

CARDIFF COUNCIL CYNGOR CAERDYDD

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE: 6 DECEMBER 2012

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER, LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

AGENDA ITEM:

ANNUAL REPORTS BY MEMBERS OF A LOCAL AUTHORITY

Reason for this Report

1. To consider draft guidance which has been published for consultation by the Welsh Government on the arrangements to be made by local authorities for the production of annual reports by elected members.

Background

2. Annual reports are intended to provide members of the public with information about their local councillor's activity. Section 5(1)(a) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires local authorities to make arrangements for "*each person who is a member of the authority to make an annual report about the person's activities*" during the previous municipal year.
3. A local authority must make arrangements enabling members to produce annual reports and publicise information about these arrangements to both members and the wider public. However, it should be noted that the production of individual annual reports by members is not mandatory. Local authorities must also provide appropriate support and advice to members in order to assist them in preparing and publishing an annual report.
4. Draft statutory guidance on the production of annual reports by elected members, which has been published for consultation by the Welsh Government, is set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

Issues

5. The draft guidance states that local authorities would be able to set their own conditions or restrictions on what is included in an annual report. For example, this could include setting a word limit on the content of annual reports or prescribing the format of the annual report for future publication. It also proposes the following standard items for inclusion in the content of annual reports:

- Role and responsibilities – to include details of membership of committees and outside bodies, as well as attendance records for these and full council;
 - Local activity – details of surgeries held and representations made on behalf of electors and the results of these representations;
 - Major projects – involvement in local, county or regional initiatives or projects; and
 - Learning and development – details of training & development events attended or undertaken and conferences & seminars attended.
6. The Committee may also wish to consider whether annual reports should be mandatory and include the following additional information:
- Other local activities – e.g. public meetings held;
 - Presence in the local community – e.g. attendance at Police and Communities Together (PACT) Meetings; School Governors; Fetes and Community Events etc.
 - Members' contact details, including website links/addresses for those members who maintain their own websites.
 - Details of the webcasting of Council meetings, where members of the public can watch their elected members in action.
7. Cabinet Members would also be able to produce separate annual reports on their activities in their executive roles.
8. Annual reports should include only factual, non-political information that relates specifically to activities undertaken by elected members when operating in their role as a councillor. In addition, members (e.g. in split wards) should not include information in annual reports that is critical of other members or which seeks to make direct comparisons of a member's performance with that of other members.
9. Local authorities would be able to determine how they intend to publish annual reports. The draft guidance includes the minimum requirement for local authorities to provide a link to a member's annual report from the relevant page of its website that relates directly to the individual member. Any further publicity of annual reports must be provided on the same basis to all members.
10. The Welsh Government anticipates that the first annual reports for 2012/13 would be published no later than the end of June 2013.

Reasons for Recommendations

11. To enable the Committee to consider the draft guidance which has been published for consultation by the Welsh Government and to inform the Council's future arrangements for the production and publication of annual reports by members.

Legal Implications

12. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 includes a requirement for Authorities to provide arrangements for members to make an annual report on their Council activities

Financial Implications

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Any support given to members in relation to their Annual Reports would be met from existing resources

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

1. note the draft guidance which has been issued for consultation by the Welsh Government; and
2. provide any comments to inform the Council's future arrangements for the production and publication of annual reports by members.

MELANIE CLAY

Chief Officer, Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

30 November 2012

APPENDIX A: Draft Guidance on Annual Reports – Welsh Government Consultation Document