

## CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

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

### **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.

<b>Recommendations:</b>	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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<b>Appendices:</b>	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.

## Appendix B

### 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