

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	29 November 2016
SUBJECT	Local Government Elections 2017
PURPOSE	To update the members on the preparation work which is currently underway for the Local Government Elections 2017
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BACKGROUND

1.1. At the last meeting of the Democratic Services Committee, the draft plans for the arrangements of the Local Government elections in 2017 were reported, which were adopted by the Committee.

1.2. The following is an update for the Committee on the work fields identified.

AWARENESS-RAISING

1.3. Members will recall that the first element of the preparation work for the 2017 elections is the 'awareness-raising' element. It was decided that it would be beneficial to hold sessions giving an opportunity to any individual who is considering or who wishes to stand for election to come to talk to officers and members in order to be able to ask questions and have a better understanding of the requirements of the role, were they successful.

1.4 It was decided that the sessions would be held in January; the arrangements for which are as follows:

- Tuesday, 17/01/2017 6-8pm, Frondeg, Pwllheli
- Wednesday, 18/01/2017 6-8pm, Siambr Penarlag, Dolgellau
- Thursday, 19/01/2017 6-8pm, Siambr Dafydd Orwig, Caernarfon

1.5. It is essential that plenty of publicity is given to the sessions, and work is underway with the communication unit to have a clear communication plan so that people can benefit from the sessions.

WELCOME DAYS

2.1 Members will already be aware that welcome days for members will be held on **9 and 10 May 2017** (Tuesday and Wednesday). The work plan has already been adopted, and the main work now is to ensure that the details are addressed by officers internally.

2.2 Another element addressed under this heading is training. A discussion was held at the last meeting of the Council following a question by Councillor Sian Hughes regarding the advantage of attending training and that there is so much to gain from the sessions as members are then equipped with the necessary information in order for them to reach fair conclusions. The Cabinet Member, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, responded to the discussion by requesting that this Committee discuss:

- A. Increasing the resource for online learning - e-learning
- B. Looking at making training mandatory
- C. Publish members' attendance at training

2.3 In response to A in 2.2. above, work is already underway to develop and enable e-learning - that is, following training modules on the computer in your own time, with some questions at the end. In addition, the Council is also looking at developing webinars as another way of learning from any location. These sessions are live at specific times, but you can join the session from any location which has computer access. We are also looking at how to use the Area Forums for some training sessions, particularly for the first 6 - 12 months following the election.

2.4 The Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill published last year consulted on making some elements of training mandatory. This would mean that every authority would decide which training sessions within their authority would be mandatory. We are aware that this draft bill will be updated shortly; this is expected to happen in January 2017 and that the above will not be changed in the next draft bill.

National discussions with officers in the field have been underway under the leadership of the Welsh Local Government Association and a great number of local authorities agree that some specific fields of training should be identified as mandatory in order to ensure that members have the necessary knowledge and understanding to make sensible decisions. Therefore, although training is not statutory, there is strength in identifying the main mandatory training topics on a Wales level, so that the learning base of each Member is robust.

2.5. In terms of publishing attendance at training, this could be done via modern.gov in the way that attendance at committees is currently published. We need to do some further work to see how it would be possible to incorporate any information about other training in this e.g. e-learning or webinars. As we are now midway through the final year of this Council, it is recommended that these arrangements should be adopted by the next Council term.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROVISION

3.1 The Focus Group has met several times in recent months. The group is now trialling different devices. By using the different equipment for a specific amount of time, members will be able to evaluate them fairly in order to reach the right conclusion. There are several considerations in question, including how easy they are to use, how portable they are, cost, speed etc.

3.2. The group will meet again at the end of January in order to evaluate the equipment in full and reach a conclusion. This will then give plenty of time to place orders for the new equipment to be ready for May 2017.

3.3. The group has also considered arrangements to collect current equipment, as well as arrangements to collect equipment should a member leave during the term.