

<u>BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</u>	
Report to	The Chair and Members of the Democratic Services Committee
Report Subject	Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services
Report Author	Bernadette Elias Head of Policy and Performance
Report date	19th February 2018
Directorate	Corporate Services and Strategy
Executive Portfolio	Leader / Corporate Services
Date of meeting	29th March 2018
Date signed off by Monitoring Officer	N/A
Date signed off by Section 151 Officer	N/A
Date signed off by Chair	14th March 2018
Key words	Elected Member support, assessment.

Report Information Summary

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	To present the annual report of the Head of Democratic Services to the Democratic Services Committee.
2.	Scope of the Report
2.1	The Head of Democratic Services role under the Local Government (Wales) Measure includes providing an assessment of the arrangements in place to support Elected Members.
2.2	The report provides an overview of the current services and support provided to Members.
3.	Contribution to the National Well-Being Goals – Detail attached as Appendix 1
4.	Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CLT/Committees/Other groups
	The report makes reference to work that has been previously tasked to the Head of Democratic Services by Council.
5.	Recommendation/s for Consideration
5.1	That the Democratic Services Committee considers the options set out in paragraph 6 and recommends the preferred option to Council.

Why this topic is a priority for the Council?						
Single Integrated Plan (SIP)	Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP)	Performance Management Improvement Framework (PMIF)	Operating Model	Transforming Blaenau Gwent (TBG Programme)	Relevant legislation	Other (please state)
	X	X				<i>The Constitution</i>

Reporting Pathway							
Directorate Management Team (DMT)	Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)	Audit	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny	Executive	Council	Other (please state)
15/3/18	20/3/18		29/3/18			24/5/18	

Main Report

1.	Background and Context
1.1	The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to designate an officer to the statutory post of Head of Democratic Services (HDS).
1.2	The Democratic Services Committee appointed the Head of Policy and Performance to the role of HDS. The scope of the role is set out in the Council's Constitution and includes assessing arrangements that support Elected Members.
1.3	The Council must provide the HDS with resources that, in its opinion, are sufficient to allow the functions of the role set out in the Measure to be discharged.
2.	Performance Evidence and Information
2.1	In 2017, the HDS was tasked with undertaking a survey of Members to identify any specific areas for support. In discussion with Group Leaderships, the HDS attended Group meetings to ascertain any areas requiring additional support. The HDS met separately with the Plaid Cymru candidate.
2.2	Members provided positive feedback on the support they received, including through the recently delivered Member Induction programme. The most pressing issue for Members at the time was arrangements for access and support to ICT. The issues were fed into the ongoing work and have been addressed as part of the Corporate Overview scrutiny forward work programme. Council agreed the approach at its meeting on 11 th January, 2018.
2.3	Other comments included the re location of Member pigeon holes to the Members room, which has been undertaken. Replacement of the hearing loop system and micro phone equipment in the Council Chamber has been raised by the HDS and is being considered as part the maintenance activity of corporate buildings for the new financial year.

	<p>Summary of current service and support for Elected Members:</p> <p>2.5 Member Development and Training: The Council has achieved level 1 of the Welsh Local Government (WLGA) Charter award for Member development and support. The WLGA feedback concluded that the support provided to councillors in Blaenau Gwent continues to be of a very high standard. Work is currently underway to re submit for assessment against the Charter. The resubmission deadline is May 2018.</p> <p>2.6 The Member training and development programme is in place and is monitored via Democratic Services Committee. The programme reflects key areas including those identified by Members and those on the forward work programme of the Scrutiny committees. The Constitution includes role descriptions for Members. A Member constitutional working group has been established supported by relevant officers.</p> <p>2.7 Following the Local Government Elections in 2017, a comprehensive induction programme was delivered. This includes both in house and externally facilitated sessions. There was positive Member feedback on the induction programme which included an informal 'Market Day' session with senior officers attending to give an insight to the Directorate work. Member feedback on the Market Day session was very positive.</p> <p>2.8 Training and development support for Members in relation to agile working and ICT has been recognised as a need from the previous PDR process. A task and finish group of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee was established and reported back to the committee. Council agreed an approach in January 2018. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new scheme and policy be adopted where the Council provided a laptop to each Member to a common specification, solely for Council business and free of charge; • Members would automatically be able to connect to the Council Wi-Fi in any Council building; • Members wishing to retain paper copies of agendas could
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	<p>do so if requested. After an agreed period of time, consideration would be given to the cessation of paper copies of agendas, following the recommendations from the Paperless Environment Task and Finish Group; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy would require sufficient resources to provide initial and follow up/refresher training including the development of “Member Champions”.
2.9	<p>In agreement with the two Group Leaderships the Personal Development Review (PDR) procedures for Members was suspended for 2017 until the new Council was in place, at which point it was agreed to be subject to a review by the HDS. The revised Member PDR process and competency framework is subject to a separate report.</p>
2.10	<p>A Mentoring Scheme for Members has been established and agreed via Democratic Services Committee and Council. Expressions of interest for Members who wish to volunteer to become mentors have been received. The HDS has delivered a training session on the agreed scheme and principles of mentoring. Members are able to self-select and participate in the scheme. Advice and guidance from the HDS will be available if requested.</p>
2.11	<p>Work to set out Support arrangements for Members appointed to sit on outside bodies was identified as a need by Members through the PDR process. A proposed approach for support was presented to Democratic Services Committee who recommended it to Council. Work is underway so that the arrangements can be implemented following the AGM. The approach has been shared with other local authorities via the officer network facilitated by the WLGA.</p>
2.12	<p>The HDS role includes responsibility for the scrutiny function. Development and support arrangements for the scrutiny function include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny meetings; • Procedures to support the function including forward work programme development, agenda setting meetings and ongoing evaluation; and • An action plan monitored via Democratic Services Committee. The action plan includes the most recent Wales Audit Office

	review proposals for improvement in relation to the scrutiny function.
2.13	The arrangements to support the agenda management of the Executive Committee and Council and are in place and the Executive handbook has been revised and agreed by the Executive on 27 th September, 2017. Scrutiny, Executive and Council forward work programmes are in place and supported by the HDS. The recent externally facilitated session with the Executive and CLT received very positive feedback.
2.14	In accordance with requirements under the Local Government Measure, each committee has considered the timings of meetings to establish Members preference, and this has informed the timings of the current cycle of meetings.
2.15	Work to support the production of the Annual Reports of Members continues to be provided. The annual report format was endorsed by Democratic Services Committee in 2013 who recommended it to Council for approval. Five Members provided annual reports covering the 2016/17 period. In recognition of the number of new members following the local elections, details on the process and support for annual reports for Members is subject to a separate report.
3.	Risk Implications
3.1	There are potential risks associated with option two if the levels of support arrangements for Members are deemed by Council not to be sufficient.
4.	Financial Implications
4.1	The Member development budget is £1,940. There is a current overspend of £2,317.
4.2	The cost of replacement equipment in the Council chamber will need to be scoped.
4.3	Reduced funding to the WLGA from Welsh Government has a potential impact on the type and cost of training and support they can offer local authorities. This is being mitigated by considering alternative sources and expertise including delivery of the member programme in house and via national networks which

	share opportunities to access external support
5.	Staffing/Workforce Development Implications
5.1	Following the internal review tasked to the HDS, the democratic services team which form part of business support have returned under the line management responsibility of the HDS.
5.2	The HDS is able to make recommendations including with regard to the appointment, organisation and management of staff discharging democratic services functions.
5.3	The HDS may arrange for the discharge of democratic services functions by staff provided, and can delegate functions to staff as they feel appropriate. The final decision on resources provided rests with Council.
6.	Options for Consideration
6.1	<p>Option one</p> <p>(i) The Democratic Services Committee recommends the report to Council for approval on the basis that it is satisfied there is a sufficient level of support for Elected Members.</p> <p>Option two</p> <p>(i) The Democratic Services Committee provides comment and amendments to the report of the HDS prior to recommending it to Council.</p>
7.	Impact Assessment Against Proposals / Options
7.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking for the long term The Member support arrangements look to the longer term and in recognition of the increasing complexity of the roles Members undertake. • Taking an integrated approach Elements of the support for Members are inter related, for example the PDR process informing the member development programme and specific support requested such as support for Members appointed to outside bodies. • Taking a preventative approach The content of the induction programme is aimed to give Members a solid grounding and prepare them to meet their roles and responsibilities for the future.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating The training and development programme for Members includes elements of both internal and external support. • Involvement Opportunities to maximise engagement in the range of training and support arrangements by Members will assist them in meeting future demands of their roles. PDR's are offered to all Members under the current procedures.
7.2	<p>Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</p> <p>The Member development programme was subject to an Equality impact assessment screening with no adverse impact on protected characteristics identified.</p> <p>Language preference for current Members has been established, and the language preference on new Members will be sought.</p>
8.	Conclusion
8.1	The council is committed to provide the appropriate level of support to Elected Members to enable them to fulfil their roles.
8.2	The range of support provided to Elected Members set out in section 2 indicates that Council can have a level of assurance that the provision is relevant and appropriate.

Assess how well your project / activity will result in multiple benefits for our communities and contribute to the national well-being goals.		
Description of the Well-being goals	How will your project / activity deliver benefits to our communities under the national well-being goals?	Is there anyway to maximise the benefits or minimise any negative impacts to our communities (and the contribution to the national well-being goals)?
<p>A prosperous Wales An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</p>	<p>As referenced in the report the Corporate Overview scrutiny committee forward work programme has included an item on the paperless environment, including work through a task and finish group.</p>	
<p>A resilient Wales A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).</p>		
<p>A healthier Wales A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.</p>	<p>The increasingly complex roles Members have is recognised and reflected in the support for Members, including in practical terms such as establishing timings of meetings for each Committee. The Induction programme includes a range of information from legal requirements to practical issues.</p>	

Description of the Well-being goals	How will your project / activity deliver benefits to our communities under the national well-being goals?	Is there anyway to maximise the benefits or minimise any negative impacts to our communities (and the contribution to the national well-being goals)?
<p>A more equal Wales A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).</p>	<p>The PDR process and Member Induction and ongoing development programme aim to provide support that is informed by both individual and organisational need.</p>	
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.</p>	<p>An overview of key corporate duties and legislation such as Equalities and corporate parent responsibilities is included in the induction programme. These topics will continue to be reflected in the ongoing Member development programme.</p>	
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.</p>	<p>Language preference of current Elected Members has been established. Arrangements will be put in place to establish the language preference of any new Members following the election. The Welsh Language standards include those in relation to democratic arrangements and processes.</p>	
<p>A globally responsible Wales A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.</p>		