

4th Quarter Monitoring and Progress Form - One Voice Wales

Quarter: 4

Year: 2014/15

Months: January to March

Information provided by: Mr Lyn Cadwallader, CEO

Date: 12 March 2015

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIORITY BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. Membership levels

a. *Current membership figure: 560*

b. *What are the area committees doing to increase membership?*

In Mid and West Wales we continue to have "Membership Recruitment and Retention" as a standing item on all Area Committee agendas, as well as an additional standing item of "Best Practice", which, between them, are encouraging representatives from member councils to share with one another a raft of good practices and various experiences of innovative project and partnership work and, which, consequently, are giving councillors the necessary evidence to promote One Voice Wales membership to non-member colleagues. Additionally, non-member councillors who have attended our training modules have provided positive feedback to colleagues and this has resulted in a few new councils coming into membership. The significant growth in the number of member councils in Pembrokeshire continues to occur, with a renewed enthusiasm apparent at Area Committee meetings.

The Swansea and Neath/Port Talbot Committees are regularly informed of membership levels and on an annual basis we write on their behalf to non-member councils encouraging them to join. Membership levels in these two areas are relatively high although we did lose Briton Ferry in the current year.

In South East Wales each area committee has an agenda item on membership and we discuss potential new members and request any member with contact with that council to assist by acting as an intermediary. We have also been speaking to Third Sector colleagues about community groups who may be interested in setting up a new town council.

2. Increase membership income :

Membership income has increased in the current year partly due to a 2.2% increase in fee levels but also because of a number of new town council members coming into membership.

a. *Membership income for 2014/15 received to date: £169557 (Budget £154500)*

3. Alternative income (over and above subscriptions and WAG core grant) generated?

- a. *What are the funding streams? Sponsorship/Conference exhibitions/Consultancy and Training/Bank Interest*
- b. *what amounts have already been raised? The amounts are as follows:*

Conference Fees and Charges - £16111 (Budget £17000)

Consultancy - £10385 (Budget £18000)

Sponsorship - £23727 (Budget £25000)

Training Fees – 26752 (Budget £30000)

(Note – Consultant's Fees are payable from this income. Cost of training venues and trainer fees come out of this income).

Bank Interest - £299 (Budget £350)

- c. *What total amounts for the year are expected?*

Conference/Exhibitor's Fees - £16111

Consultancy – £11500

Sponsorship – £23727

Training Fees - £30000

- d. *What will this income fund?*

This will be used to fund arrears of pension costs and helping increase the very low level of reserves which is somewhat concerning.

4. Larger Local Councils Committee

- a. *Please provide a summary of actions that the Larger Local Councils Officer has carried out during the quarter?*

There was one meeting of the Committee during the quarter. The Officer arranged for a presentation from Tidal Lagoon Power Limited and from Planning Aid Wales. A debate took place about changing the way the work of the Committee is managed to include greater participation from members in what has been described as 'hot and emerging topic' and it is considered that attendance levels will improve by encouraging this increased level of participation. A brief debate also took place about the WP on Local Government Reform with a full debate scheduled for the April meeting to be informed by a survey of Councils beforehand on key issues highlighted in the White Paper.

- b. *How many members are there currently? 49*

- c. *What plans are there to further develop the committee?*

As explained above the working methods of the Committee are to change and we are hopeful that the methods to be employed including wider communication about the work of the Committee will encourage more local councils to come into membership.

- d. We know that the committee is promoted to potential larger council members in member correspondence, presentations to larger councils and via the website. Has this been working well, are there any other plans?*

Yes as indicated above.

5. Member services - qualitative and quantitative

a. Legal advice: The increase in advice relating to asset transfers and service devolution continues as well as some issues pertaining to freedom of information and behaviour of members of the public attending Council meetings. There is also an increase in HR advice being needed to support organisational reviews being undertaken in a number of larger councils in readiness for the additional services they are likely to assume responsibility for by way of devolution.

b. Policy advice:

In the South West area there have been around 80 substantive requests for advice and around 20 requests for advice from the North Wales area.

Mid and West Wales: Policy (and general) advice has been given to a wide range of councils. A total of 60 substantive queries were addressed in the Mid & West region during the quarter.

For South Wales we have had 43 substantial inquiries of these 4 have been referred to NALC.

We have received several emails regarding consultations and inquiries linked to LDP, LA asset transfer strategies, planning applications related to major development e.g Old St Mellons,

c. Publications: We have distributed a joint publication with NEA Cymru on Rural Fuel Poverty based on a pilot programme with Abergwili Community Council – a copy has been provided for WG information.

d. Representational service: One Voice Wales on behalf of community and town councils across Wales have made representations on various consultations over the last three months and other consultations remain under consideration, including:

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Development of an energy efficient strategy for Wales, Planning (Wales) Bill, Public Services Staff Commission and the Draft National Transport Plan 2015.

One Voice Wales has continued to spend considerable time in the past quarter advising and working on behalf of member councils in relation to the whole agenda of services operated hitherto by unitary authorities being offered to local councils for their consideration (see question 11).

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We have attended Monmouthshire Charter Liaison meeting and corresponded with The National Parks Authority and Monmouthshire CC on behalf on our members.

We have been liaising with Cardiff and the Vale Health Board to replace our representative on their Stakeholder Reference Group and the new Chair will be speaking at the January AC meeting.

This quarter we have hosted a range of speakers for our Area Committee's including Planning Aid Wales, PREVENT (Police Anti Terrorist Programme), Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Natural Resources Wales.

One Voice Wales represented the local councils at the Wales Regeneration Summit at Swansea Liberty Stadium. The key theme was town centres in Wales. The summit focussed on the Vibrant and Viable Places programme and the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) initiative. It also looked at key examples of the many local and self-funded projects taking place in town centres throughout Wales.

e. Annual conference:

The conference has been booked for Saturday 3rd October 2015 at the Royal Welsh Showground.

f. Training – please provide an update on training courses delivered January to March 2015

BESPOKE COURSES

Appraisal Training for Crickhowell, Caldicot and Ystradgynlais Town Councils (approx.40 in attendance)

Information Management – Magor and Undy Community Council (14 in attendance – expected)

Chairing Skills – Resolven Community Council (12 in attendance)

Programmed courses: 12 courses run with 84 attendees

(Estimates are given for programmed courses as some will run in mid to the end of March and figures have only been included in respect of known bookings)

Total attendees at programmed and bespoke courses = 124 (Training courses were only programmed for February and March).

A Joint Funding Bid for training investment has been developed jointly with SLCC and submitted to the Welsh Government for consideration.

- g. Other: Internal audit work has been confirmed for Croesyceiliog and Llanyrafon CC. A circular has been sent to all Councils advertising the consultancy services available to member councils.*

Now the new website is live our Commercial lead, [information redacted], will be focussing the Commercial Development around the Supplier Directory and Banner Advertising. To this end we have met with the South Wales Chamber of Trade to explore ways of accessing the private sector in a resource efficient way.

6. Development of internal policies, procedures and people

a. Anything to report?

One remaining aspect of the WG audit to complete is the preparation of the Staff Handbook. Although many of the policies to be contained in the Handbook have been completed, this is a resource intensive activity and it has proved difficult to allocate resources to complete the work.

One Voice Wales has signed the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Charter and this has been formally acknowledged by Cynnal Cymru.

A number of further documents outlining standard responses to "Frequently Asked Questions" for the sector have been forwarded to member councils, as appropriate, and the new One Voice Wales website continues to be developed to present these and other items of useful information to members.

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b. Progress with limited company status?

[information redacted], of Geldards attended the OVW NEC in December and a discussion was held on the draft articles of

association. A revised draft will be circulated to members for their consideration in January 2015.

- c. Status of Larger Local Council Development officer post. This now falls within the remit of the Deputy Chief Executive.*

7. Communications

- a. Update on quarterly newsletters and other PR:*

Website – With funding support from the Welsh Government the website is now up to date. The Office Manager and the Deputy CEO now have responsibility for maintaining the website.

8. Promoting Welsh Assembly Government policy initiatives within the community and town council sector

- a. Training Strategy for Community and Town Councils?*

The final draft has been signed off by NTAG and is currently out for consultation with member councils. The NEC's Finance, Resources and GP Committee will consider the draft at its meeting on 13 March, 2015.

One Voice Wales National Executive Committee members recently supported the proposal that in future all community and town councillors should be compelled to undertake basic training in their roles as elected representatives, and the membership at large have endorsed this view very strongly over the past quarter.

- b. What are the current trainer numbers? 12*

- c. Are OVW happy that the trainer numbers will meet training need? YES*

Charters – progress / report? Gwynedd CC has decided not to pursue a Charter but have agreed to develop a shared working protocol with local councils in their area. The Chief Executive of Gwynedd will be attending the two Area Committees to discuss a way forward with member councils. The Neath/Port Talbot Charter has still not been finalised. The Chief Executive has written to the Chief Executive of the City and County of Swansea pressing for attention to be given to the development of an action plan to support the approved Charter.

All five Area Committees have previously endorsed the model charter in principle as the way forward, with the missing stage in each area being to progress an agreed "action plan" to accompany this document. This process is still being progressed, against the back-drop of other pressures. Three-way discussions will continue at officer level between One Voice Wales, Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council on the approach to taking these matters forward in the two respective areas, subject to Powys County

Council resolving its strategic approach in this regard. Specific talks in relation to the concept of "clustering" have taken place at Powys and their leadership has engaged formally with One Voice Wales in order to progress this, although a number of strategic issues need to be resolved. In Carmarthenshire, the Liaison Forum, at which representatives and officers from both sectors come together to discuss common issues, continues its good work; this is seen as a model of good practice and is being recommended in other areas across Wales.

The charter between the Brecon Beacons National Park and Community and Town Councils in the park area continues in place, with local council members having attended monitoring and review sessions. In Pembrokeshire, the Chief Executive Officer of the Pembrokeshire National Park has met with the Area Committee offering regular meetings with Committee delegates.

Monmouthshire – The last Charter Liaison Group meeting agreed to base their Asset Strategy on the Cornwall model; there was a follow up meeting in October where lead officers agreed to get the detail of the plan to our members in good time for them to prepare their precept however to date this has not happened and I have been asked by our Area Representative to write to Monmouthshire CC expressing the frustration and need to keep our members informed.

Newport – no meeting have been held and this is causing some concern

Cardiff – Members very unhappy with the lack communication although the Chair of the BVC AC has began a dialogue with the new officer in charge and is hopeful things will improve. There remain frustration at the exclusion of town and community councils from the key meetings and committees.

Vale of Glamorgan – Members are happy with the way the Charter is working although some feel communication could be improved.

Bridgend – There is no feed back at the Area Committee regarding this Charter so I have done some spot testing and it appears either the clerks are not aware of the Charter or nothing is happening on it. I will be following up on this with BCBC before the next AC and then raising it with members at that meeting.

In line with trying to develop the RCT/Merthyr/Caerphilly Area Committee we will be trying to engage those LA's over the next quarter.

d. Local Service Boards. Nothing to report

e. Other:

*One Voice Wales is part of the WG Diversity in Democracy steering group responsible for the delivery of the action plan that came out of the research report **On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales** Report of the Expert Group on Diversity in Local Government.*

To date the main steering group and the mentoring sub group have met and progressed to the stage where we are now recruiting mentors and have just finalised the application form and process for mentees. There is also a Publicity Group that I am feeding into on behalf of our sector.

9. Other key objectives listed in business plan

a. How would you assess your progress with the other key objectives? Only one objective not completed in the year relating to the establishment of an Awards Scheme. We are intending to launch this at our National Conference 2015.

10. Financial Information required

a. Have there been any revisions to the income and expenditure sheet provided to us for the last meeting?

The latest up to date budget outturn report is attached. It should be noted that the NEC has approved the budget for 2015/16 which will involve a 3% increase in membership fees.

11. Other

a. Details of other developments / achievements.

Liaison between One Voice Wales officers and other external bodies continues to occur, delivering increased co-operation and partnership working across sectors. Elected members remain increasingly concerned with the agenda of potentially devolving services and facilities from unitary authorities to the local level (without necessarily having sufficient time, expertise or guidance in place to enable local members to consider the issues properly), and this entire issue has become extremely critical in Powys over the last quarter.

Future Generations Bill

The Chief Executive sits on the Future Generations Bill Advisory Board led by [information redacted], Sustainable Futures Commissioner. The major development to report is that the timeline for the implementation of the Act requirements (for Town Councils only) is likely to be 2016 rather than 2018 as previously stated in Future Generations Bill consultation documents last year.

At the end of November we received the research undertaken by [information redacted] [Ed:Cynnal Cymru], which set out a series of recommendations:

- Have one common language & terminology for the Public Sector in Wales with regard to plans (proliferation of terms e.g. "place plan", "town plan", "resilience plan", "well-being plan")
- PSBs need to be transparent and involve all public bodies in their planning process including Community and Town Councils
- Make all Community and Town Councils subject to the Well-being of Future Generations Bill.
- Make Community and Town Councils a fully functioning tier of local government with a reporting duty and full-time skilled staff. This would ensure; transparency, a better profile for the sector, local support from citizens and businesses & good use of local knowledge feeding back into wellbeing plans and policy development (e.g. Wales We Want). The sector should not be expected to deal with asset transfer without training, powers or resources.
- A big learning curve for CTCs is necessary.
- CTCs should not be "consulted" but engaged in the process of developing well-being plans (see Shropshire).

This information has been fed into [information redacted], at Welsh Government as part of the Bill development process.

Planning Bill and Place Plans

As reported previously One Voice Wales and Planning Aid Wales provided a joint response to the Environment and Sustainability Committee 19 March 2014. Cllr Mike Cuddy, Penarth Town Council and the Chief Executive One Voice Wales and [information redacted], CEO Planning Aid Wales attended the committee and made representations as set out in the last NEC report.

Following on from this the CEO attended a Ministerial regional event on 18 September in City Hall Cardiff.

In November the CEO, Vice Chair of One Voice Wales Cllr Mike Cuddy and One Voice Wales Deputy CEO Paul Egan attended the National Assembly Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee and made representation on behalf of the Community and Town Council sector on the Planning Bill.

One Voice Wales/SLCC Conference

It is pleasing that Leighton Andrews AM Minister for Public Services has agreed to attend our next joint event with the SLCC in 2015.

[information redacted], **Gwent Police Commissioner**

One Voice Wales will be working with the Police Commissioner in the Spring 2015 on the promotion of the Positive Futures youth engagement programme led by Gwent Police.

One Voice Wales/WLGA Memorandum of Understanding

Following the announcement that the funding for the Improvement Team within WLGA had been cut we have been informed that the level of joint working is likely to be significantly affected.

At the time of writing we are awaiting the full impact of this development which will be discussed at the NTAG meeting in January. However in the last quarter we have worked on two events with the WLGA: 'Better Use of Public Services' conference at the SWALEC Stadium and 'Supporting Strategic Commissioning in the Public Sector' conference and seminars again at the SWALEC Stadium, Cardiff.

Sustainable Local Services Task and Finish Group

On 3 June 2014 One Voice Wales were approached to take part in a Ministerial commissioned group to look at sustainable local services. Details of the programme were set out in the last NEC report. The Chief Executive is the representative for the sector on this group - the first meeting was held on 8 August 2014.

A second meeting was held in September and draft report discussed which will be revised and circulated to members for consideration.

The final report was presented to Leighton Andrews, Minister for Public Services setting out a series of recommendations which will be taken forward via the Local Government Reform programme.

National Assets Working Group (NAWG)

One Voice Wales is represented on this group by the Chief Executive. Over the last few months there have been some significant developments relating to this group and the service and assets devolution agenda more widely.

One Voice Wales has also been successful in receiving funding from Welsh Government to develop a guidance document of community and town councils on how they manage service or asset devolution requests. Draft content has been circulated and commented upon and this will be commissioned in the coming months.

One Voice Wales represented at the joint WAO/NAWG seminar in January 2015 looking at the 'Better Use of Public Assets'.

Welsh Government Community Asset Transfer Working Group

The CEO is the sector representative on this newly formed task and finish group. A first meeting was held on 20th August 2014 with representatives from local government, WCVA, Wales Co-operative and Welsh Government. The CEO gave a short presentation on the current position in Wales vis a vis asset and service devolution and the challenges for local government and community and town councils. Over the coming weeks best practice documents will be gathered and a toolkit drafted for use by stakeholders to community asset transfer. It is acknowledged this is going to be a huge challenge for public services and the third sector to manage effectively.

At the time of writing a draft report is being finalised identifying areas of good practice. It is anticipated that this will be circulated for wider consumption in March 2015/early April 2015.

Additionally OVW is involved with WCVA and many of its member organisations in organising a Conference on Asset Transfers

Climate Change Adaptation Project, Phase II and III

This work has now been completed and the findings were presented to the Larger Councils Conference on 9 July at the Royal Welsh Showground. Feedback on the project is very positive and we now have a range of case studies to share with the local councils sector thereafter. Additionally we have a set of recommendations that will assist the work of the 'election manifesto' sub group when convened.

Following on from this work a Sustainable Living Conference was held on 17 September in Cardiff where Paul Egan provided a presentation on the above project. Again the work of One Voice Wales has been showcased.

Following on from this One Voice Wales are currently working with colleagues in NRW and Cynnal Cymru to identify sources of funding to take this forward into a Phase 3 where the findings from Phase 2 can be widely circulated and implemented on the ground.

OVW continues to maintain an active involvement in the work of the Climate Change Commission's Adaptation Sub-Group

Information Commissioners Office

Following on from the Information Commissioner for Wales (ICO) presentation at our National Conference in October 2013 a series of follow up meetings and activities have been developed culminating in a series of ICO seminars for community and town councils later in the year. Details of the dates and times are available via our training programme.

Wales Audit Office Shared Learning Seminars

As reported previously during April 2014 the Chief Executive presented at two Shared Learning Seminars run by the Wales Audit Office on Asset and Service Devolution run in Cardiff and Llanrwst respectively.

Feedback from the events suggests One Voice Wales has had a very positive impact on the delegates who attended and will have positive implications for the wider public sector community.

As a consequence of our partnership working the Auditor General has agreed to run two national events in January 2015 with One Voice Wales on the issues of asset and service devolution. This is a really positive development for One Voice Wales and members will be encouraged to attend.

NEA Cymru – Pilot Work and Policy Seminars

Following meetings between the Chief Executive of One voice Wales and the Director of NEA Cymru/ NEA's Development Officer a number of joint initiatives are being developed for the Autumn period. All member councils have received correspondence via One Voice Wales asking them to consider taking part in a Rural Fuel Poverty pilot programme funded by Calor Gas. Support will be provided by NEA staff to work with a council in a rural area on addressing the issues of rural fuel poverty. A case study of the work will be developed and then shared with community and town councils across Wales. Additionally One Voice Wales and NEA Cymru will be holding two Policy seminars in mid September in North Wales and Mid and West Wales (these are the areas of highest fuel poverty in Wales based on extensive research by NEA UK). Details of these events will be distributed prior to the summer recess to member organisations. And finally we will be working with NEA Cymru to deliver some training sessions on Fuel Poverty in the late Autumn period. Details will be distributed via One Voice Wales training programme.

Integrated Public Sector Reporting Pilot

The CEO has been asked to take part in the Integrated Public Sector Reporting project lead by [information redacted], WG Director General. An initial meeting was held on 17 November which considered

- *Governance arrangements including a possible programme board for the public sector in Wales.*
- *Establishing an IR network group building on the communications already established in Wales.*
- *Level of participation; do you wish to be fully engaged in delivering a draft IR or kept informed with the option to provide input and comment.*
- *Next steps.*

A second meeting of the group has now been held which the CEO participated in. A work programme is being established.

Wider representation

The CEO has attended a range of conferences representing the community and town council sector in Wales including PAVO Conference where joint working with the Third sector was discussed and this will be taken forward with colleagues from Powys CC; Sustainable Development Network Annual Conference where the views of the C&TC sector was fed into the discussions on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill; attended the Wales Co-o 'Doing things differently' conference where opportunities were taken to promote the work of community and town councils and the opportunities for joint working with social enterprises; joint presentation by the CEO and [information redacted], Cornwall CC to representatives of the Vale of Glamorgan CC and Vale of Glamorgan C&TC's the outcome of which there are several C&TC's investigating how 'cluster' arrangements could be made to work in their area; the CEO and Deputy CEO attended the All Wales Improvement Network Annual Conference and raised the profile of One Voice Wales exhibiting materials and taking part in seminars; and finally, the CEO made a presentation to the newly formed Risca Town Council on the benefits of membership of One Voice Wales and the role OVW plays in representing the community and town council sector.

