

To: Members of the Democratic
Services Committee

Date: Friday, 15 March 2024

Direct Dial: 01824 712589

e-mail: democratic@denbighshire.gov.uk

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE** to be held at **10.00 am** on **FRIDAY, 22 MARCH 2024** in **Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and video conference**.

Yours sincerely

G. Williams
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (Pages 3 - 4)

Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at this meeting.

3 URGENT MATTERS

Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4 MINUTES (Pages 5 - 14)

To receive the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on 27 November 2023 (copy attached).

5 WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS 'HOW MEETINGS ARE HELD' (Pages 15 - 36)

To consider a report from the Democratic Services Manager Steve Price (copy attached), on the Working Group Recommendations – 'How Meetings Are Held'.

6 COUNCIL POLICY ON MEMBER TRAINING (Pages 37 - 46)

To consider a report on the Council Policy on Member Training (copy attached) from the Democratic Services Manager, Steve Price.

7 REGIONAL SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS (Pages 47 - 60)

To consider a report by the Scrutiny Co-ordinators on the Regional Scrutiny Arrangements (copy attached).

8 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 61 - 62)

To consider a report by the Democratic Services Manager, Steve Price on the Committee's forward work programme and associated issues (copy attached).

MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Michelle Blakeley-Walker
Councillor Ellie Chard
Councillor Karen Edwards
Councillor Hugh Evans
Councillor Justine Evans

Councillor Martyn Hogg
Councillor Brian Jones
Councillor Delyth Jones
Councillor Cheryl Williams
Councillor Elfed Williams

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

Code of Conduct for Members

DISCLOSURE AND REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

I, *(name)*

a *member/co-opted member of
*(*please delete as appropriate)*

Denbighshire County Council

CONFIRM that I have declared a ***personal / personal and prejudicial** interest not previously declared in accordance with the provisions of Part III of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, in respect of the following:-
*(*please delete as appropriate)*

Date of Disclosure:

Committee *(please specify)*:

Agenda Item No.

Subject Matter:

Nature of Interest:

*(See the note below)**

Signed

Date

*Note: Please provide sufficient detail e.g. 'I am the owner of land adjacent to the application for planning permission made by Mr Jones', or 'My husband / wife is an employee of the company which has made an application for financial assistance'.

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Monday, 27 November 2023 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ellie Chard, Karen Edwards, Hugh Evans, Justine Evans, Martyn Hogg (Chair), Delyth Jones and Cheryl Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Governance and Business (GW); Democratic Services Manager (SP); Lead Officer – Destination, Marketing and Communication Team (SO); Public Engagement Officer (JS); Legal Services Manager (LJ); Zoom Host (RT-J); and Committee Administrator (SLW)

Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities, Councillor Julie Matthews

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Elfed Williams

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ellie Chard declared a personal interest in item 8 as she is a member of Rhyl Town Council.

Councillor Martyn Hogg declared a personal interest in item 8 as he is a member of St. Asaph City Council.

3 URGENT MATTERS

None.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on 24 March 2023 and the Special meeting held on 9 June 2023 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on 24 March 2023 and the Special meeting held on 9 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 APPROVAL OF DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND DRAFT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION PRIOR TO RATIFICATION

The Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities, Councillor Julie Matthews, introduced the report (previously circulated).

The Lead Officer – Destination, Marketing and Communication Team, Sian Owen and the Public Engagement Officer, Jo Sutton were in attendance for the report.

The Council previously sought views of the Special Democratic Services Committee in June 2023 on the draft document prior to the final version being prepared for consultation.

The Strategy required the Council to ensure provisions were in place but no guidance had been provided on the approach that should be taken. The Policy aimed to guide officers' when considering approaches to engagement and consultation activities and the Participation Strategy highlighted existing provision and identified areas for improvement which were to be kept under review.

The Community Engagement Policy was a required output of the 2017-2022 Corporate Plan project – people were involved in shaping and improving services. This had been created following feedback from the residents' surveys that residents did not feel the council was consistent or transparent in its approach to engagement and consultation activities.

A 3-year research project had been developed.

It was found that residents felt the need for their views to be considered by the council. The Policy aimed to provide clear definitions for engagement and consultation which could be utilised as a framework for staff to work to. The Community Engagement Policy and the Public Participation Strategy would be reviewed at least once after every ordinary Council election.

There was a legislative requirement under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 for a Public Participation Strategy. The Act required the council to identify means of facilitating engagement.

During research it was found -

- that only around 18% of people knew who their County Councillor was.
- People were not generally interested in attending Council Committee meetings, although the further south in the county, more people were interested.
- Fewer than 10% of people would consider becoming a Councillor.
- There was a north/south divide with people in the south of the county more likely to consider standing as a Member in the future.

Going forward, before 31 March 2024 the Council has to consult and publish on the Council's website both the Engagement Policy and the Participation Strategy.

By the end of 2024 –

- to use other research such as the annual stakeholder survey to monitor knowledge gaps and identify opportunities for cross-promotion.
- to identify a range of other targets to be achieved prior to the next review of the Engagement Policy and Participation Strategy.
- to formally implement some resources
- to create specific guidance on some key areas which would support the implementation of the Policy.

During discussions the following points were raised –

- it was queried whether the legislation within the Local Government Act, would have funding provided. It was confirmed that the Act had created a number of duties for which funding would not be available. The funding used would be from the Council's overall revenue support grant fund.
- Local members would be informed prior to decisions being taken regarding significant matters which affected their respective wards. Consultation with communities depended on the scope. Unfortunately, a one size fits all approach could not be taken for every decision made by the Council. It was agreed consistency would be required regarding engaging with local members.

Following the discussion, it was –

RESOLVED that Democratic Services Committee approved both documents to be translated and disseminated to the public for a 'final steer' before seeking to ratify them and approve their implementation at a later date.

6 MEASURES TO TACKLE INTIMIDATION AGAINST MEMBERS

The Lead Member for Corporate Policy and Equality, Councillor Julie Matthews, introduced the report (previously circulated). Councillor Matthews welcomed the process to support members.

The Legal Services Manager, Lisa Jones, summarised the report.

The report was about the measures the Council had put in place to support members experiencing hostile, intimidatory, defamatory or violent behaviours due to carrying out their role as Councillors.

The historical approach of supporting members which viewed abuse towards them as being "part of the job" was now outdated. The deaths of Jo Cox and David Amiss were a reminder that harassment and abuse needed to be taken seriously and as a Council certain behaviours over a threshold would not be tolerated.

It was Welsh Government policy to attract people from all walks of life to become Councillors as part of a fairer and more representative Wales and this report contributed to that, so that individuals who may consider a life in politics but are put off as they did not want to be a target for abuse, could be assured that in the event they were experiencing personal abuse and intimidation, the Council had a

framework in place that worked in practice. This would be particularly important if the Council was to attract a diverse membership.

The following measures had been or were recommended to be put in place:

- A Single Point of Contact (SPOC) be appointed from the existing workforce who would follow the framework attached at Schedule 1.
- A dedicated Members Welfare page was in the process of being finalised on the intranet.
- The Community Safety team had been put on notice regarding the framework and working closer with the North Wales Police on this area so they were aware that a SPOC would be in place. There may be an opportunity to benefit from information or training.
- Group Leaders would be briefed on the framework and the new Members' Welfare page and would be expected to cascade the initiative.

The SPOC was not a substitute for the role of the Group Leaders and any political party in providing support to their Councillors. It was the case that Members were not employees who were by law entitled to be protected from abuse and harassment in the workplace, however, it was the Councils position that no one should be subject to such behaviour and that as a large organisation a proportionate framework should be put in place to enable all Members to carry out Council and Ward business without fear but also go about their personal life without restrictions.

The process would be reviewed after 12 months.

It was confirmed that the report would be presented at all Member Area Groups to ensure all members were informed of the details put in place.

RESOLVED that -

- (i) *members agree a Single Point of Contact be appointed from the existing workforce who would follow the framework attached as Schedule 1*
- (ii) *the process to be reviewed after 12 months*
- (iii) *Group Leaders to be briefed on the framework and the New Members' Welfare page and Group Leaders would be expected to cascade the initiative. (iv) all new members to receive information regarding this framework as part of the training programme and induction process.*
- (v) *a report to be presented to each Member Area Group for members to be aware of the processes in place.*

7 A REVIEW INTO "HOW MEETINGS ARE HELD"

The Democratic Services Manager, Steve Price, introduced the report (previously circulated).

The previous Council administration took decisions on how Council meetings would be held. This had been in response to changes during 2020 and 2021, a period of pandemic lock-downs which temporarily halted traditional face-to-face meetings. Changes in the law governing certain Council and committee meetings, and the

technical advancements made during that period, had allowed business to be conducted using virtual or hybrid meetings.

In December 2021 full Council considered a report on “Proposals for Members to adopt New Ways of Working”. The report outlined recommendations agreed at a members’ Task and Finish Group and by the Democratic Services Committee that looked at the New Ways of Working agenda, primarily focusing on how members’ meetings should be conducted, and the ICT equipment required for Members.

In favour of virtual meetings

- Council had declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency. Virtual meetings did not have the carbon emissions generated from member and officer journeys to meeting venues.
- Reduction in travel expenses.
- Reduction in time spent travelling to meetings.
- Virtual meetings could be more accessible (participants could attend from any location, and the time commitment was limited to the meeting time itself) and likely to promote participation in local democracy.

In favour of face-to-face meetings

- Some members felt that face to face meetings enabled them to engage better in debate and able to interpret the atmosphere of a meeting, or the body language of participants.
- Some members missed the social benefits of interacting directly with their peers in the same location.
- Any technical problems could affect the business being undertaken or the participation of those experiencing a technical problem.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that the current group leaders had appointed members to a working group (the “How Meetings are Held Working Group”). This working group had designed a survey for all elected members, lay-members and the Council’s Senior Leadership Team. The survey had been opened on the 17 November 2023. He advised that the survey also passed questions about the Council’s hybrid meetings protocol.

During discussions, the following points were raised –

- The voting process during hybrid meetings had been queried as for some meetings a roll call was taken for members attending remotely but the electronic voting took place for those members attending in person in the Chamber. It was requested that this could be addressed so that voting was the same whether attending in person or online. Technical issues had caused the issue regarding voting but this was currently being tested which would then mean a consistent voting process.
- The Chair asked whether support staff had been included in the survey. It was confirmed that all members and SLT were included in the survey but not support staff.
- It was confirmed that it was a legal requirement to allow members to attend public facing formal committees remotely, which meant that those meetings

could only be held either entirely online or as hybrid meetings. Council had chosen to hold those meetings as hybrid meetings.

- The Council's informal, internal elected member meetings did not fall under the statutory provisions of the formal public committees so the Council could choose how they should be held. In 2021 Council decided that the internal meetings would be held as virtual meetings unless there were over-riding reasons for a different method of conducting a meeting.
- The 'How Meetings are Held Working Group would meet again to review the responses from the 2023 survey.

***RESOLVED** that the Democratic Services Committee accepted the report and the How Meetings are Held Working Group would report at a future Democratic Services Committee.*

**AT THIS JUNCTURE (11.30 A.M.) THERE WAS A 10 MINUTE BREAK.
THE MEETING RECONVENED AT 11.40 A.M.**

8 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES FOR 2024-2025

The Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities, Councillor Julie Matthews, introduced the report (previously circulated).

In reviewing the draft report, the committee would be aware of the proposals for the remuneration of members and would be able to respond to the Panel on any issues raised by the Panel's draft report. The Panel was expected to issue its final annual report for the 2024 – 2025 financial year in February.

The Democratic Services Manager, Steve Price, summarised the proposals set out by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW).

During discussions, the following points were raised –

- The basic salary for the next financial year was proposed to be aligned with three fifths of the 2022 statistics for Wales of the 'Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings in Wales'. This would result in the basic salary rising from £17,600 to £18,666 a year.
- The IRPW was proposing a corresponding increase to the senior salary elements i.e., the part of the senior salary payments beyond the basic salary that were for the roles undertaken by a Cabinet member or committee chair for example.
- Overall, the Panel's proposals for the basic, senior and civic salaries would equate to an increase of 6% in the salary costs for elected members in 2024 – 2025.
- Members stated that it would be important to do more to publicise why and how councillors get paid.
- It would be advantageous for each councillor to provide an annual report of the work they have carried out to ensure the public were aware of the work carried out by councillors.

- It was confirmed that Council could not refuse to pay its members the basic salaries stipulated by the IRPW.
- It was stated that the public needed to be made aware that Councillors were not awarding themselves a pay increase but rather it was a decision made by an independent panel.
- It was agreed that a communication should be ready to be produced when the IRPW publish the report in February 2024. Group Leaders were recommended to be involved in the communication to be submitted in February 2024.

In respect of the Council's co-opted or lay members the Democratic Services Manager advised that the IRPW had noted the changes to working practices over the last few years, with more frequent use of often short online meetings or training courses as well as more regular committee meetings. The IRPW had therefore proposed there should be local flexibility to decide when it would be appropriate to apply a day or a half day rate, or to use an hourly rate where it was sensible to aggregate a number of short meetings.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) *The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales be notified of the committee's comments on the draft annual report.*
- (ii) *That the Council prepares a public communication on the final determinations made by the IRPW in its annual report in February 2024.*
- (iii) *In respect of remuneration for the Council's co-opted members, the committee endorses a flexible approach allowing the proper officer to apply the appropriate hourly, half-daily or daily rate according to the circumstances and the stipulations of the final 2024-2025 annual report of the IRPW.*

9 SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE

The Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities, Councillor Julie Matthews, introduced the report (previously circulated).

On 6 May 2022, the provisions of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) relating to the single transferable vote system at the election of councillors to a principal council (a county or county borough council) in Wales came into force. The provisions allowed councils to decide to conduct elections using the single transferable vote system rather than the simple majority system, often referred to as first past the post.

A decision on whether to change this Council's voting system was not required. The new provisions were powers not duties. However, there was a deadline set in November 2024 for concluding the consultation and decision-making processes should the Council take the decision to change the voting system.

The Single Transferable Vote (STV) system was a form of proportional representation with the Wales STV provisions having multi-member wards, each with between 3 and 6 councillors representing the ward. The STV system was designed to allow voters more choice than existed in single member wards. Under

the first past the post system, it was argued that votes for minority parties or candidates could be 'wasted' as they did not contribute to the election of any candidates and the results, therefore, not proportionally representative of the electorate as a whole.

Each council would continue to utilise the first past the post system unless it decided to change to the STV system. Any change would require a resolution supported by a two-thirds majority of the full council, at a meeting specially convened for the purpose, with written notice given at least 21 days before the meeting.

If council opted to change the voting system, it would be required to use the new system for the next two rounds of ordinary elections, for a period of 10 years. In the case of a by-election for a casual vacancy after the Council had changed to STV but before the first round of ordinary elections using STV had been held, the voting method at the previous ordinary election would be used. After those two rounds, the council could decide to return to the previous voting system.

If council exercised its power to change the voting system, the council must notify the Welsh Ministers and the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales of the change. After receiving a notification, the Welsh Ministers would direct the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales to conduct an initial review of the area of the council. The provisions for these initial reviews included requiring that the number of councillors for each electoral ward would be no less than three, but no more than six.

During discussions the following points were raised –

- Before it could exercise its power to change the voting system the Council would have to consult locally. This would include its local government electors, each city, town and community council in the county and any other people it considered appropriate.
- Concerns were raised if the decision was taken to change to STV that local identity would be lost due to the larger wards, particularly with the representation and voices of rural areas being weakened.
- Members agreed that all political groups would need to be consulted to obtain their feedback.
- Scotland and Northern Ireland used STV and a lot of information would be gained from councils in those countries.
- A wider understanding of the process would be required as the general consensus was that the STV would favour smaller political parties and disadvantage independent candidates and rural areas.
- A Council Workshop for members to decide whether to change to STV was suggested. At the Workshop members could then give a firm steer on whether to take no action at present or proceed with a public consultation with a view to asking full Council before November 2024 to take a formal decision on changing the voting system to the STV system.
- It was also suggested that a survey could be issued to members and residents as to the way forward.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the Democratic Services Committee has considered the Single Transferable Vote report and agreed as follows –

(i) To recommend that a Council Workshop be held to inform all members on the provisions for changing the Council's electoral system to the single transferable vote system, and to provide a steer on how the Council should proceed.

(ii) That the involvement of the Group Leaders in the single transferable vote options be facilitated.

(iii) The potential for surveying members and residents on the single transferable vote options be explored.

10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager, Steve Price, introduced the Democratic Services Committee Forward Work Programme (previously circulated).

A report on "Mandatory Training Policy for Councillors" had not been submitted to this meeting but a survey was to be circulated to all members.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the Democratic Services Committee Forward Work Programme be approved.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 12:55 P.M.

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Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting	22 March 2024
Lead Member	Councillor Julie Matthews, Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities
Head of Service	Catrin Roberts, Head of Corporate Support Service: People
Report author	Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager
Title	Working Group Recommendations: 'How Meetings are Held'

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. This report is about the Council's arrangements for holding its member-level meetings and

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. Shortly before the last council elections the previous Council administration took decisions on how Council meetings would be held. This was in response to changes during 2020 and 2021, a period of pandemic lockdowns which temporarily halted traditional face-to-face meetings, changes in the law governing certain Council and committee meetings, and the technical advancements made during that period that have allowed business to be conducted using virtual or hybrid meetings.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 That the Democratic Services Committee considers whether to endorse to full Council the recommendations of the working group, as outlined in paragraph 4.9.

4. Report details

4.1. In December 2021 full Council considered a report on “Proposals for Members to adopt New Ways of Working”. That report outlined recommendations agreed at a members’ task and finish group and by the Democratic Services Committee that looked at the New Ways of Working agenda, primarily focusing on how members’ meetings should be conducted, and the ICT equipment required for Members. The report and discussion at Council considered points in favour of virtual meetings, and points in favour of face-to-face meetings.

In favour of virtual meetings

- Council has declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency. Virtual meetings don’t have the carbon emissions generated from member and officer journeys to meeting venues.
- Reduction in travel expenses.
- Reduction in time spent travelling to meetings.
- Virtual meetings can be more accessible (participants can attend from wherever they happen to be, and the time commitment is limited to the meeting time itself) and likely to promote participation in local democracy.

In favour of face-to-face meetings

- Some members feel that face to face meetings enable them to engage better in debate and to be able to interpret the atmosphere of a meeting, or the body language of participants.
- Some members miss the social benefits of interacting directly with their peers in the same location.
- Any technical problems can affect the business being undertaken or the participation of those experiencing a technical problem.

4.2. Council acknowledged that it could not hold public meetings of its statutory committees as face-to-face meetings. Recent changes in the law in Wales required local authorities to offer remote attendance for those meetings, thereby leaving the virtual or hybrid meeting options.

4.3. In addition to the main public Council and committee meetings, councillors participate in a range of internal meetings, for panels and groups established by the Council to consult and engage with members on specific topics. These meetings are not under the statutory requirements of the public committees and therefore the Council can choose whether they are held as face-to-face, virtual or hybrid meetings. In 2021, Council decided that these internal meetings would by default be held as virtual meetings (unless an overriding necessity required specific meetings to be held as face-to-face or hybrid meetings).

The 'How Meetings are Held' (2023) Working Group

- 4.4. In 2023 the Council's Group Leaders called for a new member working group to be formed to review the 2021 decisions by considering the legal framework and options available in order to present any recommendations to the Democratic Services Committee and full Council.
- 4.5. The working group, chaired by Councillor Julie Matthews, decided to issue a survey (attached as appendix 1) to councillors, lay-members and the senior leadership team. The working group also considered good practices for hybrid and virtual meetings. In 2021 Council adopted a hybrid committee meetings protocol designed to guide participants and clarify expectations. The protocol attached as appendix 2 contains amendments recommended by the working group.

The Survey

- 4.6. Appendix 1 contains the survey questions, results and analysis considered by the working group in February 2024. The survey responses indicated that extending the range of meetings held as hybrid meetings would be popular with many members. Hybrid and virtual meetings both allow participants to attend virtually so hybrid could be seen as the optimum option for those who have not chosen face-to-face meetings in the survey. However, hybrid meetings will include at least some of the carbon, travel expenses and time costs that Council in 2021 was keen to reduce and are not a feature of virtual meetings.
- 4.7. The costs of hybrid meetings will also include the on-site attendance of support officers (to operate the hybrid system being used and for general support tasks

associated with using a physical meeting location). The range and availability of suitable hybrid meeting rooms is also a relevant consideration.

The Working Group's Conclusions

- 4.8. The working group was keen to promote high standards of meeting behaviour and professionalism for the Council's public hybrid meetings. These are reflected in the changes proposed to the protocol (appendix 2). The working group was of the view that the extensive use of virtual interactions had come at a cost by constricting the development of effective peer relationships amongst members.
- 4.9. The working group was satisfied the existing arrangements for holding internal member-level meetings virtually was largely appropriate. However, the survey results and the working group's views supported allowing the individual Member Area Groups (MAGs) to decide how their meetings would be held.

Recommendation 1: That the Hybrid meetings Protocol be amended as indicated in appendix 2 to promote high standards of meeting behaviour and practices for both hybrid and virtual member-level meetings.

Recommendation 2: That internal member-level meetings (excluding the MAGs) be held as virtual meetings unless there is an over-riding benefit to the Council from holding a meeting as a hybrid or face-to-face meeting.

Recommendation 3: That the individual Member Area Groups be allowed to decide whether their meetings be held as face-to-face, hybrid or virtual. In determining this the MAGs should have due regard to the added costs of carbon dioxide emissions, travel expenses and officer time associated with hybrid and face-to-face meetings.

Recommendation 4: That the Democratic Services Committee consider whether any hybrid MAG meetings should only be held in the Council's free to access hybrid meeting rooms, or whether hybrid MAG meetings could be held from hired external locations.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. The issues covered in this report relate to the corporate plan themes of 'a better connected Denbighshire' and 'a well-run, high performing Council'.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. Paragraph 4.2 outline the main cost elements associated with how meetings are held. These include carbon emissions, travelling costs and the time spent or saved by how members and officers attend meetings. The hiring of external hybrid meeting rooms for MAG meetings would be an additional financial cost.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A well being impact assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1 The relevant forum for reporting and consulting on the issues raised in this report is the Democratic Services Committee.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. A Chief Finance Officer Statement is not required for this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. The 'How Meetings are Held' Working Group's review considered the advantages and disadvantages of each meeting format, and through surveying members and reviewing the Council's hybrid meeting protocol it seeks to have appropriate measures in place that have the support of the current membership.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Any formal decisions would be made by full Council in response to recommendations from the Democratic Services Committee.

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How Meetings are Held – Summary of Survey Responses.

This survey was sent out on 17th November 2023 until 12th January 2024. The survey went out on Microsoft Forms with an introduction that covered:

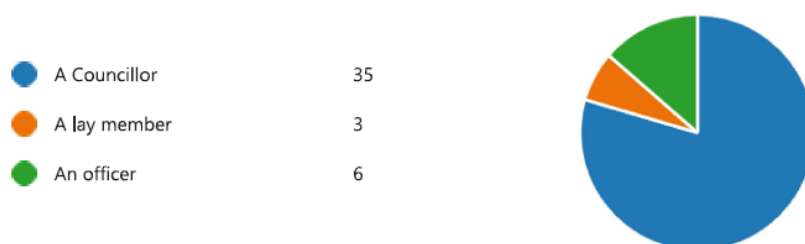
“This survey is being issued to all Councillors, lay members and the Senior Leadership Team officers of Denbighshire County Council. This survey seeks to provide the Council with information on the views of participants of the Council's discretionary meetings. These 'discretionary' meetings are the non-statutory meetings which are not open to the press and public.

Please note that responses to the questions and comments will be anonymised”.

In total during the above time frame 44 responses were received.

The following illustrates what responses were given for each question in the survey, taken directly from Microsoft Forms.

1. Please indicate whether you are:



Question 1 illustrates who has contributed to this survey, this survey was sent out to all councillors and lay members, and the corporate executive team and senior leadership team.

Q2. For each of the following meetings, please state how you would prefer the meetings to be held.

The following table illustrates the non-statutory meetings which are not open to the press and public the Council can choose how they are held. These are listed in the meeting column, and the green highlights represent the single most popular answer.

A breakdown for the above against Councillor, Officer or Lay Member responding can be found in the appendices.

Meeting	Face to Face	Hybrid	Virtual	I don't attend these meetings	Prefer not to say / no opinion
All Members Briefing	11	17	11	3	
Asset Management Group	2	15	10	16	
Capital Scrutiny Group	3	15	11	14	
Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Group	2	15	15	9	2
Corporate Parenting Forum	3	15	17	7	1
Council Workshops	15	14	14	1	
Joint Consultative Committee for Health and Safety Employee Relations	1	14	14	13	1
Member Area Groups	14	13	14	3	
Task and Finish Groups	10	12	15	5	1

Responses for All-Members' Briefings, the Asset Management Group and the Capital Scrutiny Group illustrate the popularity of a hybrid choice for those meetings.

The Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Group, and JCC responses were equally favouring hybrid or virtual.

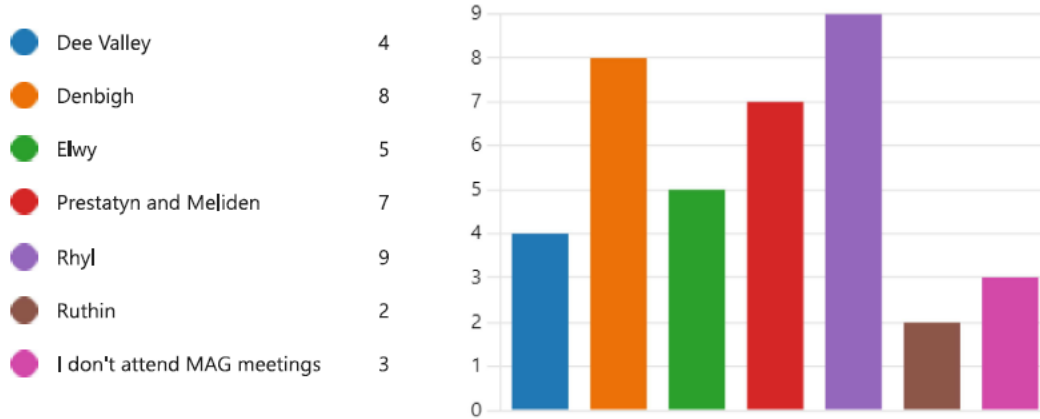
The single most popular choice for Council Workshops was face-to-face.

The responses for the Member Area Groups were very close for all 3 options and tied face-to-face and virtual meetings, with hybrid votes narrowly behind.

The survey favoured virtual meetings for Task and Finish Groups.

3. This question is for Councillors and Officers who attend Member Area Group meetings only.

Which Member Area Group (MAG) do you attend?



4. Please state how you would prefer your MAG meetings to be held?

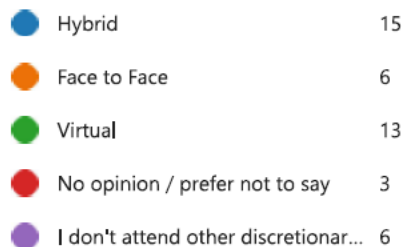


For questions 3 and 4 the table below shows how the survey responses were allocated across the six member area groups.

	Face to Face	Hybrid	Virtual
Elwy	2	1	2
Denbigh	4	3	1
Prestatyn and Meliden	1	3	3
Rhyl	2	3	4
Dee Valley	1	2	1
Ruthin	1	1	

Although the table above is the best data we currently have on the preferences for individual MAGs some caution is required owing to the size of some of the responses, particularly those for Ruthin MAG.

5. If you are a member of, or participate in other discretionary meetings (for example the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group, Service Challenges, the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group, Strategic Governance Board for Denbighshire Leisure Ltd, the Strategic Planning Group etc) how would you prefer those meetings to be held?



It is evident from the above figures that there are a range of other internal meetings where face-to-face meetings are not favoured and responses for hybrid, closely followed by virtual meetings were the most popular choices.

Q6. If you have answered Hybrid, Face to Face, or Virtual, please state which meeting or meetings your responses refer to, e.g. the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group.

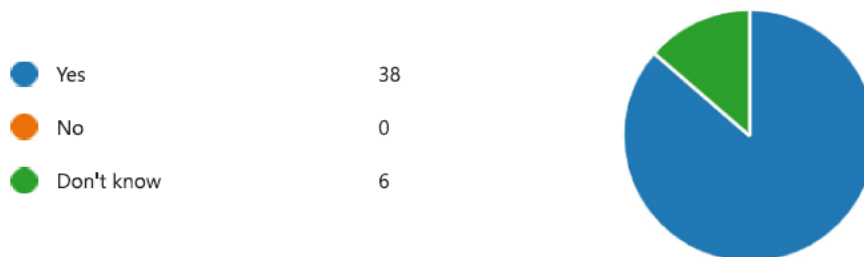
This table shows the main summary for the panels identified in question 5.

	Face to Face	Hybrid	Virtual
Service Challenge	2	3	2
Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs	1	4	4
Strategic Planning Group	0	2	4

7. Are you aware that the Council has a protocol for participating in hybrid meetings?



8. If you answered 'Yes' to Question 7, do you think the hybrid meetings' protocol plays a beneficial role in hybrid meetings?



Q9. If you would like to leave comments on question 8, please do so here:

- A lot of Members (and some officers) don't have their cameras on when they attend meetings. I think that needs to be enforced more robustly.
- Sicrhau bod y camera ymlaen trwy gydol y cyfarfod. Sicrhau bod dim a all amharu ar allu aelod i ganolbwyntio ar y trafodaethau. (*Ensure that the camera is on throughout the meeting. Ensure that nothing impairs members' ability to concentrate on the discussions*).
- Lots more to do to make them as professional as should be.
- It allows greater participation however I believe people do not engage fully in hybrid meetings.
- The saving of travel.
- Enforcement of onscreen viewing of camera also in person must use microphone
- The only point i would make is that all attendees should have their cameras on, because that isn't always the case.
- Members of a committee should on the whole attend in person. It is OK for observers to be remote.
- Angen pwysleisio i Aelodau/Cynghorwyr i beidio a siarad ar-lein cy y cyfarfodydd pan mae aelodau'r cyhoedd yn debygol o fod yn bresennol. (*Need to emphasise to Members/Councillors not to speak online before the meetings when members of the public are likely to be present*).
- I do feel people need to be reminded about the protocol regularly.

10. Do you think improvements can be made to how virtual, face to face or hybrid meetings are held?



Q11. If you answered 'Yes' to question 10, or if you would like to leave your observations on the above question, please do so here:

A lot of the responses below relate to the ICT, however it must be highlighted that the enforcement of camera's being on has also been highlighted on multiple times within this question also.

Responses:

- The tech could be more reliable. I think the Chair needs a separate screen on their desk showing all virtual attendees.
- Improve Hybrid facilities at County Hall
- The requirement to have cameras on. Also, for hybrid meetings, usually the Chair will take all requests to speak in the room and then move to those online, and I wonder whether that is right? When I say that all discretionary meetings should be virtual, I mean. However, there is a place for face-to-face meetings at times. It creates a different dynamic that can be very beneficial. For example, the Members workshop on 17th Nov was very good, and I think it had more impact because it was face-to-face.
- Technology didn't work on one occasion when I was meant to address a Performance Scrutiny meeting. Also, when I chair meetings in the Council Chamber, the names shown on the screen of members / officers attending virtually is too small to read.
- Better discipline, technical capability,
- Faultless system needed. Speaking into the mic needs to be much better. Members backgrounds need to be sorted before going live. Some chairs need to chair much better. Stop the online chatter before a meeting that can be heard by all, including the public, in the chamber. Chairs taking as much notice of online participants as in person ones e.g. for proposing /seconding/speaking in general.
- IT improvements so they run smoothly but accept there will always be glitches.
- I think all councillors should attend full council face to face but have hybrid as an emergency. There are only 7 meeting a year and I think councillors should make the effort to attend.
- Meeting minutes for attendance should distinguish between in person and virtual.
- More Community participation
- Chair should insist on cameras being on, or people leaving the meeting.
- Quite often, members who attend virtually and raise their virtual hand to make a comment are not noticed. This can be very frustrating.
- General Point: I have said Virtual for All Member Briefings & Council Workshops....HOWEVER whilst the majority should be virtual, some need to be face to face depending on the topic.
- Better use of mobile equipment to make hybrid possible in other locations.
- Connectivity issues.
- Cameras on always with DCC logo as the background. No voting permitted unless its beyond doubt that a Councillor has fully participated in the debate. Failure to attend 3 or more meetings during the year would then call into question the position of that councillor/s position on a committee/group.
- Refine IT issues.
- Volume of some speakers is a real issue! Some softly spoken speakers are virtually inaudible! This matter really does need addressing please.
- If it's webcast, Ban eating/drinking on camera.

- The requirement for cameras to be on for committee members attending remotely should be more vigorously enforced.
- Better quality sound
- Voting should be the same method for in-person or virtual attendees (roll call or voting button).
- Participants need to understand that conversations between people who are attending virtually can be heard by all, including any members of the public who are observing meetings in the Chambers. Can be embarrassing when people are chatting inappropriately.
- Virtual or Hybrid attendance should be via formal DCC IT accounts unless specific circumstances. Some members dial in as guest at each and every meeting.

Appendix 1 (to the survey document)

The following tables provide more information to Q2 which asked, for each of the following meetings, please state how you would prefer the meetings to be held. The following tables show who responded:

All Members Briefing:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face	10		1
Hybrid	15	1	2
Virtual	8		3
Don't attend these meetings	1	2	
Prefer not to say / no opinion			

Asset Management Group:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face	2		
Hybrid	14	1	
Virtual	10		
Don't attend these meetings	8	2	6
Prefer not to say / no opinion			

Capital Scrutiny Group:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face	3		
Hybrid	14	1	
Virtual	10		1
Don't attend these meetings	7	2	5
Prefer not to say / no opinion			

Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Group:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face	2		
Hybrid	14	1	
Virtual	13	2	2
Don't attend these meetings	3		4
Prefer not to say / no opinion	2		

Corporate Parenting Forum:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face	3		
Hybrid	13	1	1
Virtual	16		1

Don't attend these meetings	1	2	4
Prefer not to say / no opinion	1		

Council Workshops:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face	15		
Hybrid	11	2	1
Virtual	9		5
Don't attend these meetings			
Prefer not to say / no opinion		1	

Joint Consultative Committee for Health and Safety Employee Relations:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face			1
Hybrid	13	1	
Virtual	13		1
Don't attend these meetings	7	2	4
Prefer not to say / no opinion	1		

Member Area Groups:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face	11		3
Hybrid	12	1	
Virtual	12		2
Don't attend these meetings		2	1
Prefer not to say / no opinion			

Task and Finish Groups:

	Councillor	Lay Member	Officer
Face to Face	9		1
Hybrid	11	1	
Virtual	12		3
Don't attend these meetings	1	2	2
Prefer not to say / no opinion	1		

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DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

HYBRID / VIRTUAL MEMBER COMMITTEE

MEETINGS PROTOCOL

1. PURPOSE OF THE PROTOCOL

- 1.1 The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance to Members and the public as to the processes to be undertaken by the Council when conducting hybrid and virtual member-level committee meetings.
- 1.2 Hybrid meetings are a combination of face-to-face meetings and virtual meetings, whereby attendees ~~some Members, officers and the public attend the Council Chamber and some members may~~ attend remotely online or from a central meeting room.
- 1.3 During hybrid and virtual meetings, all participants will be able to see and hear each other and where used translation facilities will be available for all.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires the Council to make and publish arrangements that enable persons who are not in the same place to attend meetings of the Council. This provision in effect requires hybrid meetings for full Council and the public principal committee meetings. The Council has discretion over how it holds its internal member-level meetings.
- 2.2. To ~~continue to ensure~~ promote the public and press ~~have~~ access to public meetings of the Council and to ensure transparency of decision-making, principal committee meetings will be live streamed ~~simultaneously~~. Recordings will be uploaded to the Council's website for public record and be available for viewing for 6 months from the date of the meeting.
- 2.3. All voting will be carried out either by affirmation of the meeting, by using the electronic voting systems s available, for example within the Council Chamber and on the virtual meeting platform in use, or by means of a roll-call of all Members present both remotely and in person.
- 2.4. All voting results will be announced by the Chair before moving to the next item of business.
- 2.5. Underpinning this Protocol are the fundamental principles that conduct shall be compliant with the Code of Conduct for Members and that the integrity and security of any confidential information is maintained.

- 2.6. Hybrid and virtual meetings will follow the Council's usual meetings practice in terms of publication of agendas and reports, and they will follow normal procedural rules in the Constitution where possible.
- 2.7. A fundamental principle is that the attendance of a Member or an Officer is equally valid irrespective of whether they are attending in the Council Chamber or from a remote location. It will not be appropriate for any Member to make any adverse comment or inference in respect of any other Member or Officer's chosen location for attendance. However, a member chairing a hybrid meeting or an officer with a prominent role at a hybrid meeting is encouraged to consider it good practice to be present in the meeting room whenever possible.
- 2.8. No member will record the proceedings of any meeting, which, for the avoidance of doubt includes all ~~virtual~~remote and hybrid meetings whether open to the public or not, without notifying and seeking the consent of the members and officers attending the meeting.
- 2.9. Meetings which are being webcast to the public will be recorded by Democratic Services and made available on the Council's website.

3. PROTOCOL FOR HYBRID & VIRTUAL MEETINGS

- 3.1. Council will operate hybrid meetings using ~~its~~the hybrid video conferencing and webcasting facilities within the Council ~~Chamber~~to enable both remote attendance and physical attendance at meetings.
- 3.2. Prior to the meeting, Democratic Services will ensure that all Members, relevant officers and any other relevant participating individual have been invited to join the meeting and have been informed as to how they must connect to the meeting.
- ~~3.3. Any Member wishing to attend in person will need to give prior notice to Democratic Services as soon as possible that s/he wishes to attend in person~~
- ~~3.4.3.3.~~ Members attending remotely will be expected to join the meeting ~~at least ten minutes~~ before the proposed start time for the meeting to ensure that they are able to connect and that the translation channel may be tested.
- ~~3.5.3.4.~~ If a quorum is achieved the meeting will proceed in any event, notwithstanding ~~a Member's or any~~ Members' failure to achieve a connection. If a Member joins the meeting at a later time they must make themselves known immediately to the Chair~~man~~ and comment and vote only on those complete agenda items remaining.
- ~~3.6.3.5.~~ When attending remotely, Members need to use their best endeavours to remain on-line throughout debates and during voting in order to maintain the integrity of the decision-making process and to reduce the opportunity for legal challenge of any decision.

- 3.6. When attending remotely, Members and any participants must ensure that the room from which they are accessing the ~~remote~~ meeting is suitable in terms of privacy and that no disturbance occurs during the course of the meeting as it is important to ensure the appropriate a-degree of formality is accorded to the meeting being attended. Remote attendees at meetings of full Council and the principal committee meetings are expected to conduct themselves in the same manner as they would if they were attending the meeting in the Council Chamber. in the proceedings. It must be remembered that as proceedings will be live, viewers will effectively be able to view you working in your home.
- 3.7 When attending remotely, Members must access the meeting individually via their Council issued equipment and ensure use a suitable Denbighshire County Council video background. Members are able to make use of other Council facilities to ensure a stable internet connection. ~~but they must liaise with Democratic Services in advance of the meeting giving sufficient time for such arrangements to be made.~~
- 3.8 If remote attendees declare a personal and prejudicial interest in a particular item, in order to continue to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members, they will be removed from the meeting by the Democratic Services Officer and placed in the 'waiting room' for the duration of the relevant item. The Democratic Services Officer as moderator can also add and remove other attendees such as public speakers. If attendees are in the chamber / meeting room, they will physically leave the chamber / meeting room for the duration of the item.
- 3.9. During the meeting whilst a Member attending remotely is not speaking, their microphone should be set to mute and this should be clicked to un-mute (sound) when s/he is invited to speak by the Chair~~man~~. Members should avoid setting their devices to the highest volume, sit too close to the microphone, have other electronic devices operating or shuffle papers in front of the microphone as this is likely to cause feedback. Committee Members ~~shouldare encouraged to~~ keep their cameras on at all times in order that they may be seen to be present by other participants and members of the public throughout debates and voting. ~~However, it is recognised that if a Member is experiencing poor connectivity it may be necessary to turn their video off. At the chair's request a Member may turn their video off in order to improve the quality of their audio link when the member is speaking. It is expected that the camera will be turned back on after the member has finished speaking.~~
- 3.10. Members recognise and accept that their microphones may be switched off remotely by Democratic Services Officers if they have been left on inadvertently when the Member is not speaking.
- 3.11. Members should ensure that the name that appears on screen in connection with their image should be their full name and include the title Councillor in order that the public and other attendees can identify elected members.
- 3.12. It is accepted that the Chair plays a Page 33 role in the orderly conduct of the committee meeting. Chairs will be fully supported by Democratic Services.

-officers and the Monitoring Officer to enable the Chair to conduct the meeting in accordance with the Rules of Procedure and the principles of this Protocol.

- 3.13. At the start of the meeting, the Chair will ensure that the system allows everyone to participate. The Chair will make an introduction to the meeting and provide a reminder of the meeting arrangements and this protocol.
- 3.14. Given the nature of hybrid meetings the Chair will ensure that every member has the opportunity to participate in the meeting and that members are called to speak in the order that they indicate their wish to do so wherever they are attending the meeting from. Members who are attending remotely should use the 'raise hand' function to indicate that they wish to speak. Democratic Services officers will assist the Chair in monitoring the requests to speak. ~~The Chair must allow officers to speak if they indicate that they wish to do so.~~
- 3.15. Members' use of the 'chat' function should be restricted to issues such as informing the meeting that they are leaving temporarily or permanently, or that they are having connectivity issues. The 'chat' function should not be used to make contributions to the debate as all debate should be through the Chair, or to send informal messages to other attendees. Members are reminded that 'chat' messages may be inappropriately visible to viewers of the meeting.
- 3.16. In relation to reports that are presented that are deemed exempt from publication, Members will be reminded that the item is an exempt report and asked to vote to recognise this accordingly. If the debate then proceeds in 'Part II', Members must ensure that they are able to strictly maintain the privacy of the proceedings at their location. ~~Any~~ ~~The~~ live webcasting link will cease before the item commences and therefore there may be a hiatus in proceedings to ensure that no recording is taking place. Individuals who are not entitled to be present during the item will physically leave the meeting in the Chamber / meeting room, and will be removed from the virtual meeting by the Democratic Services Officer.
- 3.17. If connectivity is lost for any remote attendee during the proceedings so that the quorum is not met, the Chair~~man~~ will require the meeting to be paused in order to allow re-establishment of connectivity if at all possible. If it proves impossible to re-establish connection for a sufficient number of Members to reach a quorum, the meeting will be adjourned to a later date. The Chair~~man~~ will make every effort as is reasonable to enable those Members experiencing connectivity problems to take part in the debate.
- 3.18. Public speakers will be contacted by Democratic Services in advance of the committee meeting to establish whether they wish to attend a public hybrid meeting in person or remotely. Remote attendees will be provided with a link to the meeting. All remote public speakers will be invited to join the meeting when they enter the 'waiting room' but must remain in mute mode and not speak unless invited by the Chair to do so. The Chair will invite each speaker to begin their presentation at the appropriate time. Where appropriate public ~~s~~Speakers ~~may be~~ are requested to provide their presentation in writing to the Chair in advance of the meeting. In the event of issues with connectivity, the

Chair ~~would then~~ read the speaker's presentation on their behalf. Public ~~S~~speakers will then 'leave' the meeting following the relevant agenda item, if necessary with support from the meeting host.

3.19. ~~Members of the press will be able to view the livestream of the meeting.~~

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Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting	22 March 2024
Lead Member	Councillor Julie Matthews, Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities
Head of Service	Catrin Roberts, Head of Corporate Support Services: People
Report author	Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager
Title	Council Policy on Member Training

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. In June 2023 the Democratic Services Committee considered member training and reported its views to full Council in July 2023. This report provides information on the unresolved aspects of member training.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to obtain and report to full Council the recommendations of the Democratic Services Committee on a Council policy for mandatory member training.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Democratic Services Committee makes appropriate recommendations to full Council on any mandatory member training requirements.

4. Report details

Introduction

4.1. A programme of member inductions, training and development commenced immediately after the Council elections in May 2022. The sessions delivered as part of the initial induction for new and returning members included training on the Council's Code of Conduct, members' ICT provision, familiarisation with services, equality and diversity, safeguarding, and an introduction to Scrutiny. Training was also provided for undertaking certain roles as members, for example, for members of the Planning or Governance and Audit Committees and acting as a 'corporate parent'. Training opportunities have continued with the regular availability of new or repeat training and development sessions for members.

Mandatory and Discretionary Training

4.2. The Council could decide to designate certain training as being mandatory for all members, or for members undertaking certain roles. Attending at least one training session on the Members' Code of Conduct during each full term of office is mandatory because the requirement is included within the Council's Code of Conduct. The Council has continued to operate mandatory training for members of the Planning Committee, because of the quasi-judicial role being undertaken.

4.3. To enable members to fulfil their obligations, any mandatory training would need to be offered at appropriate times and frequencies, and over a realistic timeframe. The line-management and training policy arrangements for staff are not appropriate for councillors as they are elected office-holders rather than employees. However, Council could support a mandatory training policy for members, for example by:

- The provision of training records to the group leaders
- Reporting on mandatory training records to the Democratic Services Committee, the Governance and Audit Committee or the Standards Committee.
- Publishing records of non-compliance with mandatory requirements.
- Groups encouraging the completion of mandatory training and considering this in their allocation of roles to their members.

4.4. The previous Council decided that the following would be mandatory training courses:

- Code of Conduct - once a term / Planning – two training events each year (for Planning Committee Members) / Licensing - two training events each year (for Licensing Committee Members) / Data Protection and GDPR – annual training but subsequently amended to once a term / Local Government Finance - once a term / Safeguarding - once a term / Corporate Parenting – once a term.

4.5. In June 2023 the Democratic Services Committee recommended the setting of reasonable mandatory training requirements for appropriate subjects and roles. The committee thought the use of 'once a term' as a timescale for mandatory training to be completed as being unsuitable. The committee supported a role for the political groups and group leaders in encouraging compliance with any mandatory training requirements and supported the use of appropriate sanctions for non-compliance.

4.6 In July 2023 full Council considered member training issues and the committee's recommendations but it was unable to agree a Council policy on mandatory training and associated sanctions. Council therefore referred member training for consideration by the group leaders, who subsequently requested that a survey be issued to clarify the views of members.

4.7 The results of the survey, which was opened in February and closed on the 8 March and was open to councillors, senior officers and lay members, are attached as appendix 1.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. This report does not directly contribute to the Corporate Priorities but appropriately trained and supported elected members will contribute to the Council's performance at strategic, policy development and decision-taking levels.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. Most of the training plan is provided by the Council's officers. This does not require extra funding but does require officer time and that is an important factor in the size and complexity of the training programme that can be delivered. For some training sessions external facilitation may be required which would need to be contained

within the member training budget. E-learning modules for some topics are also available.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A well-being impact assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. Member training and development issues are reported to the Democratic Services Committee and full Council. The political group leaders have been consulted for their views on member training.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. A Chief Finance Officer Statement is not required for this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. Training and development are intended to equip members and co-opted members with the skills and knowledge required for the different roles of the modern councillor and lay member. Without appropriate training and development there is also a greater risk of successful challenges to decisions and of complaints. As mentioned in section 6 above, to a large extent the provision of member training relies on the capacity of Council staff to provide training on their areas of work and expertise.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

Responses from “Survey of Members: Council Policy on Mandatory Training”

The aim of this survey is to provide Council with information from elected members, SLT and lay members on member training. In particular, the survey sought feedback on what training should be mandatory and to what extent, and what sanctions should be applied to address instances of non-compliance with any mandatory training required by Council of its members.

Responses:

Question 1 asked respondents to indicate whether they are a councillor, lay member or officer. The results show 30 responses were received in total.

1. Please indicate whether you are:



Question 2 asked respondents to state whether they think the training topics shown in the first (Training) column should be mandatory for all councillors, mandatory for certain councillors, or not mandatory for anyone. The table below shows the outcome of this question.

The options that received the most votes are highlighted in green.

Training:	Mandatory for All	Mandatory for Certain Members	Not Mandatory
Chairing of Meetings	26.9%	61.5%	11.5%
Climate Change / Ecological Emergency	64.3%	14.3%	21.4%
Code of Conduct	89.3%	3.6%	7.1%
Corporate Governance	39.3%	46.4%	14.3%
Corporate Parenting	51.9%	22.2%	25.9%
Data Protection	72.4%	13.8%	13.8%
Equality / Diversity	75.9%	13.8%	10.3%
Gypsy and Traveller	46.4%	35.7%	17.9%
Health and Safety	51.9%	33.3%	14.8%

Training	Mandatory for All	Mandatory for Certain Members	Not Mandatory
Local Government Finance and Budget Setting	50%	35.7%	14.3%
Licensing (Committee)	11.1%	70.4%	18.5%
Mental Health and Wellbeing	59.3%	22.2%	18.5%
Performance Data	13.8%	55.2%	31%
Planning Committee	22.2%	70.4%	7.4%
Questioning Skills	31%	34.5%	34.5%
Safeguarding	66.7%	22.2%	11.1%
Schools and Education	37%	33.3%	29.6%
Scrutiny (introduction)	42.3%	38.5%	19.2%
Wellbeing of Future Generations Act	50%	25%	25%
Welsh Language Standards	46.4%	35.7%	17.9%

Question 3 asked respondents if they had any comments relating to their answers in question 2. The responses are listed below:

- We should all have a mandatory standard of training equally so all of them makes sense as all of them criss-cross everything that we do or become involved in or observe. If we don't all have at least a basic level of training, how can we possibly contribute?
- Should be optional, due to existing overall workload.
- There are some topics I would not feel qualified to scrutinise as out of my field of knowledge.
- Concerned that there are different of what 'Corporate Governance' means. If seen as just necessary legal and finance processes then it may not be seen as something for all members, whereas since the true meaning is much wider than it should be mandatory for all members.
- The key thing here is determining who should require mandatory training. I think it is mostly obvious - Scrutiny members require scrutiny training, at least one member of each group should have training in some subjects etc (this makes pt8 tricky though).
- I have suggested many are mandatory for all. Perhaps, if the training is mandatory for just certain Cllr's - e.g. planning, the training could be made available for any Cllr's who wish to attend.
- A one off *[in relation to questioning skills]*.

Question 4 focused on how often mandatory training should be undertaken.

4. For the topics you noted as mandatory in question 2, please indicate how often the training should be undertaken.



Question 5 asked if they had any comments or suggestions relating to their answers to question 4 and the timescales for completing the mandatory courses. The responses are listed below:

- Once per council term
- Really, we should then be asked how frequent for each one we've ticked as mandatory as the frequency is different for each. Maybe tag some of them as much as possible onto County Council meetings as we're all there for those anyway?
- Once a term or any change in legislation
- Biannually due to workload
- Some should be annually some less often.
- completed once a term or as and when new legislation is introduced.
- Some could be annual; others more often; others as a one-off
- Don't think this question is designed well - the frequency depends on the particular topic. Code of Conduct, for example, should be annual, but others could be less frequent. There needs to be a balance struck with available time for training from members and also be officers (or others) delivering training.
- Training should be per term (5 years)
- This will depend on the subject area - safeguarding for example should be annually whereas questioning skills could be once a term.
- I would suggest that the frequency of training could vary with some areas such as data/GDPR protection, safeguarding etc needing a biannual refresher and other aspects such as Finance and budget setting etc on a 1 in a term basis.
- Within the year
- None

Question 6 asked if there are any topics not listed above on which respondents would like training to be provided? The responses are listed below:

- Councillors need a Council led process of legal redress against malicious accusations or slander by the public.
- Housing & Homelessness: annual
- The Constitution - how the different groups, committees and key officers' function and relate together. This need not be annual but should be mandatory for all members (including lay) upon induction.
- Use of social media and other communication platforms mandatory

Question 7 queried whether the Council should have measures in place to promote compliance with mandatory training requirements:

7. Should the training topics designated by Council as mandatory be accompanied by measures to promote compliance with Council's policy?



If the Council decided to have measures to promote compliance with its mandatory training policy respondents were asked in **question 8** for their views on the suitability of 4 potential measures.

The options that received the most votes are highlighted in green:

	Yes, I support this measure	No, this measure is not appropriate	I am unsure / No response
Provision of training records to the group leaders	82.1%	10.7%	7.1%
Public reporting of mandatory training records to an appropriate committee	53.6%	32.1%	14.3%

Publishing details of non-compliance with mandatory training requirements	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%
Groups reviewing & encouraging the completion of mandatory training / consideration of training in the allocation of roles	66.7%	14.8%	18.5%

Finally, respondents were invited to leave any further comments that had not been covered in their responses. The following comments were received:

- Councillors have a heavy workload already without mandatory training
- Mandatory means mandatory
- Agree with mandatory training and need for measures to promote compliance, but consideration needs to be given to means of training - attendance at formal group training sessions may not always be necessary, but online training which requires some questions to be answered may be a more appropriate in some cases.

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Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting	22 March 2024
Lead Officer	Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager
Head of Service	Catrin Roberts, Head of Support Service: People
Report authors	Karen Evans and Rhian Evans, Scrutiny Co-ordinators
Title	Regional Scrutiny Arrangements

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. To provide information on how local authority Scrutiny arrangements are applied to regional public service delivery.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To comply with the Committee's request and provide information on how local authority scrutiny arrangements apply to regional public service delivery and how various regional bodies or sub-regional bodies are currently scrutinised.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 That the Committee considers and discusses the information provided.

4. Report details

- 4.1. This report provides an overview of the various scrutiny arrangements currently in place, or being proposed, for the regional/sub-regional public service bodies that are directly associated with local authorities across the North Wales region.
- 4.2. With local authorities for the foreseeable future attempting to balance increased demand for services against reducing resources regional management of public

service delivery may well come to the fore. In addition, Welsh Government (WG) has directed that specific areas of service delivery should be guided by regional plans, hence its decision to establish Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). These factors reinforce the need for local authorities to have robust scrutiny arrangements in place to safeguard the delivery of high-quality regionally co-ordinated services in their local areas.

4.3. Regionalisation of service delivery is not a new concept. North Wales Police and North Wales Fire Service (later North Wales Fire and Rescue Service) were both created as part of earlier local government reorganisations. Whilst further local government reorganisation is not currently being proposed a number of regional public service bodies already exist with the aim of creating synergies between various organisations, avoiding duplication, and reducing service delivery costs.

4.4. On a strategic level there are currently a number of boards or services that operate on a regional or sub-regional footprint. Similar to other authorities Denbighshire contributes to the work of these bodies. Regionally, the main ones at present are:

- GwE (Regional School Improvement Service)
- North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB)
- North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)
- North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB)
- North Wales Residual Waste Joint Committee
- North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent (NWMTRA)

Sub-regionally

- Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB)
- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Joint Committee

4.5 As these are public service delivery bodies it is appropriate that their activities and decisions are appropriately understood and transparent to the wider community. Local authority scrutiny committees have an important role in engaging members and the public in regional service delivery and in providing challenge and accountability measures where necessary.

4.6 The Regulations or Agreements that established the above bodies stipulate that they are required to be democratically accountable to their constituent authorities via scrutiny. Whilst the Regulations or Agreements establishing the NWEAB and the PSB stipulate that each local authority is required to designate a specific scrutiny committee to scrutinise these bodies, the scrutiny arrangements for them vary across the region. The table in Appendix 1 provides an overview of the current scrutiny arrangements for GwE, NWEAB, the CJC and PSBs across the region .

Denbighshire's current arrangements

4.7 **Regional School Improvement Service (GwE):** At present GwE officials attend Scrutiny (predominantly Performance Scrutiny Committee) with Education Service officers at the Committee's invitation to discuss school support and performance related matters. Further information can be found in Appendix 1.

4.8 **North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) :** Quarterly and annual reporting to Scrutiny on progress against the North Wales Growth Deal is a requirement of the Final Deal Agreement. As part of the final deal agreement all six local authorities agreed a 'Scrutiny Protocol' whereby regular updates on the work of the NWEAB are submitted to each authority's 'relevant' scrutiny Committee. Denbighshire has designated Partnerships Scrutiny Committee as its 'relevant' scrutiny committee for this purpose. Consequently, Partnerships Scrutiny Committee receives the NWEAB's Quarters 1, 2 and 3 performance reports for information and then the Quarter 4 and Annual Report are formally presented to the Committee by the Council Leader (DCC's representative on the NWEAB) and officers from the Board's Portfolio Management Office. The above mentioned 'Scrutiny Protocol' also includes an agreed approach for dealing with a 'Call-In.'

As 'economic well-being' is one of the powers vested in the new North Wales CJC there has been some discussion around transferring the functions of the NWEAB to the CJC. This would involve the NWEAB becoming a sub-committee of the CJC. Each of the six local authorities have approved this change in principle, however, these arrangements are yet to be confirmed and any change will have to be approved by members. Scrutiny arrangements for

the NWEAB in Denbighshire, like elsewhere, will continue in their current guise until the position is clarified.

4.9 North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC): The Welsh Government created the North Wales CJC under the North Wales Corporate Joint Committees Regulations 2021. It came into being on 1 April 2021 and was required to make arrangements to deliver its functions from 30 June 2022. The CJC is a high-level strategic body which has powers conferred on it in relation to:

- developing a strategic regional transport plan
- developing a strategic development plan; and
- securing the broad economic well-being of the region

The membership of the CJC comprises representatives from the six local authorities and Eryri National Park (ENP). ENP members only have voting rights on the CJC in relation to developing its Strategic Development Plan.

Work on developing scrutiny arrangements and a scrutiny framework for the CJC are currently underway. These arrangements could include the creation of a Joint North Wales Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC). Further information will be provided as these arrangements develop.

4.10 North Wales Residual Waste Joint Committee: this Board consists of representatives from all North Wales local authorities, except Wrexham County Borough Council. It was established to create a strategy and procure services for jointly disposing of residual waste. There are currently no regular scrutiny arrangements in place in Denbighshire for this joint committee.

4.11 North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent (NMWTRA): this agent manages, maintains and delivers improvements on the strategic road network in North and Mid Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government. It operates on the basis of a partnership between the 8 North and Mid Wales local authorities. There are currently no regular scrutiny arrangements in place in Denbighshire for NMWTRA.

4.12 Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB): Section 58 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and Regulation 3 of The Local Authorities (Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2013 makes provision for two or more local authorities by agreement to

establish a joint scrutiny committee. Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council both agreed to establish a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) for the purposes of scrutinising and complying with duties conferred on Scrutiny in relation to PSBs under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015. The JOSC meets twice a year at present.

Whilst there is one other joint PSB in North Wales and the other two have developed a joint Well-being Plan, Conwy and Denbighshire are the only counties who have established a JOSC. A JOSC operates in exactly the same way as any local authority scrutiny committee and has call-in powers which can be instigated if required.

Other regional and sub-regional bodies or boards subject to scrutiny in Denbighshire

4.13 There are a number of other regional or sub-regional bodies in existence which are scrutinised on a regular basis in Denbighshire. These are:

Conwy & Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) – this Committee attends Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on at least an annual basis in accordance with the requirements of sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006. Each local authority is required under this Act to have a designated Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee.

North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB) – The NWRPB is one of 7 boards established across Wales to bring together local authorities, local health boards, third sector, service users and carers to co-operate together in planning and delivering services in relation to adults with needs for care and support, carers and children. Regional Partnership Boards operate on the footprints of each of the seven Health Boards in Wales. In Denbighshire, the Board's Annual Report is presented to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

4.14 In addition, other regional arrangements do exist which can be invited in for scrutiny at any time if members feel that aspects of their work would benefit from being scrutinised. These include the **North Wales Safeguarding Board (NWSB)** and the **North Wales Counties Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS)**. Neither of the above named are currently subject to regular scrutiny in Denbighshire.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. Effective partnership working is key if the Council is to realise its ambition of delivering its Corporate Plan. Scrutiny has a crucial role to play in building relationships with partner organisations with a view to realising value for money and securing the delivery of high-quality services for local residents.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. There are no direct costs arising from the production of this report. Any costs associated with supporting scrutiny of public service delivery will need to be considered as part of the establishment costs if and when any regional arrangements are proposed.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. Not applicable as no decision is required.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. Not applicable as this report is for the Committee's information.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. Not required.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. No risks have been identified in relation to the production of this report.

However, scrutiny is a key component of effective decision-making, therefore it is imperative that all public service delivery arrangements, be they on a local authority area basis, a sub-regional or regional basis are effectively held to account via a robust scrutiny mechanism.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. No decision required. The legislative basis for the areas covered in this report include Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, Section 58 of the Local

Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and Regulation 3 of The Local Authorities
(Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2013.

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Current scrutiny arrangements across North Wales for scrutinising regional/sub-regional bodies

Regional/Sub-regional bodies	GwE	Public Services Boards (PSBs)	North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB)	North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)
<p>Denbighshire</p> <p>GwE attend for specific topics upon request from the Scrutiny Committee and/or Education Service officers. Denbighshire’s scrutiny committees do not regularly scrutinise GwE’s annual report or receive a</p>	<p>Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) established with Conwy for the purpose of scrutinising the Conwy & Denbighshire PSB (currently meets twice a year)</p>	<p>Quarters 1, 2 & 3 performance reports circulated to members of the designated Scrutiny Committee (Partnerships SC) for information. Q4 & Annual Performance Report presented formally to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for discussion</p>	<p>Scrutiny arrangements and scrutiny framework currently under development – further information will be provided as these arrangements develop.</p>	

	bespoke report on GwE's activities in Denbighshire			
Conwy	Bespoke Annual Report on GwE's activities etc. in Conwy presented to the Education & Skills Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee	JOSC established with Denbighshire for the purpose of scrutinising the Conwy & Denbighshire PSB (currently meets twice a year)	Quarters 1, 2 & 3 performance reports circulated to members of the designated Scrutiny Committee for information. Q4 & Annual Performance Report presented formally to the designated Scrutiny Committee for discussion	Scrutiny arrangements and scrutiny framework currently under development – further information will be provided as these arrangements develop.
Flintshire	Bespoke Annual Report on GwE's activities etc. in Flintshire presented to the Education, Youth & Culture O&S Committee	The Corporate Resources O&S Committee is the Council's designated scrutiny committee for scrutinising the PSB. Although Flintshire has developed a joint Well-being plan with Wrexham County	Quarters 1, 2 & 3 performance reports circulated to members of the designated Scrutiny Committee for information. Q4 & Annual Performance Report presented formally to the designated Scrutiny Committee for discussion	Scrutiny arrangements and scrutiny framework currently under development – further information will be provided as these arrangements develop.

		Borough Council, it is only a joint Plan agreed by two standalone PSBs which are scrutinised by both councils' designated scrutiny committees on an individual basis		
Gwynedd	Bespoke Annual Report on GwE's activities etc. in Gwynedd presented to the Education & Economy Scrutiny Committee	Communities Scrutiny Committee is the designated Scrutiny Committee for scrutinising the Joint Gwynedd & Ynys Môn PSB (although a formal joint PSB exists, no joint scrutiny arrangements have been established)	Quarters 1, 2 & 3 performance reports circulated to members of the designated Scrutiny Committee for information. Q4 & Annual Performance Report presented formally to the designated Scrutiny Committee for discussion	Scrutiny arrangements and scrutiny framework currently under development – further information will be provided as these arrangements develop.
Wrexham	Generic Annual Report accompanied by a bespoke report on education issues	The Corporate, Performance, Resources & Governance Scrutiny Committee is the Council's designated scrutiny	Quarters 1, 2 & 3 performance reports circulated to members of the designated Scrutiny Committee for information.	Scrutiny arrangements and scrutiny framework currently under development – further information will be provided

	and priorities in Wrexham (prepared by the Head of Education) presented to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee	committee for scrutinising the PSB. Although Wrexham has developed a joint Well-being plan with Flintshire County Council, it is only a joint Plan agreed by two standalone PSBs which are scrutinised by both councils' designated scrutiny committees on an individual basis	Q4 & Annual Performance Report presented formally to the designated Scrutiny Committee for discussion	as these arrangements develop.
Ynys Môn	Generic Annual Report accompanied by a bespoke appendix detailing GwE's activities in Ynys Môn presented to the Partnership &	Ynys Môn's Partnership & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee is the designated Scrutiny Committee for scrutinising the Joint Gwynedd & Ynys Môn PSB (although a formal joint PSB exists, no joint scrutiny	Quarters 1, 2 & 3 performance reports circulated to members of the designated Scrutiny Committee for information. Q4 & Annual Performance Report presented formally	Scrutiny arrangements and scrutiny framework currently under development – further information will be provided as these arrangements develop.

	Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	arrangements have been established)	to the designated Scrutiny Committee for discussion	
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Democratic Services Committee Forward Work Plan

Meeting		Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Author	Date Entered / Updated By
20 September 2024	1	An Archive for Webcasts	A review of the arrangements for archiving the Council's webcasts	Catrin Roberts / Steve Price	Feb 2023
	2	The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act	To receive information on the implications of the Act.	Steve Price	Sept 2022/ deferred March 2024 (NH)
	3	Petition Scheme	To consider a new petition scheme	Catrin Roberts/ Jo Sutton	Feb 2024/ deferred March 2024 (NH)

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 Updated 13/3/2024 - NH

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