. Developments in line with the rough work programmes noted above are already underway with different teams of officers. Any comments on the work programme are welcomed.

12. DECISION SOUGHT

**The Democracy Services Committee is asked to approve the general work programme and request an update at the Committee meeting to be held in November. (16/11/2021)**

## APPENDIX A

### **IT following the Local Government election, May 2021** **(discussion paper in order to identify the way forward)**

- The Covid period has shown clearly that IT skills and technical provision to support that is key to elected members. We have started to discuss the requirements for the period following the May 2022 election, and so this is a summary of the situation as it currently stands.
- Prior to the 2017 election, a group of members met with some key officers to select the most suitable provision for the 2017 - 2021 period (as the situation was at the time). The surface pro was selected.
- A number of lessons have been learnt over that period, mainly
  - That the Surface pro is not suitable for all (many found the Windows element difficult to understand, following the switch from iPads)
  - That the background system is what matters
  - That a choice of provision is needed to respond to the individual requirements of members and their various roles
- From our experiences to date, it is obvious that elected members, as a minimum, need to be able to
  - Deal with e-mails (understand how to receive them and respond to them)
  - Manage an electronic calendar
  - Read committee papers electronically
  - Participate in virtual meetings (both formal and informal)
  - Access to the members' intranet
  - Deal with social media, if they choose to do so
- Different members have different roles such as chairing virtual meetings, possibly creating reports if a Cabinet Member, and others wish to manage ward matters electronically. It is clear therefore that some members have different requirements.
- When discussing with members, it is obvious that different provisions will suit different people. Some favour a simple, easily portable tablet, and maybe also using personal equipment; others (such as Committee Chairs or Cabinet Members), favour a laptop, and others may wish to have something completely different.
- It is obvious that a different system will need to be established to ensure a fit-for-purpose electronic provision for all elected members following the election in May 2022. It is suggested that elected members will need to be given a choice. By giving members a choice, it must be considered and acknowledged that it could, possibly, take some time to source a device for everyone. It is also suggested that a procedure will be needed to prioritise how to share resources between the "different categories" of members: members who are returning unopposed, new members, returning members.



- Following the 2022 election, it is suggested that a "menu" of choice is presented to members, with two main options currently:
  - a) use of personal equipment,
  - b) choosing from the provision supplied, supported and managed by the Council - the device cannot be used for personal matters (e.g. using the device to download apps outside what is offered by the Council). It is envisaged that the choice could possibly include an android device/ ipad / laptop – dependent on developments over the next few months.
  
- It is recommended that the Democracy and Language service works with the IT team to provide arrangements following the May 2022 election, based on the above.
  
- We are also aware that the need for IT skills is essential for the role of an elected member. However, we must ensure that this does not close the door on people, so that they do not stand for election. Therefore, we will need to ensure that our preparations include training on the use of technology.
  
- Therefore, it is recommended that the Democracy and Language service works with the IT team and the Learning and Development team to develop IT training following the election in May 2022.
  
- **DECISION SOUGHT**  
**The Democracy Services Committee is asked to support**
  - **The direction outlined in this paper for the IT provision for elected members following the 2022 election**
  - **That the Democracy and Language Service collaborate with the IT and Learning and Development teams to fine-tune the arrangements outlined above**
  - **A further report to the next meeting of the Democracy Services Committee in November 2021**

# Agenda Item 8

<b>MEETING</b>	Democracy Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	29/06/2021
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Council's draft Diversity Declaration
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Present a draft of the Diversity Declaration to the Democracy Services Committee for comments prior to presenting for adoption by the the full Council
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Geraint Owen, Head of Democracy Services

1. The Committee has discussed the need to promote diversity in democracy a number of times, with numerous steps taken over the years to try and persuade more people from different backgrounds to stand in local elections.
2. A specific project was included in the Council's Equality Plan, 2016-20, with the work now continuing on a day to day basis, As noted in the report on the preparations for the Local Government Elections 2022, further steps to encourage diversity in democracy are being taken in different areas.
3. In addition, political leaders from all authorities in Wales have been discussing how to encourage more people from different backgrounds to stand in local government elections 2022. Wales Local Government Association have worked with the political leaders and identified a number of possible steps to be taken, some on a National level, others at a political level, and a few recommendations on a local level.
4. One of the matters agreed was for each individual Local Authority to adopt a Diversity Declaration in order to make a clear and public statement of the Council's commitment to diversity in democracy.
5. Gwynedd Council supports such a declaration. A draft Diversity Declaration for Gwynedd Council is presented below.

*This Council commits to being a Diverse Council. Therefore, we wish to reflect the community in which we live by, in the first instance, increase the number of females, young people, disabled and ethnic minority who stand in the elections to be a Gwynedd Councillor.*

*We agree to*

- *Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy*
- *Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct*
- *Set out a local Diverse Council Action Plan ahead of the 2022 local elections.*
- *Work towards the standards set out in the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.*

- *Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors*
- *Consider how to provide flexibility in council business by reviewing our practical arrangements*
- *Continue to encourage all members to take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.*
- *Work towards ensuring that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.*

#### 6. DECISION SOUGHT

**The Democracy Services Committee is asked to**

- **Provide comments on the draft Diversity Declaration prior to presenting for adoption by the Full Council on 08/07/2021**

# Agenda Item 9

<b>MEETING</b>	Democracy Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	29/06/2021
<b>TITLE</b>	Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To approve a draft policy on ensuring access to the public, to be submitted to the full Council on 08/07/2021</li><li>• Trialling the webinar arrangements</li></ul>
<b>AUTHORS</b>	Geraint Owen, Head of Democracy Services and Iwan Evans, Monitoring Officer

## **Foreword**

1. There is considerable history to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which is rooted in the Local Government (Wales) Bill presented by Leighton Andrews, the former Minister for Local Government, in 2015.
2. The Act received Royal Assent on 20 January 2021. There are nine main sections to the Act with some provisions already in force, but we are continuing to await the publication of relevant regulations or statutory guidance. A report on the act was submitted to the Full Council in March 2021.

## **Access to the Public**

3. The access rights of the press and public to Council meetings, its Committees and the Cabinet, is a basic statutory principle in Local Government Legislation. Previously, this was based on ensuring access to the press and public to the room/chamber where the meeting was held (excluding Exempt matters). It must be noted, although the principles are almost identical, the Cabinet arrangements are in a specific, separate system.
4. Section 4 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, adapts this legislation by allowing the Authority to hold meetings virtually, i.e. that the access to the press and public is provided virtually. This could be via webcasting at the meeting, but it could be via other electronic methods, which allow them to speak to hear and see the meeting. Therefore, where a meeting is held wholly through the virtual method, rather than stating the time and location of the meeting on the front of the agenda, it must be stated clearly how access can be gained to the meeting.
5. In accordance to Section 47 of the Act, the Council must adopt and publish arrangements with provision to enable meetings to be held with people who are not all at the same location. Such a meeting could be held purely virtually or as a hybrid meeting which is held at a specific location with provision for remote attendance. Although a meeting can be held purely in a specific location, remote attendance for attendees must be provided for. The term 'hybrid' is used for these types of meetings, and it is envisaged that they will be a normal occurrence in the future.
6. It is a basic requirement (except for exempt items) that meetings are open to the public and press. In the past, this duty was provided by ensuring access to the press and public to the location the meeting was held. Webcasting of meetings further enhanced this, but it did not

address the statutory requirement. By now, 'access' can be provided through electronic provisions, being webcasting or another appropriate electronic provision. This development opens the door to public virtual meetings.

7. This provision has been in place since 1 May this year. As part of the work, the Authority is requested to adopt and publish its arrangements for delivering these requirements, and re-publishing if changes arise.
8. At present, we continue to hold virtual meetings only. A specific project has been established to develop the necessary technology in order to offer hybrid meetings - meetings that allow for remote access and at a specific location. These developments are progressing. It will be necessary to ensure that the provision is technically easy to use and responds to the requirements of bilingualism, voting matters, webcasting, etc.
9. This is also subject to Coronavirus regulations that apply to our decisions regarding attending offices.

### **Equality Act 2010**

10. The Council is subject to its duty under the 2010 Equality Act to give due attention to the need to remove unlawful discrimination, harassment and oppression, along with any other behaviours prohibited under the provisions of the Act. In addition, there is a need to increase equal opportunities and foster good relationships between those with protected characteristics and those who do not have protected characteristics (the General Equality Duty). In accordance with the requirement in Wales, and in order to address this duty, an Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared.
11. Also, it is essential to ensure training for members, particularly for committee Chairs, on how to hold hybrid meetings as the dynamics of such committees will be considerably different.
12. Therefore, in response to the above requirements, it is suggested that temporary arrangements should be established and published, whilst the above developmental work is done. The arrangements will need to be reviewed regularly. A further report on developments will be presented to the Full Council meeting in October 2021.
13. The policy includes two options to enable access to the public in the short-term:
  - Live webcasting
  - Sharing a link for the meeting that will be held as a webinar

### **Live webcasting**

14. The Act provides for mandatory live webcasting of meetings from May 2022. Although a range of the Council's committees are expected to be included within the scope, we will need to wait regulations and consult on them to fully understand the scope of requirements. However, it is an additional requirement to that of the subject of this report.

15. The virtual meetings of the Full Council and Cabinet have been webcast live since October and November 2020. The meetings of the planning committee have been webcast live since May 2021. Note that the live webcast involves considerable resource input from the Democracy Services Team.
16. Before the pandemic, the following meetings were webcast live:
- Full Council (V - situation recovered)
  - Cabinet (V - situation recovered)
  - Planning - meetings held in Caernarfon only (V - previous situation recovered, and developed further by webcasting all virtual planning meetings)
  - Scrutiny
  - Audit and Governance (February meeting when the budget was discussed)

### **Webinar**

17. We will be trialling a webinar process for other committees. Holding the meeting as a webinar means that up to 100 members of the public can follow a link to watch the meeting, but they WILL NOT be able to participate.
18. This will not involve a major change to Gwynedd elected members, but it will mean that every member must register their Zoom account and use the app to attend any meeting. Arrangements are already in place to contact the individuals who are yet to register, to assist them to do so.
19. Also, officers attending the committees will need to be aware of the requirements, with work progressing in that field.
20. Today's meeting of the Democratic Services Committee is being held as a webinar in order to pilot the arrangements and ensure that there is an opportunity to adapt or respond to any additional needs before the arrangements are rolled out. In addition, the Pensions Committee, held on 24/06/21, was held as a webinar. Subject to the success of today's arrangements, it is intended to introduce the draft arrangements noted below to the full Council meeting on 08/07/2021. As noted above, the Cabinet arrangements operate under an alternative system and the Cabinet will be responsible for deciding what system to incorporate in its arrangements.

### **Constitution**

21. The Constitution will need to be adapted to reflect this Legislation. This will include:
1. Changing the definition of Quorum in order to address remote attendance
  2. Amending rights of access to the press and public in order to acknowledge the new electronic context and the alternative statutory arrangements.

### **Draft arrangements to present to the Full Council - 8th July 2021**

22. Gwynedd Council is continuing to hold virtual meetings only during the period from May 2021 onwards, until noted otherwise. Meanwhile, we will continue to develop our

arrangements for holding hybrid meetings and ensure safety in returning to the chambers. We will review the situation regularly.

23. In order to ensure access to the public to see and hear discussions, we will provide live webcasts of the following meetings:
  - Full Council
  - Cabinet
  - Planning Committees
  
24. For other meetings - a link will be included on the front page of the agenda, noting that the meeting is virtual, but that members of the public can gain access to watch the webinar by following the relevant link on the front of the agenda or any other relevant guidance.
  
25. We will report back on technical developments for the hybrid arrangements to the full Council in October 2021. In the meantime, the Head of Democracy Services, in consultation with the Chairs of individual committees, can agree to hold a pilot scheme of any proposed arrangements.
  
- 26. The Democracy Services Committee is requested to support the temporary arrangements for submission to the full Council on 08/07/2021**

Appendix 1

(Cncl = Full Council , Cab. = Cabinet , AGC = Audit and Governance Committee, DSC = Democratic Services Committee, SC = Standards Committee)

Provisions	Description	Provision in Force	Responsible Officer	Preparation Steps / Resources	Timetable
<b>Part 3 Promoting Access to Local Government,</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Right to hold formal meetings on a hybrid and virtual basis, but a Policy needs to be adopted</li> <li>2. Provide remote attendance for members on a statutory basis</li> <li>3. Incorporate changes in matters such as publishing meeting agendas and dealing with matters such as publishing decisions</li> <li>4 A duty to encourage public participation in matters such as decision-making</li> <li>6. The requirement to adopt a Participation Strategy</li> <li>7. The requirement to adopt a Petitions Scheme</li> <li>8 Statutory requirement to webcast a range of meetings</li> <li>9. The requirement to publish Guidelines to the Constitution</li> </ol>	<p>1, 2, 3 In Force 1 May 2021</p> <p>4- 9 In Force May 2022</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Support</p>	<p>Democracy and Language Service to lead on matters involving remote attendance, participation and publishing agendas, etc.</p> <p>Legal Services to lead on reviewing the Constitution and preparing Guidelines.</p>	<p>Reporting on 1,2,3 to DSC and Cab. June 2021 with a report to Cncl. in July with a recommendation of a Virtual Meetings Policy.</p> <p>4-7 Report to Cab. October 2021.</p> <p>8 DSC Report October 2021 with a request for resources to the 2022 bidding round.</p> <p>9. Draft to the AGC Committee October 2022.</p>
<b>Part 4 - Local Authority Executives, Members, Officers and Committees</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To establish the post described as "Chief Executive" on a statutory footing with specific responsibilities</li> <li>2. Allow appointing members as Cabinet Members assistants</li> <li>3. Allow job-sharing for Cabinet members</li> <li>4. Allow job sharing for Chairs and Vice-chairs</li> <li>5. Group Leaders to have statutory responsibility for the conduct of their members</li> </ol>	<p>In Force May 2022.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Support Service</p> <p>5.6 Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)</p>	<p>Legal Services to lead on reviewing the Constitution and Code of Conduct issues.</p> <p>The Chief Executive's job description already reflects the change.</p>	



Provisions	Description	Provision in Force	Responsible Officer	Preparation Steps / Resources	Timetable
	6. Give the Annual Standards Committee report to the Council a statutory footing			Awaiting the publishing of regulations on 2, 3 and 4 and a further report will be given when they have been published.	

## **GWYNEDD COUNCIL**

### **PROTOCOL FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS**

#### **1. GENERAL**

- 1.1 This Protocol has been prepared in accordance with Section 47 of The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the Act). That Act provides for attendance at local authority meetings, whilst Part 1 of Schedule 4 amends existing legislation in relation to arrangements for local authority meetings and documents, including access by the press and public and requiring electronic publication of certain meeting documents.
- 1.2 From 1 May 2021, local authorities will be required to make arrangements to ensure their meetings are capable of being held virtually, partially virtually or as physical meetings. Section 47 does not prescribe how meetings are to be held, and this is a matter for each authority
- 1.3 The Council's Constitution Standing Orders arrangements will be followed when holding meetings. The Protocol is designed to advise and support the Constitution and in the event of a conflict between provisions the Constitution will take precedence.
- 1.4 Meeting "virtually" is different and requires an alternative way of working. Neither the way the discussion works nor the environment in which contributions are made is the same as in an usual meeting. The purpose of this Protocol is to guide contributors through meetings and give guidance on best practice.
- 1.5 This Protocol provides a procedure for virtual meetings in order to ensure that the meetings are held in an appropriate and fair manner and ensures the confidence of the public in Gwynedd Council's democratic arrangements over the period of the crisis.

#### **2. PRE-MEETING PERIOD**

##### **NOTICE , AGENDA AND REPORT**

- 2.1 The Agenda and reports will be published and circulated to members as usual. As usual, the date and time of the meeting will be noted on the agenda.
- 2.2 An electronic invitation to the meeting will be sent which will contain a link to facilitate access to the meeting.
- 2.3 The Notice of the meeting will also include details of the time of the meetings and how members of the public can access the meeting.
- 2.4 Members of the press and public will be able to access the meeting through one of the following means:
  - (a) Live webcast, or
  - (b) Webinar facilities, or
  - (c) An alternative way in appropriate circumstances.

### **3. 3. THE DAY OF THE COMMITTEE**

#### **3.1 TESTING THE SYSTEM AND PREPARING**

All members and officers will be expected to log-in to the system at least 20 minutes before the meeting in order to ensure that the connections are working. As all 75 members are invited to the Full Council meeting, members will be expected to log-in to the system 30 minutes before the meeting. Capacity to resolve technical problems during the meeting is limited.

A Democratic Services Officer will test connections immediately in this period to ensure:

1. That the provision is working
2. That all members and officers who are taking part have access to the system
3. If there is a technical problem, to identify a solution and implement it.
4. That the translation is working for the non-Welsh-speaking members.

A member of the Democratic Team will act as Host and will manage admittance to the meeting. To facilitate arrangements also, technical support will be available in some meetings to act as "Technical Manager" in order to deal with any technical issues.

The legal officer or other lead officer will confirm that a quorum is present and the meeting can start and inform the chair.

A quorum is defined as members who are in attendance (logged into the meeting) by electronic means and can speak and be heard at the meeting.

#### **3.2 CHAIR TO OPEN THE MEETING**

The Chair will open the meeting by explaining the procedure and how everything will work in a virtual meeting (noting the procedure for allowing local members and third parties to speak, proposals, requests to speak from committee members and voting). Specifically, the following must be explained:

- That requests to speak will be made by "raising" the virtual hand and waiting to be invited to speak by the Chair.
- That microphones must be on mute at all times unless a contributor has been invited to speak by the Chair. The microphone should be muted immediately afterwards.
- Explain the procedure in terms of loss of connection etc. (explain below) and that the rules about being present to listen to the addresses apply.
- The 'chat' function will not be available during a meeting

#### **3.3 DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND PROTOCOL MATTERS**

- Chair to ask if anyone is declaring an interest. Members to note by using the Raise Hand icon, their intention to declare so that the Chair can ask them to address the Committee.

- Members to note the item and the reason for expressing an interest (members should contact the Legal Officer beforehand for advice in order to facilitate the process).
- If the member declares a prejudicial interest in any item. When the item begins, they must "leave" the meeting. A Democratic Services Officer will ensure that this happens by 'moving' the member to a 'waiting room'. A Democratic Services Officer will ensure that the member re-joins at the end of the item by inviting them back to the main meeting from the 'waiting room'.

### 3.4 DISCUSSION

- Members will note their wish to make or second a proposal or amendment or otherwise speak by using the Raise Hand icon. Members should not unmute their microphone until the Chair has invited them to speak. So as to maintain order and assist the Chair, after speaking, every member will need to lower their hand by clicking on the Lower Hand icon and remember to mute their microphone immediately.
- The Chair will go through these in turn. So as to maintain order, members should restrict their contribution to one address. The Chair will maintain discretion to allow additional questions.

### 3.5 PROPRIETY OFFICERS

The Chair must be aware of any requests by a Statutory Officer to draw the Chair's attention to either a matter of order or propriety which needs to be drawn to the meeting's attention. Therefore, if the Propriety Officer makes a request to speak **they should confirm whether the officer wishes to speak immediately** in relation to a point of order or whether they would be willing to wait their turn. If the Chair does not see the Statutory Officer's request to speak, the officer will need to interrupt the meeting to sort the matter out.

### 3.6 VOTE

- Votes can be undertaken in the following manner:
  - Where there is an available electronic voting system with the use of that system,
  - By asking every member with the right to vote to express orally how they are voting, i.e. in favour of the proposal, against the proposal or abstaining their vote.
  - At a meeting of 12 or fewer voting members, the electronic hand method may be used for voting if it is available to members and that it is possible to see their vote.
  - If the vote is tied, the Chair will use his/her casting vote by expressing this orally at the Committee and formally announcing the result.

### **3.7 TECHNICAL ISSUES**

- If, at any time during the Committee, that technical issues mean that an audio and/or video connection is lost with members or officers, the Chair will adjourn the meeting in an attempt to rectify the problem and allow the member to continue to take part whether with video and audio or on an audio only basis.
- Members are required to contact the Technical Manager or Democratic Services Officer if they are having difficulties. As far as is possible, members and officers must have an alternative method for contacting them e.g. phone, e-mail or other means.
- If technical issues remain to the extent that members who wish to participate are unable to do so, and that this has a significant effect on an item or items or the propriety of continuing, the Chair will consider whether an item or the rest of the meeting should be deferred until a later date and/or time.