

<b>MEETING</b>	Democratic Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	16 November 2021
<b>TITLE</b>	Local Government Elections May 2022
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To submit an update on the preparations for the Local Government Elections, May 2022
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	To accept the report for information To create an Election Sub-group to look in greater detail at some elements of the preparations.
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Annes Sion Democracy Team Leader

## 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. The work has already commenced, and this report provides an update of the draft plans already in place and the further work which is to be achieved over the coming months to prepare for the Election in May and the period immediately afterwards.
3. Democracy Week  
As part of the preparations for the election, a democracy awareness week was held in October this year in order to promote awareness of democracy and encourage diversity among the candidates standing for election. The campaign was held via social websites and included sharing a short video of the experiences of some of the existing Councillors, statistics and useful information. This information is also on the Council Website.
4. The activities reached 14,000 people on Facebook, and over 2,000 people viewed the video of the selection of Councillors. Messages will continue to be shared on social websites over the coming months to raise awareness and interest about the election and to encourage diverse people to stand for election.
5. As part of the preparations for the week, the 'Being a Councillor' page on the website was updated to ensure that the latest information is available to prospective candidates. Over the coming months, the information will be shared regularly, specifically for the element 'How to stand for Election'. We are currently expecting some changes, but continue to wait for statutory guidance to confirm the situation.
6. As part of the week, 'Question and Answer' sessions were arranged for prospective candidates to receive further information about being a Councillor from officers. It must be noted that nobody registered to attend the sessions, which was very disappointing. We believe that many factors led to this, such as not enough advertising, the date of the event being during the half term holiday and it may have been held too early. We will arrange further sessions in January 2022 which will be a further opportunity for individuals to enquire about the role of Councillor, the expectations on them, the support that is available,

as well as the steps that need to be followed in order to stand for election. We will also reconsider how we raise awareness about these sessions.

7. Member Training.

As part of the preparations for the election, work has been carried out to look at the training programme for Councillors during the first year after the election. Prioritising mandatory training, particularly for new members, is very important in order to equip them with the necessary information to fulfil the role. However, it is a difficult task to ensure that we strike a balance between providing the necessary information and ensuring that they are not drowned in too much information and training.

8. A draft programme of the training offered as well as a rough timetable for the first year can be seen in **Appendix 1**. We would appreciate any observations on the draft programme.

9. Members' Handbook

In 2017, it was decided not to give an information pack to Councillors during the induction days in order to strengthen the message that Gwynedd Council is working towards being a paper-less Council. The Council has declared a climate emergency and continues to aim to be paper-less, however, in reflecting on the lessons learned from 2017 and having listened to Councillors' comments, we believe that it would be beneficial to create a short handbook at the beginning of the term. It will serve as a directory which provides the necessary information about the Council, Committees, salaries and useful contacts, referring the Councillors to where to find more information.

10. A draft version of the handbook has been developed over the past few months, but we believe that having members' input on its content will ensure that the information provided is useful to Councillors.

11. Members' Intranet

Work is continuing to develop the Members' intranet to ensure that the information is current for you as Councillors. I would like to draw your attention specifically to a new element which has been added recently, namely "Safety".

12. Your safety as Councillors while you work in the community is clearly important, and this has become increasingly important as a result of Covid and the death of the MP, Sir David Amess. We have developed a short guide for you to consider while you work in the community, and we have also provided links to several other useful sites.

13. We are continuing to develop the Members' Intranet regularly and would appreciate any observations.

14. In order to receive observations and input, we are keen to establish an Election Sub-group of approximately four or five members of the Committee in order to seek an opinion on various aspects of the preparations over the next few months.

## **15. DECISION SOUGHT**

- **To accept the report for information**
- **To establish an Election Sub-group of approximately four or five members of the committee to look in greater detail at some elements of the preparations, such as training, members' handbook and the members' intranet.**