

Public Document Pack



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa,
Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0PA
ceredigion.gov.uk

14 September 2023

Dear Sir / Madam

I write to inform you that a Meeting of the Democratic Services Committee will be held at NEUADD CYNGOR CEREDIGION, PENMORFA, ABERAERON AND REMOTELY VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 10.00 am for the transaction of the following business:

1. **Apologies**
2. **Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests**
3. **To consider the Minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising (Pages 3 - 6)**
4. **To consider a report on amendments to the Democratic Services Committee Terms of Reference (Pages 7 - 10)**
5. **To consider a report on proposals to conduct a survey of all Councillors in relation to research facilities (Pages 11 - 18)**
6. **To consider a report on amendments to the Ceredigion County Council Petition Scheme to include e-petitions (Pages 19 - 32)**
7. **To consider a report on the proposed WLGA Self-Assessment Framework (Pages 33 - 42)**
8. **Discussion upon a review of live-streaming additional meetings**
9. **To consider items for the forward work programme**
10. **Any other matter which the Chairperson decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee**

Members are reminded to sign the Attendance Register

A Translation Services will be provided at this meeting and those present are welcome to speak in Welsh or English at the meeting.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Edwards'.

Miss Lowri Edwards
Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

To: Chairman and Members of Democratic Services Committee
The remaining Members of the Council for information only.

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**Minutes of the Meeting of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
held at Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely via video
conference on Friday, 9 June 2023**

PRESENT: Councillors Elizabeth Evans (Chair) and Councillors Endaf Edwards, Gwyn James, Gareth Lloyd, Caryl Roberts and Mark Strong

Also in attendance: Councillor Wyn Thomas

Officers in attendance: Lowri Edwards (Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services), and Nia Jones (Corporate Manager, Democratic Services)

(10.00am - 11.10am)

1 Apologies

None.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

None.

3 To consider the Minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm as true the minutes of the meeting held 24 March 2023.

Matters arising

Members requested training on downloading Office 365 to personal devices, to include security and GDPR.

4 To consider the Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2022 - 2023

Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee, noting that the report is representative of the amount of work carried out by this Committee, and the importance of the work that they do.

Members thanked officers for preparing the report, noting that the revised format makes it much easier to read the report.

The report will now be presented to Council on 13 July 2023 for information.

5 To consider a report on a Draft Protocol for Attendance at Local Authority Multi-location Meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee, noting that the draft protocol has been created to reflect the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Welsh Government Draft Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance. It was noted that this is an active document which may need to be adapted to reflect any changes to the Welsh Government Guidance and operational developments.

Members noted that the protocol does not require that Chairs are present in the Council Chamber, and it was noted that the regulations allow every Member to choose their mode of attendance.

Members also asked regarding the practicalities of keeping their cameras switched on at all times when they may have limited internet access and asked whether all Councillors, including those that are not Committee Members to remain as 'Panellists' throughout the meeting to avoid the delay of being transferred on raising their hands. Members also noted the importance of promoting public awareness and involvement, which could be further enhanced within the document.

It was noted that the protocol aims to reflect the practice in person, where committee members normally sit around the Cabinet table, and non-Members sit in the outer rows. It was also noted that training would be provided to all Councillors, on the protocol to include training on meeting etiquette previously requested by the Committee.

It was also noted that supporting hybrid meeting, and the live-streaming is extremely resource intensive, and that there are developments underway to amend the current live-streaming processes.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council the approval of the Draft Protocol for Attendance at Local Authority Multi-location Meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings.

6 To consider a report on a discussion paper for Multi-location Meetings

A report was presented to Committee, noting that this is a discussion paper to seek the views of the Committee Members regarding an 18 month trial period where meetings for the Governance and Audit Committee and the Democratic Services Committee are held on a remote only basis.

Members noted their support to the trial, stating that the current hybrid approach to the Governance and Audit Committee is extremely challenging to Members attending from the Council Chamber, due to the Chair being in remote attendance. They also noted that including the Democratic Services Committee within the trial would provide them with an excellent insight, and direct experience of the remote only method.

Members noted that it should be clear that this is a trial period, and that hybrid meetings will automatically resume after 18 months, subject to this committee recommending to Council that it continues and Council approves the arrangements. Officers noted that a report would be presented to this committee to include feedback from both committees.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend the trial period for remote only meetings for the Democratic Services Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee to Council, at its meeting on 13 July 2023.

7 To consider a report on a Member Development Strategy

A report was presented to the Committee noting that the Welsh Government Draft Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance states that “Councils could put together a member development strategy”. It was noted that this is not a statutory requirement, however a draft strategy has been prepared reflecting the current practice already in place in Ceredigion.

It was noted that the draft guidance provides a list of subjects for an on-going training programme of member development which could be included, and that it is recommended that Ceredigion County Council include the additional subjects within its training programme:

- Training on specific roles members may undertake such as governors or representatives on health boards, fire and rescue authorities or national parks including a short brief on the purpose of the role and the member’s responsibilities in keeping the council apprised of developments on the body that they are representing the council on, the level of decision making that is delegated to them and how they may access assistance to support them in the role;
- Training on the role of the councillor as a local member, the delegation of functions to ward members and councillor calls for action.

Members noted that the training for representatives on various external bodies would need to have a focus on the role of the Councillor as a representative of the Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to

- a) Approve the addition of the 2 additional items to the induction programme as noted above; and
- b) To recommend that Council approve the Member Development Strategy.

8 To consider a report on Councillors' 'Calls for Action'

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to the committee noting the historical background to the ‘Call for Action’ legislation. It was noted that this is not currently reflected in the Council’s Constitution, and that the aim of this protocol was to highlight this course of action to Members, noting that this does not supersede the current arrangements in relation to scrutiny and that a proforma for presenting ‘Calls for Action’ has been prepared to assist Members through the process.

Members noted that this action should be seen as a last resort, and that it is an important mechanism where all other attempts have failed.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend the protocol for consideration by Council following consideration by the Constitution Working group.

9 To consider a report on Chair Announcements

A report was presented to the committee noting that the recommendation had initially been put forward by the Group Leaders. It was noted that there

are current inconsistencies with regards to items presented during the Council's 'Personal Matters' agenda item and that a survey of all Authorities in Wales had found that the Council's current practice is not reflected elsewhere and that the practice was to have 'Chair's Announcements' rather than 'Personal Matters'.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans, Chair of the Committee noted that during previous meetings of the Council, more time had been allocated to presenting personal matters than that of discussion on important matters such as the Council's budget. Members noted that it is important that the Councillors voice is not lost, however the proposed change would ensure greater fairness, and it was recommended that the Chair's Announcements stipulates the relevant Councillor and Ward.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that Council approve the Chair's Announcements, stipulating the inclusion of the relevant Councillor and Ward.

10 To consider a report on The Jo Cox Commission on Civility

The Committee considered the correspondence received from the Jo Cox Civility Commission, and it was **RESOLVED** to ask that Lowri Edwards writes to the Commission to offer our support and readiness to be involved in the information gathering stage.

11 To consider items for the forward work programme

Members discussed items for the Forward Work Programme, which included the following:

- a) A Protocol on Councillor Wellbeing and Personal Safety;
- b) Guidance for Multi-Member Ward representatives;
- c) A Protocol for research facilities;
- d) A revision to the Committee's Terms of Reference; and
- e) A review of the broadcasting of additional meetings.

It was noted that the above matters are reflective of the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory guidance, and it was agreed to bring forward the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee from 7 December to 20 September 2023 to consider these matters.

12 Any other matter which the Chairman decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee

None.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held
on 20 September 2023**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to:	Democratic Services Committee
Date:	20.09.2023
Title:	Democratic Services Committee Terms of Reference
Purpose of report:	To consider amendments to the Democratic Services Committee Terms of Reference

Background

The Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales, supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, section 13.0 Democratic Services Committees Statutory Guidance provide an outline of the functions of the Democratic Services Committee.

The current Terms of Reference, as published in the Council's Constitution have been reviewed to reflect the content of the guidance, and it is recommended that the following amendments are made to the Terms of Reference of the Democratic Services Committee.

a) Introduction

To include a reference in the introduction to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principle Councils in Wales.

Also to include the following statement: *'DSC meetings and sub-committees are to be open to the public as is normal in council meetings and subject to the same regime of accessibility in general'*. (as per section 13.15 of the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance)

b) Terms of Reference

To include the following within the 'Terms of Reference' of the Committee section: *'The Democratic Services Committee can decide how it carries out these functions'* (as per section 13.10 of the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance)

c) Membership

To stipulate within the 'Membership' section that the 6 Members will be 'politically balanced', and: *'It should consist solely of councillors and cannot include more than one member of the executive or assistant to the executive. Any executive member must not be the council leader'*. (as per section 13.11 of the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance)

d) Chairman

To include the following within the 'Chairman' section: *'The Chair must not be a member of any of the political groups represented in executive. The exception to this is when a council has no opposition groups. In this case, any member of the DSC can be appointed as chair provide the member is not a*

member of the executive.' (as per section 13.12 of the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance)

e) Frequency of Meetings

The guidance stipulates that the DSC committee must meet at least once a year, however the current Terms of Reference stipulates that the Committee will meet at least three times in any municipal year. It is recommended that the section 'Frequency of Meetings' is amended to state: *'The Committee is required to meet at least once in any municipal year, however the Democratic Services Committee will aim to meet at least 3 times in any municipal year'*. It is also recommended that where the Terms of Reference state that meetings may be convened if the full Council so decides or at least a third of the member of the Committee demands a meeting, that the following statement is added: *'There is no limit on the maximum number of meetings a DSC may hold.'* (as per section 13.15 of the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance)

The above recommended amendments can be viewed in the draft revised Democratic Services Committee Terms of Reference via track-changes in Appendix A.

Next Steps

For Members of the Democratic Services Committee to consider the draft amendments to the Democratic Services Committee Terms of Reference, and to make recommendations to the Council with regards to including the revised Terms of Reference in the Council's Constitution. The guidance also stipulates that the procedures relating to the operation of the Democratic Services Committee should be included in the Council's Constitution. Subject to approval by Council, any amendments will be put forward to the Constitution Working Group for adoption.

Recommendations: To consider the draft revised Terms of Reference, and to make recommendations to Council in relation to the proposed amendments.

Appendices: Democratic Services Committee Terms of Reference with proposed amendments

Background documents: Welsh Government Statutory and Non Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales;
The Local Government Act 2000;
The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011;
The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Name: Lowri Edwards

Job Title: Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

Date: 03.08.2023

Democratic Services Committee Terms of Reference

Section 16 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to establish a Democratic Services Committee in accordance with Statutory Guidance. The Terms of Reference are based on Chapter 3 of the Statutory Guidance, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Welsh Government Draft Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principle Councils in Wales.

DSC meetings and sub-committees are to be open to the public as is normal in council meetings and subject to the same regime of accessibility in general.

Terms of Reference of the Committee

The functions of the Democratic Services Committee are to:

- Carry out the local authority's function of designating the Head of Democratic Services (HDS)
- Keep under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to the HDS, in order to ensure that it is adequate for the responsibilities of the post
- Make reports, at least annually, to the full council in relation to these matters
- To consider, and make recommendations to the Council, concerning the timing of meetings
- To oversee the training and development of Members

The Democratic Services Committee can decide how it carries out these functions.

Membership

The Committee will comprise 6 politically balanced Members as appointed by the Council. It should consist solely of councillors, and cannot include more than one member of the executive or assistant to the executive. Any executive member must not be the Council Leader.

Chairman

The Chairman will be appointed by the Council and will serve for a term of two consecutive municipal years (in accordance with Article 5.2 of Part 2 of the Constitution). The Chair must not be a member of any of the political groups represented in the executive. The exception to this is when a council has no opposition groups. In this case, any member of the Democratic Services Committee can be appointed as chair provided the member is not a member of the executive.

Co-option

The Measure does not provide the Committee with powers to co-opt persons onto the Committee.

Sub-committees

The Committee may appoint sub-committees as and when required and delegate functions to them.

The Committee will appoint the Chairman of any sub-committee.

Attendance to answer questions

The Committee (and any sub-committee) has the power to require the attendance of any Members or Officers of the Council to answer questions and can invite anyone else it likes to do so also. If a member or officer is required to attend they must answer any questions unless the question is one which they would be entitled to refuse in a court.

Access to information

The Committee's proceedings are subject to the Council Access to Information Rules as found in Document B Part 4 of the Constitution.

Frequency of meetings

The Committee is required to meet at least once in any municipal year, however the Democratic Services Committee will aim to meet at least three times in any municipal year.

A meeting of the Committee can also be convened if the full Council so decides or at least a third of the members of the Committee demands a meeting. There is no limit on the maximum number of meetings a Democratic Services Committee may hold.

The onus lies on the Chairman to ensure that meetings are held when required.

Welsh Government Guidance

The Committee must have regard to guidance from Welsh Ministers when exercising its functions.

Reports of the Head of Democratic Services

Any report presented to the Committee by the HDS must be considered by the Committee within three months. Similarly, any report made by the Committee must be considered by the full Council within three months.

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to:	Democratic Services Committee
Date:	20.09.2023
Title:	Proposal to conduct a survey of all councillors in relation to research facilities.
Purpose of report:	To consider deferring to Officer to carry out a survey of all councillors in relation to research facilities.

Background

The Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales, recommends that the Democratic Services Committee should consider the provision of Research Support and Services for Councillors as part of its considerations as to what constitutes sufficient resources for the Head of Democratic Services to discharge their functions. The guidance anticipated that this will mainly focus on signposting individual members to existing sources of information or available training, as well as pre-meeting briefings and targeted support for example when leading on a task and finish investigation, or in response to a call for action.

It goes on to state that *“It is anticipated that the DSC will begin this process by identifying the baseline of support which is already available to members, then work with members to identify how this support and its parameters could be developed over time.”*

Appendix A includes information relating to support currently available to Councillors.

It should be noted that the guidance does not stipulate that this is a statutory requirement, however it does suggest that the committee ‘should consider’ this.

In order to understand the need or demand for research facilities, it is recommended that Democratic Services Committee delegate responsibility to Officers to survey members in relation to the current baseline of support available, and to identify what additional support is required and how this support could be developed over time, in order to identify if there is a case for the provision of additional resources (Appendix A)

On completion of this survey, a report will be presented to the Democratic Services Committee to review the finding of the survey.

Recommendations:	To request that Officers survey Councillors in relation to the baseline support currently available to members and any additional support required.
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Appendices:	Appendix A – information relating to support currently available to Councillors
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Appendix B – draft survey

Background documents:

Welsh Government Statutory and Non Statutory
Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales;
The Local Government Act 2000,;
The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011;
The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act
2021.

Name:

Lowri Edwards

Job Title:

Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

Date:

03.08.2023

Appendix A

Baseline of support currently available to Members

In order to understand how it fits into the wider context from legislation and Welsh Government Guidance documents, there needs to be a thorough review of the existing support available which will then ensure that any new work programme is relevant and complements existing support available.

Below is a list of current provision for consideration by Councillors in completing the survey.

Support provided to the Democratic Services Committee

The Terms of Reference for the Democratic Services Committee outlines its functions in relation to Members' support. This includes:

- Keeping under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to the HDS, in order to ensure that it is adequate for the responsibilities of the post
- To consider, and make recommendations to the Council, concerning the timing of meetings
- To oversee the training and development of Members

The Committee also has the power to require the attendance of any Members or Officer of the Council to answer questions and can invite anyone else it likes to do so also. If a member or officer is required to attend they must answer any questions unless the question is one which they would be entitled to refuse in a court.

In addition to the requirements stipulated in the Terms of Reference, Officers also provide information and data relevant to the committee such as:

- Diversity in democracy;
- Hybrid attendance;
- Exit surveys.

It also conducts members' surveys such as:

- A survey of preferred meeting times, and dates
- A survey of Members' ICT requirements and training
- A learning and development survey
- An Overview and Scrutiny Self-Assessment Survey.

Data and analysis resulting from these surveys are shared with Members of the Democratic Services Committee.

Chair Briefings

In addition to providing training to Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, all Chairs are briefed in advance of the meeting on procedural matters such as:

- Details of persons that will be presenting reports, including Chairs of Scrutiny, and support officers

- Attendees and apologies
- Notification of declarations of interest and personal matters received prior to the meeting
- Procedures in relation to voting, recorded votes etc

Identifying areas for investigation by Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for deciding the content of the agenda, however in deciding items for the Forward Work Programme, the Scrutiny Officers provide guidance which includes topics taken from:

- The Corporate Strategy
- Business Plans
- The Corporate Risk Register
- Budget savings – proposals and impact
- Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Panel meetings
- Departmental input
- Continuing work.

The Scrutiny Officers provide support to Members by coordinating the requests of the committee with the relevant Officers, and external organisations. The Scrutiny Officers also draft a report on behalf of the Committee in conjunction with the Chair for consideration by Cabinet or Council.

Support for Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish investigations

Scrutiny Officers provide support to Members by arranging task and finish investigations and coordinating with relevant Officers within the Council or external organisations to collate the required information and to present reports to the relevant Committee.

Preparation of reports for committees

Officers from all services across the Council play a role in providing information, data and reports to committees upon their request. The relevant Corporate Lead Officer also provides detailed briefings to the Member of Executive presenting the report, and are present during the meeting to provide support should supplementary questions arise.

Training, Workshops and Briefings

The Democratic Services Committee oversees the induction and training programme for all Members. This includes a vast array of training from Code of Conduct to training specific to Committees such as Development Management and Licensing; Charing committees; the role and responsibilities of political Group Leaders; Scrutiny; Equalities; Welsh Language Standards; Safeguarding; Health and Safety and Lone working; Communication and Social Media; and Wellbeing of Future Generations to name but a few.

In addition to training activities, Councillors are provided with internal workshops on themes such as the School Transport Policy, the Housing Register Policy and

budgets, as well as workshops arranged in conjunction with external providers such as the Fire and Rescue Service, the Hywel Dda University Health Board and Hydrogen Power in order to get a better understanding of the role of external partners.

Briefings are also provided to Members on emerging issues such as the development at Hafan y Waun, and the Chief Executive of Ceredigion County Council also provides monthly briefings to Group Leaders for dissemination to their members.

ICT support

Members are provided ICT support directly from Customer Contact and ICT services on all matters relating to ICT and the technology provided to them.

Information available on the Council's website and Council reports

A vast amount of information is available on the Council's web-pages and provided in the form of reports to committees such as:

- The Statutory Director of Social services annual report
- The Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan Annual reports
- The Ceredigion Economic Strategy
- CYSUR/CWMPAS quarterly reports
- Childcare sufficiency reports
- Air Quality reports and Carbon Management
- Consultations, Engagement and Participation

Prior to requesting information or research, Members should consider whether the information that they require is already available in the public domain.

Performance and Improvement Services

The Performance and Improvement Team provide analytics on the performance of the Council, as well as external data such as the Census and its implications for Ceredigion. This is a useful resource, and first point of contact for potential research activity.

Media and Communication

The Ceredigion County Council Communication Team provide copies of all press-releases to all Members, in order that they are aware of any activities or developments that relate to them. The social media pages also provide information which Members can share to promote activities and information to their residents.

CLIC Enquiries

Members are able to access information directly via the CLIC portal.

External data providers - Data Cymru

There are several providers of external data that Members can access, such as the Ward Profile Data provided by Data Cymru:

<https://www.data.cymru/dashboards/localareaprofiles?q=lap23>

This provides information focussing on the Census 2021, by Ward and provides information relating to:

- People
- Employment and skills
- Health and Care
- Transport
- Housing
- Language and Identity

A link to data published by central government, local authorities and public bodies can also be viewed at: <https://www.data.gov.uk/>

Training will be provided to all Members on data and research during September 2023.

Support from colleagues, Group Leaders, and Political Parties

Members are able to access support, and shared experiences with colleagues, as well as Group Leaders and Political Parties. Members that are not affiliated to Political Parties are able to access information and support from the Local Government Association.

CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – SURVEY OF RESEARCH SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR COUNCILLORS

In accordance with the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales, Section 3, the Democratic Services Committee should consider the provision of research support and services to elected members by identifying the baseline of support which is already available to Members, then work with Members to identify how this support and its parameters could be developed over time, in order to identify if there is a case for the provision of additional resources.

1	Having considered the base-line support to Members currently identified, are there any other areas of support that you believe should be included in this list?
2	What support has been useful in your role as Councillor?
3	What could be improved?
4	What information / data do you require that is not currently available on the Council's website or reports provided to committees?
5	What information / data do you require that is not currently available via external providers such as Data Cymru, WLGA etc
6	Please list any areas of research that you may find useful to your role as Councillor, where this information is not already available in the public domain

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CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to:	Democratic Services Committee
Date:	20.09.2023
Title:	Ceredigion County Council Petition Scheme to include e-petitions
Purpose of report:	To consider amendments to Ceredigion County Council Petition Scheme to include e-petitions

Background

Section 42, Chapter 4 of The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on local authorities to set out a petition scheme, including electronic petitions. The Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales, supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 was finalised in June 2023. A draft revision of the current guidance relation to the Ceredigion County Council Petition Scheme is attached for consideration by the Democratic Services Committee.

The Council's current Petition Protocol is outlined in Document O of the Council's Constitution. This document has been reviewed to reflect the requirements of the legislation in relation to electronic petitions as well as the draft statutory guidance which includes:

- A clear explanation of the matters about which the council will accept petitions, including the criteria for making a decision to accept or reject a petition;
- How and where advice will be given to petitioners to enable them to engage productively with the process, including measures in place for disabled people and individuals with long term health conditions and neurodiversity;
- A clear understanding of the different stages in the petitions scheme, with an explanation of what thresholds will be used to determine the transition from one stage to another;
- How petitions fit in with other opportunities for the public to be involved – and signposting to other opportunities, either as complementary to a petition or instead of it, including connecting the potential petitioner with their ward councillor;
- The correct body to consider a given petition. It is right for petitions to be heard by a variety of different bodies, although the default is likely to be full Council unless it is seen as especially useful for the petition to be heard by a committee that focuses specifically on the subject matter of the petition itself;
- Petition schemes will need to consider where petitions are considered in scrutiny committees. These committees have no power to act on petitions but could (for example) adopt petitioners' arguments as formal recommendations;

- The rights of petitioners to speak in meetings, and how this engages with wider public speaking rights, and rights to make deputations;
- How and within what timeframe the council will provide feedback to the petitioner on the success or otherwise of their petition.

CEREDIGION'S PROPOSED PETITION SCHEME

In addition to the above requirements, consideration has been given to the following:

- a) Petitions will not be acceptable from other in-line petition systems**
The Guidance document does not stipulate the requirements in relation to this however, the recommendation within the petition scheme is reflective of the Wales Senedd practice
- b) Electronic Petitions may collect signature for a maximum period of 3 months**
The Guidance document does not stipulate the requirements in relation to this. The Wales Senedd (Standing Order 23) stipulates a maximum period of 6 months, however it is proposed that Ceredigion stipulate a maximum period of 3 months, in order to reflect a quicker response to local matters
- c) Petitions that are the same or substantially similar to a petition which closed less than a year earlier are inadmissible**
The Guidance document does not stipulate the requirements in relation to this however, the recommendation within the petition scheme is reflective of the Wales Senedd practice
- d) The correct body to consider a given petition.**
The guidance states that *'it is right for petitions to be heard by a variety of different bodies, although the default is likely to be full Council unless it is seen as especially useful for the petition to be heard by a committee that focuses specifically on the subject matter of the petition itself'*. The Council's Constitution recommends that petitions are heard by Cabinet. The scheme does however provide for an opportunity for Members to refer matters to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.
- e) Opportunities of petitioners to speak at the Committee**
Currently, the Constitution does not stipulate a right for the petitioner to speak at Committee, however there is already a mechanism for members of the public to request permission to speak during Scrutiny meetings.

The above recommended amendments can be viewed in the draft revised Petition Protocol available in Appendix A.

Next Steps

For Members of the Democratic Services Committee to consider the draft amendments to the Petition Protocol, and to make recommendations to the Constitution Working Group, for consideration prior to being presented to Council.

Recommendations: To consider the draft revised Petition Protocol, and to make recommendations to the Constitution

Working Group in relation to the proposed amendments.

Appendices:

Draft revised Petition Protocol

Background documents:

Welsh Government Statutory and Non Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales;
The Local Government Act 2000;
The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011;
The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Name:

Lowri Edwards

Job Title:

Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

Date:

03.08.2023

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Ceredigion County Council Petition Scheme

Determination of the Proper Form of Petitions

Ceredigion Council has made the following determination of the proper form of public petitions submitted under Section 44 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Means and format for submissions

1. Petitions may be submitted on paper or electronically using the Ceredigion County Council online petition system, or a combination of the two.
2. People can only sign a petition once. If they sign the petition online, they will be asked to verify their e-mail address. People cannot sign both an online and a paper petition and may be removed if it is proven that a petitioner has signed twice.
3. Petitions will not be accepted from other on-line petition systems.
4. Electronic Petitions may collect signature for a maximum period of 3 months.
5. For a paper petition the petition wording should be set out in full on each sheet (or side of a sheet) where signatures and addresses are asked for

Wording

1. Electronic petition wording must be set out bilingually in Welsh and in English.
2. Petitions should be submitted in good faith and addressed to Ceredigion County Council. They should call for Ceredigion County Council to take some specific action, for example:
'We call on Ceredigion County Council to...'

Information

The petition must clearly indicate:

1. The name of the petitioner, who may be an individual or an organisation. This includes anyone under the age of 18.
2. The petitioner's address, which must be in Ceredigion to which all communications concerning the petition should be sent.
3. A date for your petition to stop collecting signatures.

Admissible Petitions

Petitions must relate to the matters which fall under the jurisdiction of Ceredigion County Council, with the exception of the inadmissible criteria below.

Petitions that are not admissible

1. Petitions relating to anything which does not come under the Council's jurisdiction
2. Petitions that are the same, or substantially similar to a petition which was closed less than a year earlier
3. Petitions relating to planning or licensing applications

4. Statutory petitions, or petitions relating to Local Authority Referendums which falls under the Local Authorities (Referendums) (Petitions and Directions) (Wales) Regulations 2001
5. Petitions asking the Council to adjudicate, arbitrate or mediate personal or commercial interests this is the role of a court or tribunal)
6. Petitions on matters that are subject to legal proceedings in the courts
7. Petitions on matters that are already subject to determination by an ombudsman (or person with similar powers)
8. Petitions that are essentially Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, comments, compliments or complaints. Please see information on the Ceredigion County Council website as follows:
Freedom of Information Requests
<http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/data-protection-freedom-of-information/freedom-of-information/>
Submitting Comments, Compliments and Complaints:
<http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/comments-compliments-and-complaints/>
9. Petitions which raise issues of possible councillor misconduct will be taken as complains arising under the Local Government Act 2000 and will be reported to the Ethics and Standards Committee rather than considered under this petition scheme
10. Petitions relating to the jurisdiction of Town and Community Councils.

Petitions must not contain

1. Language which is offensive, intemperate or provocative. This not only includes obvious profanities, swear words and insults, but any language which a reasonable person would regard as offensive
2. Potentially false or potentially defamatory statements
3. Information which is prohibited from being published by an order of a court or a body or person with similar power
4. Materials which is potentially confidential, commercially sensitive, or which may cause personal distress or loss
5. Any commercial endorsement, promotion of any product, service or publication or statements that amount to advertisements;
6. The names of officials of public bodies, unless they are part of the senior management of those organisations;
7. The names of family members of elected representatives or officials of public bodies;
8. The names of individuals, or information where they may be identified, in relation to criminal charges;
9. Issues for which a petition is not the appropriate channel (for example, correspondence about a personal issue).

In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently. If this is the case we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which may apply.

Submitting an e-petition using the Council's online system.

The Council's online petition system can be accessed here: [xxxxxxx](#)

You will be asked to input the following information:

- a) Title and the text of the petition
- b) Your name
- c) Your e-mail
- d) Your Address
- e) A date for your petition to stop collecting signatures. Petitions may collect signatures for a maximum period of 3 months. It might be worth bearing in mind that the Council will not consider your petition until after it has finished collecting signatures.

Acknowledging receipt of submission of an electronic petition

Once you have submitted your petition, you will receive an e-mail confirming that it has been received. Democratic Services will then consider it against the rules for petitioning the Council as set out above.

If your petition is admissible as you have worded it, it be published on our website within 10 working days of receipt and can begin to collect signatures. We will confirm this by e-mail and send you the link to your petition.

If your petition is inadmissible, we will let you know and tell you the reason that it cannot go forward. It might be that the issue raised by your petition is admissible in principle, but there are some aspects of the wording which fall outside the rules. In these situations the Democratic Services team will contact you to suggest ways in which you can change the wording so that it complies fully with the rules. Once you are happy with the final wording, your petition will be published within 10 working days of confirmation of the revised wording and can begin collecting signatures.

If your petition is inadmissible as set out in the rules above and cannot be rectified by means of amending the wording, we will let you know and tell you the reason that it cannot go forward. The title and text of the petition will be published online as part of the list of inadmissible petitions, along with an explanation about why it wasn't admissible.

Handing in your petition

For e-petitions, the first working day following the date stipulated to stop collecting signatures will be deemed to be the 'handing in' date. The e-petition will then be forwarded to the relevant Corporate Lead Officer, or in their absence, the relevant Corporate Director.

Any paper petition should be received by a Member, Chief Executive, Corporate Director or Corporate Lead Officer.

Any petition received should be immediately forwarded to the relevant Corporate Lead Officer, or in his / her absence, the relevant Corporate Director for the topic in question.

Acknowledging Receipt of all petitions

A Democratic Services Officer will acknowledge receipt of the petition within 10 working days of the 'submission date'. The admissibility of electronic petitions are verified at the outset of the process, however if any paper petition is deemed to be inadmissible for the reasons outlined in the section above, you will be informed of the reason why it cannot go forward.

NOTE - Petitions should be acknowledged by writing to the first signatory to the petition, or to the person submitting the petition if it is accompanied by a covering letter, or if it is submitted electronically.

Steps taken by the Council in response to a petition received

The Democratic Services Officer will forward a copy of the front sheet of the petition, together with an estimate of the number of signatories, to the relevant Corporate Lead Officer / Corporate Director / Chief Executive. The Head of Democratic Services shall maintain a register of all petitions received.

The Democratic Services Officer will report receipt of the petition to the next available Cabinet meeting and will retain custody of the original petition. The exact wording of the petition title will be reported to Cabinet, along with number of petitioners. This information will appear on the Cabinet agenda.

The relevant Corporate Director / Corporate Lead Officer will take the petition into account in making any delegated decision and will refer to it in any report to Cabinet regarding the topic in question.

The relevant Corporate Director / Corporate Lead Officer will notify the person submitting the petition of any outcome resulting from the petition.

Other Engagement Opportunities

The relevant Cabinet Member will be made aware of the petition, and where the subject matter affects particular wards, the councillors representing those wards will also be notified of the receipt of the petition.

This will provide an opportunity for those Members to connect with the petitioner and to consider alternative or complimentary methods of dealing with the matter, such as submitting a letter requestion consideration of parking restrictions in a particular area or referring a matter to Scrutiny for consideration.

Equality and the Welsh Language

In implementing the Petition Protocol, Ceredigion County Council will make regard to the statutory duties in respect of equalities, Welsh Language and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Data protection and GDPR

We will keep all petitions for 6 years. After that time it will be safely and securely destroyed.

PETITIONS PROTOCOL

1. Any petition (excluding a petition received in response to a Planning application or a Licensing matter) should be received by a Member, Chief Executive, Corporate Director or Corporate Lead Officer.
2. Any petition received by a member of staff or Member should be immediately forwarded to the relevant Corporate Director, or in his / her absence, the relevant Corporate Lead Officer for the topic in question.
3. The relevant Cabinet Member (and local Member where appropriate) should be made aware of the petition.
4. The relevant Corporate Director / Corporate Lead Officer will acknowledge receipt of the petition within two working days of receipt and forward a copy of the front sheet of the petition, together with an estimate of the number of signatories, to the Chief Executive and to the Head of Democratic Services. The Head of Democratic Services shall maintain a register of all petitions received.
5. The relevant Corporate Director / Corporate Lead Officer will report receipt of the petition to the next available Cabinet meeting and will retain custody of the original petition. The exact wording of the petition title will be reported to Cabinet, along with number of petitioners. This information will appear on the Cabinet agenda.
6. The relevant Corporate Director / Corporate Lead Officer will take the petition into account in making any delegated decision and will refer to it in any report to Cabinet or Council (as appropriate) regarding the topic in question.

NOTE

Petitions should be acknowledged by writing to the first signatory to the petition, or to the person submitting the petition if it is accompanied by a covering letter.

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2.0 Statutory Guidance on Petitions

Status of this Guidance

2.1 This is statutory guidance made under section 44 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act).

Purpose of this Guidance

2.2 This guidance is to support councils in the preparation and maintenance of petition schemes aimed at enabling communities to explore support for specific issues to inform council deliberations.

What the Act requires

2.3 Section 42 of the 2021 Act requires principal councils to make and publish a petition scheme setting out how the council intends to handle and respond to petitions including electronic petitions.

2.4 The petition scheme must as a minimum set out:

- a) how a petition may be submitted to the council;
- b) how and by when the council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;
- c) the steps the council may take in response to a petition received by it;
- d) the circumstances (if any) in which the council may take no further action in response to a petition;
- e) how and by when the council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.

2.5 A principal council must review its petition scheme from time to time and, if the council considers it appropriate, revise the scheme.

2.6 If a principal council revises or replaces a petition scheme, it must publish the revised or new scheme.

Designing a petition scheme

2.7 A petition scheme should not be considered as the sole method of receiving public views on matters. Its design and parameters should be set in the context of the council's public participation strategy and informed by the other participation pathways available to members of the public. Therefore, as part of a suite of pathways used as part of the council's wider public participation strategy, it can be a powerful tool in gauging support for specific courses of

action.

- 2.8 Well designed and resourced petition systems, working in conjunction and harmony with other participation pathways can have a range of benefits for the public and councils. For example, petitions enable communities to quickly highlight the issues which are of the most concern to them to the council, they can add weight to representations made by ward councillors on their behalf and provide a focus for community discussion. In turn, councils gain valuable insight into the concerns of their communities and can then support communities in addressing these issues.
- 2.9 Petitions should not be considered as a nuisance or threat and should be considered as a good opportunity to hear the views of the public, whether in support or not of something the council may be considering or intending to do.
- 2.10 Councils should, when designing petition schemes, think about the process from the point of view of petitioners, including understanding what petitioners might think “success” will look like at different stages in the process, and how the process can be made as transparent and streamlined as possible.
- 2.11 Councils should have regard to their statutory duties in respect of equalities, Welsh language and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 when preparing their petition scheme.
- 2.12 Petition schemes should be developed not just to ensure a fair and robust process but also to provide a helpful and positive experience for those people who take the time to submit and promote petitions. This is likely to involve consideration of the following issues:
- A clear explanation of the matters about which the council will accept petitions, including the criteria for making a decision to accept or reject a petition;
 - How and where advice will be given to petitioners to enable them to engage productively with the process, including measures in place for disabled people and individuals with long term health conditions and neurodiversity;
 - A clear understanding of the different stages in the petitions scheme, with an explanation of what thresholds will be used to determine the transition from one stage to another;
 - How petitions fit in with other opportunities for the public to be involved – and signposting to other opportunities, either as complementary to a petition or instead of it, including connecting the potential petitioner with their ward councillor;
 - The correct body to consider a given petition. It is right for petitions to be heard by a variety of different bodies, although the default is likely to be full Council

unless it is seen as especially useful for the petition to be heard by a committee that focuses specifically on the subject matter of the petition itself;

- Petition schemes will need to consider where petitions are considered in scrutiny committees. These committees have no power to act on petitions but could (for example) adopt petitioners' arguments as formal recommendations;
- The rights of petitioners to speak in meetings, and how this engages with wider public speaking rights, and rights to make deputations;
- How and within what timeframe the council will provide feedback to the petitioner on the success or otherwise of their petition.

2.13 Councils are encouraged to explore what would constitute good practice around the framework for petition schemes set out in this guidance. For example, what might be an appropriate signature threshold for the consideration of a petition and how and when this threshold would be kept under review. This would support a balance between local discretion based on the size of the council, the nature of the scheme and its relationship to other participation pathways in the council and consistency for the members of the public who may be engaged with multiple councils or move from one council area to another.

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CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to: Democratic Services Committee

Date: 20.09.2023

Title: WLGA - Self-Assessment

Purpose of report: To consider proposed Self-Assessment framework by the WLGA, and provide feedback

Background

In response to The Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales, the Wales Local Government Association (WLGA) has proposed a framework for Self-Assessment incorporating support, information, guidance and development needs that councils can use to develop their own approach to self-assessment recognising their local needs and priorities (Appendix A)

The WLGA is currently consulting with all Local Authorities in Wales to seek their view on the proposed framework, before the end of October 2023.

Recommendations: To consider the proposed protocol and note any comments or recommendations to feedback to the WLGA

Appendices: Appendix A – Self-Assessment Framework

Background documents: Welsh Government Statutory and Non Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales;
The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Name: Lowri Edwards

Job Title: Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

Date: 10.08.2023

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From Charter to Self-Assessment, the Evolution of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development

Consultation July 2023

Background

Twenty years ago, support and development for councillors in Wales was less well established than it is today. In 2002, the first improvement team at the WLGA (then Syniad), worked with every council and a cross party group of councillors to identify what further support and training opportunities councillors would find useful. Councils requested that good practice in this area should be agreed, described, and disseminated.

In response to this request, and in line with wider UK practice, the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development was co- developed by the WLGA and councils to:

- provide a framework for good practice across Wales,
- be an incentive for councils to provide their councillors with the support and development they needed, and
- provide assurance to councillors that they were being given the best support possible.

Over the last 20 years, the Charter has been further developed and instrumental in both enabling and recognising local good practice. The majority of councils, national parks and fire and rescue authorities have been awarded the Charter, whilst others have used it as a framework to identify good practice and check that they have effective support mechanisms in place.

Since the inception of the Charter, the local government landscape has changed significantly. The role of councillors has become even more challenging and wide ranging. Resources are scarce and ways of working post Covid radically different. Councils now have more sophisticated and well-established approaches to councillor support. The Welsh Government has introduced legislation with statutory guidance for councillors and democratic services. The improvement landscape has also evolved. In 2021-22 a new Improvement Programme was launched to support sector-led improvement across local government in Wales. Leaders and chief executives have expressed a commitment to sector-led improvement, underpinned by peer challenge, support and mutual aid.

Against this backdrop, the Charter has been reviewed by the WLGA and councils represented by their Heads of Democratic Services. We recognise that although the Charter provided a framework for good practice, impetus for, and recognition of councillor support in the past, there is now a need for a different framework which reflects a more progressive approach to sector led improvement, recent WG legislation, statutory and other guidance and which recognises the increasingly limited resources available in councils.

A Councillor Support Self-Assessment Framework.

Proposal

We propose that the existing Charter be replaced by a voluntary self-assessment framework that focusses on the support provided for councillors to deliver the outcomes needed by their communities. The framework aims to cover all aspects of good practice in councillor support. However, as priorities and resources differ between councils, it would be for councils to decide locally how much of the framework to use and which sections should be prioritised.

The framework would be developed according to the following principles:

1. Aims of the framework

- To provide assurance to councils that councillors are provided with the support, information, guidance, and development needed to enable them to secure the best possible outcomes for their communities.
- To provide an ambitious but pragmatic national framework of good practice which recognises legislative requirements, statutory and other guidance, the expressed needs of councillors and widely accepted examples of what works.

2. Principles for development

- To develop the framework collaboratively with councils, WLGA and other stakeholders to ensure that it meets needs and reflects national aspirations.
- To develop a framework which works with the wider programme for improvement and self-assessment in Wales with a potential to develop as part of the peer review programme if required. Councils may decide that this self-assessment should be led by democratic services committees.
- To develop a framework that reflects the needs of all councillors regardless of political party or independent status.
- To provide opportunities for practice sharing between councils.

3. Scope of the framework

The framework would cover:

- support and development for councillors in the widest sense to incorporate support provided by the whole council. Including, but not limited to, for example, democratic services, legal, digital, communications, learning and development teams, and directorates in their support for scrutiny, the executive and frontline councillors,
- the needs of all councillors before election, as new members and as experienced politicians,
- all councillor roles both within the council and in the community,
- the personal and 'professional' support to councillors within the influence of councils and
- the expectations placed on councils, officers, and councillors themselves.

4. Context

The framework will take account of, for example: the [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#), the [Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper](#), the [WLGA Exit Surveys](#), the [WG survey of councillors](#), the [Civility in public life initiative](#), the [WG Guidance for Principal Councils](#) and the emerging local government improvement and self-assessment framework.

5. An example framework for discussion

The framework below is based on the proposed aims and principles and offered as a starting point for discussions between all stakeholders. Councils are invited to comment on the suitability of the framework as a shared, national foundation document that councils can use to develop their own approach to self-assessment recognising their local needs and priorities.

Democracy	Outcomes sought: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are encouraged and enabled to stand for office. • Councillors understand their role and undertake it effectively and ethically. • Councillors can participate equally in council business. • Councillors are provided with the support, information, and resources they need. • Councillors represent the diversity of the people they serve. • Councillors are safe and protected from harm.
Theme	Questions to ask
Candidates and prospective candidates	<p>Does the council provide comprehensive information to prospective and official candidates about the role of the councillor, the council and any associated responsibilities and benefits?</p> <p>Are the approaches to the outreach to and information for prospective candidates made according to the need to encourage diversity in candidates and informed by the council's Diversity Declaration?</p> <p>Does the council signpost prospective candidates to information provided by the WG, WLGA, Electoral Commission and other organisations providing information for candidates?</p> <p>Do councillors, the council and local parties promote fair and respectful campaigning initiatives?</p> <p>Are prospective candidates informed about support for standing such as the Access to Elected Office fund?</p> <p>Are prospective candidates informed of the expectations placed on them to take part in induction and continuing professional development some of which will be mandatory?</p>
Councillors understand their role, responsibilities,	<p>Are all councillors, when elected or when being selected for a specialist position, provided with information and guidance about all aspects of their role?</p>

<p>and accountabilities.</p>	<p>Are all members provided with a competency framework to understand the skills and knowledge required of councillors? Have role descriptions (see WLGA models for examples) been formally adopted by the council and agreed by individual councillors? Have councillors serving on outside bodies been provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guidance on their role and responsibilities, • legal information such as their accountabilities and interests, • an explanation of the expectations placed on them by their nominating council, • requirements for communication with and reporting back from the outside body?
<p>Standards of conduct</p>	<p>Do all councillors understand their responsibilities in adhering to the local code of conduct? Have they received local guidance and any information provided by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales? Do standards committees and chairs understand their particular roles and responsibilities? Do political group leaders promote and maintain high standards of conduct and cooperate with the standards committee? Have all councillors formally committed to undertake all aspects of their role with civility and respect towards each other, the public and officers in all settings and media? Are instances of bullying, harassment and intimidation dealt with quickly and effectively?</p>
<p>The constitution</p>	<p>Do all councillors understand the constitution including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the roles, responsibilities, and limits to the roles of committees, • the role of individual councillors and officers, • councillor /officer protocols, • meeting practice, • standing orders, • rules of debate, • public engagement, • roles on the council where councillor training is deemed mandatory?
<p>Officer support</p>	<p>Does every committee, panel, forum etc. have an appropriate level of officer support? Are councillors supported adequately in their collaborative and joint work with other councils or organisations, for example on corporate joint committees? Are councillors supported in their community and case work? Are all councillors provided with the information and research they are entitled to according to the requirements of the</p>

	<p>statutory guidance issued under section 8 (1A) of the Local Government Wales Measure 2011.</p> <p>i.e. All councillors are proactively and also in response to specific requests, provided with information, data, briefing and training relating to their decision making, committee work and community and casework.</p> <p>This service is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided equitably to all members according to a published protocol which includes standards and response times, • exclusive of information for party political use, • provided confidentially where necessary and with due regard to data protection and other information law, • undertaken by the council or external agencies, • proportionate and provided within available resources. <p>Democratic services committees ensure that the service is effective and adequately resourced.</p> <p>Do overview and scrutiny committees have dedicated support from officers who can provide impartial research, support, and advice?</p> <p>Has the nature of any support information including research services has been clearly publicised and explained to all councillors?</p>
<p>Equality of access</p>	<p>Are the arrangements made for the business of the council flexible and do they enable councillors to participate fully regardless of personal circumstances?</p> <p>Do meeting times, modes and venues reflect the expressed needs of councillors as closely as possible?</p> <p>Do councillors have equal access to meetings regardless of any protected characteristics?</p> <p>Do the arrangements for multi-location meetings meet the needs of councillors?</p> <p>Are councillors and other meeting participants able to use both Welsh and English in meetings?</p> <p>Do council recess times reflect the needs of councillors with, for example, caring responsibilities?</p> <p>Are job share arrangements for cabinet members supported so that the workload is clear and appropriate?</p> <p>Are occasional physical spaces available for informal meetings on request?</p>
<p>Support for councillors' rights, safety, and wellbeing</p>	<p>Are councillors provided with guidance on their rights and benefits. For example, salaries, family absence, job sharing for members of the executive/cabinet, allowances, tax and benefits, pensions, indemnities, data protection and freedom of information?</p> <p>Are councillors actively encouraged to take up the salaries and allowances they are entitled to and is foregoing allowances and salaries actively discouraged?</p> <p>Does the council have an informal duty of care in place which demonstrates a proactive commitment to protecting councillors' health and wellbeing? Is this recorded and available for members to view? Does it set out the nature of any support available to councillors for example counselling</p>

	<p>and health checks and those responsible for helping councillors access this support?</p> <p>Are councillors provided with guidance on maintaining their wellbeing and personal safety? For example, lone working, bullying and harassment?</p> <p>Does the council act proactively to support councillors who experience bullying and harassment, including liaison with the police if appropriate?</p>
Diversity	<p>Has the council's Diversity Declaration been agreed by the Full Council? Is it monitored?</p> <p>Does the Diversity Declaration set out the actions that the council takes to ensure that councillors from underrepresented groups are actively encouraged to stand and given positions of responsibility wherever possible?</p> <p>Are councillors with special access requirements supported in their work in the council and community?</p>
Digital	<p>Have all councillors been provided with the equipment or funding to buy equipment, software, apps and connectivity required to undertake their role in the council offices, at home and when travelling in the council area?</p> <p>Does this include smart phones and laptops/tablets?</p> <p>Has full training been provided in the use of equipment and packages? Is technical support available?</p> <p>Are councillors sufficiently supported in their attendance at multilocation meetings?</p> <p>Are councillors supported in the use of social media through guidance on its use and online safety?</p>

Community	<p>Outcomes sought:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors lead, represent, advocate for, and enable their communities. • Councillors make sure that local resources are available and maximised. • Councillors encourage citizen participation and innovation. • Councillors work with communities to make them sustainable and resilient.
Theme	Questions to ask
Public awareness	<p>Does the council ensure that the public understand the role and responsibilities of councillors and of local MSs', MPs and community and town councillors?</p> <p>Do people know which tier of representative should be contacted for different local issues?</p> <p>Does the council publicise and promote the value of councillors to the community?</p>
Communities contacting councillors	<p>Are systems in place for local residents and community groups to contact their local ward councillor, and/or councillors with specific roles, if appropriate?</p>

	Are these systems and standards for their application clearly articulated and publicised to the public and councillors?
Surgeries and community meetings	Is the support provided by the council for councillors to organise surgeries and community meetings adequate? Do the relevant officers attend community meetings when requested by councillors where appropriate? Is the extent of the support available to councillors clearly articulated to all councillors?
Community engagement, leadership, and co-production	Are councillors informed, supported and resourced to enable their communities to be sustainable and resilient through, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal and informal community consultation • joint working with community leaders to meet needs at a local level, • co-production with local people of policies and actions which lead to successful communities? Is this support for councillors clearly articulated to all councillors?
Casework support	Are adequate systems in place to support councillors in their casework? Is this support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided equitably to all members according to a published protocol, • exclusive of party-political activities, • provided confidentially where necessary and with due regard to data protection and other information law, • proportionate and provided within available resources. Are councillors provided with guidance on managing casework. Through, for example casework management systems?
Oversight and safety	Does the council have clear protocols in place for protecting the personal safety and wellbeing of councillors which are clearly articulated to councillors and the public? Are the expectations and access of the community managed so that councillors are not contacted inappropriately? Are councillors provided with information and guidance on managing their relationships with the public and maintaining appropriate boundaries?

Learning	Outcome sought: Councillors have the skills and knowledge to deliver what local people need.
Themes	Questions to ask
The Councillor Development Strategy	Does the council have an effective and defined approach to councillor development which includes the expressed needs of every councillor and the needs of the organisation and community?

Personal development reviews	Does the council provide all councillors with useful personal support and development reviews undertaken by people competent to do so?
A learning and development Programme.	Does the council have an annual learning and development programme fully promoted to councillors? Can all councillors access the programme equally? Is the programme regularly monitored, evaluated, and updated? Are councillors able to identify positive outcomes from the training such as improved understanding and performance and specific outcomes for the community?
Induction	Are all new or returning councillors provided with a comprehensive, prioritised, multi session, programme of induction which enables councillors to participate effectively during their first year of office?
Quality of development	Do councillors believe that the learning activities are sufficiently stimulating, relevant and provided in progressive and appropriate styles? Does the council have a systematic and effective approach to commissioning, developing, delivering, and evaluating its training and development activities?
Participation	Do councillors attend all the development opportunities that are relevant to them? Is any non-participation addressed?
Learning from others	Do councillors participate in shared regional and national development opportunities? Are councillors encouraged and supported to collaborate with other councils and national bodies to act as political peers, mentors and in networks to share approaches to the role of councillor, identify good practice and to contribute to sector led improvement?