

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 27 May 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Huw Jones / Hywyn Williams

Report Author: David Morgan

Title: Street Naming and Numbering Policy

1. What is the report about?

The report proposes the adoption of a new Street Naming and Numbering Policy for the county that will replace the 1997 policy, which is now out of date. There has been particular Member and public interest in enabling street name changes to take place to rename some streets that currently have a single language name to change to a new bilingual name. Provision for this is included in the policy along with a number of other updates and refinements to the policy.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

A decision is required from Cabinet to agree, amend or reject the proposed new Street Naming and Numbering Policy (Appendix 1) and to approve the change in delegation from the Head of Planning and Public Protection to the Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation.

3. What are the Recommendations?

The recommendations are

1. For Cabinet to agree the proposed new Street Naming and Numbering Policy.
2. Cabinet note that the street naming and numbering function is managed by the Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation.

4. Report details.

The responsibility for street naming and numbering policy lies with the Corporate Research and Intelligence Team located in the Business Improvement and Modernisation Service. This is because the information management skills required to maintain the council's land and property gazetteer and street gazetteer sit within this team. For the past two years the team has won gold awards and best in Wales prizes for the quality of its management of address and street data.

Our current Street Naming and Numbering Policy dates from 1997, shortly after the formation of Denbighshire County Council. Recent examination of the policy found it lacking in the following areas:

1. A lack of clarity about street name changes and which legislation was to be applied
2. The lack of a procedure to enable street name changes to be applied in a consistent manner.
3. Insufficient safeguards against controversial or inappropriate street naming.

At the same time there has been significant interest in the issue of bilingual street naming coming from Members, the public and Assembly Members. Each of these points has been considered in the drafting of the proposed policy.

The policy clarifies that council will follow the provisions of the Public Health Act 1925 in relation to street naming and numbering including where there is a proposal to change an existing name. The policy states that all new street names must be either a Welsh language name or a bilingual name that is consistent with the local heritage and history of the area. It explains that streets will not normally be renamed but where there is a demand for this, the policy outlines a new procedure to be followed to achieve this. This procedure involves consultation with local residents and wider stakeholders including the local Town and Community Councils.

Denbighshire County Council has to approve all new or changed street names. The policy explains the need to avoid names that may cause offence, may cause confusion or may be controversial. This includes the proposal that 'Any proposal to name a street (or building) after specific individuals (living or deceased) will not be approved.'

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The proposed changes do not directly contribute to a Corporate Priority. It will, however, benefit residents and communities, by allowing street naming in line with local cultures. It will also benefit the emergency services through ensuring clear street naming and improve the ease at which properties can be located etc.

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

The policy itself will not automatically incur costs of its own. However, it does provide for the possibility of street name changes. Street name changes will involve two sets of costs. Firstly, a street name change requires a consultation exercise with residents and, if it proceeds to the second stage, will require official notices to be erected in the street (similar to notices placed on lamp posts when planning permission is sought). The cost of which will be covered by a small admin fee recovered from the proposer of the change or Town and Community Council sponsor.

Secondly, there would be the cost of replacement street signage. The cost of producing and installing a new sign is approximately £200-£220 depending on the whether one line of text or two lines of text are required. The number of signs required in any given street will vary depending on street length etc. We would be obliged to place signs at reasonable intervals, at corners and junctions. This cost will usually be recouped from the relevant Town or Community Council, if they have agreed to act as sponsor to the change. If a name change has been agreed to go

ahead without a sponsor (e.g. at the request of the emergency services) then the cost of replacement signage would have to be borne by Denbighshire County Council.

Finally, there is a small risk of a legal challenge being made to a Street Name Change (although the consultation process is designed to prevent this). This would require staff time and support from the Legal and Democratic Services Department. The cost of which would not be recoverable.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

An equality impact assessment was undertaken and is attached. We propose to include information on any equality issues that may arise in the monitoring report that will be provided to scrutiny.

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

The principle of the change in policy relating particularly to the mechanisms for street name changes has been discussed at the Members bilingual forum and subsequently with representative of that group in more detail. The draft policy was then circulated to relevant internal stakeholder in the various council departments. The issue was raised at Performance Scrutiny Committee who have requested a monitoring report on street naming and numbering in approximately 6 months' time.

One consultee suggested that naming of streets after individuals should be allowed in some circumstances. However, we have not changed the policy relating to this because of the difficulties in outlining when it would and when it would not be appropriate to name a street after a person.

Finally, the potential for Town and Community Councils (T&CCs) to act as sponsors to street name changes arose during consultation. We recognise the need to consult with T&CCs about the proposed sponsor role for street name changes in their area. However, we felt it was necessary to have a view from Cabinet about this in principle before we consulted with the T&CCs about the practical detail. The policy as proposed does not place any requirement on T&CC to be involved in any way in street naming and numbering. It simply opens up the possibility for T&CC to become sponsors of street name changes should they wish to do so. We expect that some T&CCs will wish more involvement than others in these matters and wish to remain flexible.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The policy should try to ensure that the risk of additional costs being incurred by the council is minimised.

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

There are potentially two risks that are associated with the policy. Firstly, if the demand for street name changes is very great then there could have a financial implication for the local authority or for the sponsoring Town and Community Council if these requests go ahead. If a large number of requests were to be rejected then this could have negative reputational consequences.

Secondly, there is a risk that legal challenges are made once a notice to rename the street has been drawn up. The consultation process which will be undertaken prior to any notice being issued is designed to resolve any potential issues before they reach the stage of a legal challenge.

11. Power to make the Decision

The main power to make the decision arises from the Public Health Act 1925 (Sections 17 to 19 and 29 to 31). This instrument empowers the Local Authority to issue and receive street naming notices before a street is named, to issue orders to name streets, to alter the name of a street, and to enforce the display of officially assigned street names. It repeals section 160 of the Public Health Act 1875 and Town Improvement Clause Act 1847.

The Local Government Act 1972 (Section 180 (3)) has a secondary relevance. This instrument clarifies that it is not possible to apply the Public Health Act 1925 together with the Town Improvement Clauses Act 1847. This is relevant because some of the practices included in Denbighshire County Council's previous Street Naming and Numbering Policy (1997) related to the 1847 Act.