MEETING	Democracy Services Committee
DATE	29/06/2021
TITLE	Local Government Elections May 2022
PURPOSE	• To present the draft work programme • To ask for guidance on the direction for IT provision following the election

RECOMMENDATION	**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)**
	
	• **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**

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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	- We will proceed to create simple videos to explain the role of a councillor whilst also encouraging diversity in democracy. - Democracy week activities in October, including an information fair and a campaign on social media.
Electoral Wards	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)
Information - intranet and handbook	- Develop the members' intranet to ensure that it contains suitable information (especially for the new members in 2022) - Produce a short handbook that includes the main information required by newly elected Councillors.

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	• Reflect on the lessons learnt from 2017. • Draw up a draft programme to respond to the improvements from 2017. • 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.
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

<u>IT following the Local Government election, May 2021</u>
<u>(discussion paper in order to identify the way forward)</u>

- 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 possible 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**