

Monitoring and Progress Form - One Voice Wales

Quarter: 1

Year: 2015-16

Months: April-June

Information provided by: Lyn Cadwallader, Chief Executive, OVW

Date:

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIORITY BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. Membership levels

a. Current membership figure: 560 (still awaiting decisions on some councils as they are in the process of having their AGM's)

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

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 is heartening, and non-member councils have again this summer been invited to attend our Area Committee meetings.

At every meeting of the Swansea Area and Neath Port Talbot Area Committees we seek the views of members as to how we can increase membership. Letter have been sent by the Deputy CEO to the few councils not in membership and none of them have accepted an offer of me making a presentation to them. Members of the Committee have agreed to speak to the representatives of non-member councils at meetings of the respective Community Liaison Committees.

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

a. Membership income for 2015-16 received to date:

Budget = £170,000. Actual =£170,628

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

a. If so, what amounts are involved?

Bank Interest:

Budget = £450. Actual = £9.98

Sponsorship:

Budget = £30,000. Actual = £ 5,500

Conference Fees & Charges:

Budget = £17,500. Actual = £4,540

b. Again, if applicable, what will this income fund? This funding is needed to finance the general activities of the organisation.

4. Larger Local Councils Committee

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

During the quarter a meeting of the Committee was held in April when a new meeting structure was piloted involving greater engagement of members in discussion of topical issues. The attendance at the meeting was much higher than it has been previously. The attendance level was 26 members plus officers of OVW. Planning of the Larger Council's Conference took place in the quarter with the Conference taking place on 8 July with a high level of bookings being achieved. Much of our consultancy work delivered by the Larger Councils Officer is targeted at the larger councils and work has been undertaken for Chepstow, Llanedi and Blaenhonddan Councils. The Chair of the Committee is planning to meet with all larger councils accompanied by an OVW officer to talk about the work of the Committee and to identify what councils would like to see the Committee become engaged with over the coming year.

b. How many members are there currently? 50 (lost Prestatyn TC but gained Colwyn Bay and Tenby Town Councils)

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

This will depend on the Chair's consultation with the larger councils. For now, agendas will be designed to increase member participation in topics of general interest.

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?

It has not resulted in any major increase in member numbers although in the current year we have attracted Bay of Colwyn and Tenby into membership.

5. Member services - qualitative and quantitative

a. Legal advice: The main areas where legal advice has been required relate to asset management, leases, cemetery management, land management and contractual issues.

b. Policy advice: A wide range of policy advice has been issued to councils throughout Wales relating to freedom of information, register of member interests, website information requirements, devolution of services/asset transfers, a range of employment law issues, financial queries and general governance matters. The Deputy CEO has been dealing with around 25 enquiries per week.

A total of 83 substantive queries were addressed in the Mid & West region during the quarter.

c. Publications:

The Chief Executive will be preparing the booklet on 'Working with Young People.' The next edition of The Voice will be published in August/September 2015 and is currently being drafted.

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: the White Paper on Reforming Local Government (Power to Local People), Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill, annual scrutiny of Natural Resources Wales and Protecting Community Assets

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).

We have taken up an issue about train services to Pwllheli with the Welsh Government Minister and have made representations to the National Grid about overhead cabling in the Northern part of the Dwyfor area. We have also represented the Swansea Area Committee at a meeting with the Democratic Services Officer relating to the development of a Charter action plan.

e. Annual conference:

The flyer for the Annual Conference has been distributed to member councils and booking forms will be issued before the end of July. With the Minister speaking at the Conference it is anticipated that there will be a record number of attendees. This year's conference is being held at the Bont Pafilwn at Pontrhydfendigaid on 3 October 2016.

- f. Training - How many training courses have been provided? How many attended them?*

13 courses ran and a total of 90 attendees (April – June 2015)

- g. Other:*

Direct involvement in the organisation of the WCVA Community Asset Seminar held in June, 2015. We will be involved in the organisation of a follow-up to be held in March 2016. We were also directly involved in the organisation of the joint OVW/SLCC event in May 2015 and the Climate Change Communities SAP event held on 13 July, 2015.

We have supported Welsh Governments High Street Supporter campaign during the quarter promoting the initiative across all our member councils.

6. Development of internal policies, procedures and people

- a. Anything to report?*

A policy on honorarium policies was approved at the June NEC.

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.

During the quarter the South Wales Development Officer has been on sick leave and her duties have been covered by the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive who have led Area Committee work and liaison with relevant bodies as well as providing advice and support to councils.

[information redacted], North Wales Development Officer has returned to work at the end of June 2015 following 12 months maternity leave.

The Audit Panel met during the quarter and agreed that the Chief Executive approach [information redacted], (formerly WLGA/ Senior Advisor to First Minister) to take up the position of co-opted independent member of the Panel. The Chief Executive has approached [information redacted], and he will be taking up his position at the next Audit Panel meeting to be held in July.

OVW has joined South Wales Chamber of Commerce to access potential supplier organisations and target new exhibitors for our events.

b. Progress with limited company status?

The final draft of the Articles of Association is currently being finalised for distribution to member councils in advance of 2015 AGM.

c. Status of Larger Local Council Development officer post.

The Deputy Chief Executive continues to fulfil this role.

7. Communications

a. Update on quarterly newsletters and other PR:

Currently drafting the next edition of The Voice – due to be sent out late August/September.

Chief Executive is currently drafting guidance on Youth Councils.

We undertook a IT Survey of the sector during the quarter – the results indicated there was further work required within the sector regarding use of personal computers by Clerk and backing up of data. Specific guidance on this is being drafted for release to member councils.

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

a. Training Strategy for Community and Town Councils? The new national training strategy was launched in May 2015 and work will now be undertaken with the SLCC to carry out the agreed actions. From October onwards, courses will be added to the modular programme on advanced finance, sustainability and devolution of services/community asset transfers. We are currently in discussions with the WCVA with a view to submitting a business case on developing a training programme on Working with the Third Sector.

b. What are the current trainer numbers? 12

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

d. Charters – progress / report?

We have been asked by the Neath/Port Talbot Area Committee to progress the completion of the Charter. The Chief Executive will be attending the next meeting of the Committee when he will be asked to progress its completion. We have met with the Democratic Services Officer of the City and County of Swansea and have asked him to consider the development of an action plan

to support the approved Charter. He has agreed to do this and will be attending a future meeting of the Area Committee. The Deputy CEO has been covering the Arfon/Dwyfor Area Committee for the past 12 months and he has written to the Chief Executive of Gwynedd to urge him to take steps to develop a Charter. Although he has not agreed to take joint working forward on this basis he has agreed to look at alternative models of joint working developed around the re-shaping of services agenda.

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.

Discussions are continuing at officer level between One Voice Wales and Ceredigion County Council on the approach to taking these matters forward, and similar discussions have occurred in relation to Powys County Council also. Specific talks in relation to the option of "clustering" councils for the purpose of running certain services 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. Ceredigion County Council is now actively looking at this model with a consideration to implement such a forum in the coming year. Pembrokeshire also has a smaller, all be it similar, forum where a limited number of sector representatives attend for liaison with county members and officers.

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, and in addition One Voice Wales members participate in the Park's scrutiny process on a regular basis.

At Pembrokeshire, the Chief Executive Officer of the Pembrokeshire National Park has met with the Area Committee and a series of regular meetings with Committee delegates is being planned.

e. Local Service Boards.

Nothing to report

f. Other:

The Deputy CEO now sits on a Re-Shaping Local Services Board established by the Vale of Glamorgan.

9. Other key objectives listed in business plan

We are currently on track to meet the targets set out within the Business Plan 2015-16.

10. Financial Information required

- a. *Have there been any revisions to the income and expenditure sheet provided to us in the business plan?*

The sheet has been amended to encompass indicative budgets up to 2017/18 – this is attached.

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 critical in a number of counties, in particular in Powys, over the last quarter.

Other notable areas of development include:

Asset/Service Devolution

During the period the Chief Executive has advised Severnside area (Monmouthshire) community councils on Asset and Service Transfers and presented to seven councils on the CAT procedure.

One Voice Wales/SLCC Conference

It is pleasing that Leighton Andrews AM Minister for Public Services attended the joint event with the SLCC in May 2015 where his presentation was well received by delegates.

[information redacted],, Gwent Police Commissioner

One Voice Wales will be working with the Police Commissioner in the Summer 2015 on the establishment of a second joint conference with the aim of closer collaborative working and in particular the Positive Futures youth engagement programme led by Gwent Police.

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. The

Minister for Finance Jane Hutt will be attending the next NAWG meeting in July 2015.

Mutuals/Co-operatives Review

The Chief Executive has met with [information redacted], on three occasions during the course of his review work jointly commissioned by the Minister for Public Services/ Minister for Economy Edwina Hart on Mutuals/Co-operatives. The Chief Executive will be attending a Alternative Delivery Model conference in Flintshire at the beginning of July 2015 where the findings of the review will be presented to conference – indications are that community and town councils will be seen as bodies to play a greater role in partnership working to meet the asset/service transfer agenda.

Joint working with NRW

The Chief Executive has had a meeting during the quarter with the South Wales Management team of NRW to explore opportunities for joint working. Issues relating to flood risk were identified as potential for future collaboration. This work s ongoing and will be reported on as developments occur.

EGM Ynys Mon

The Chief Executive convened an EGM of the Ynys Mon Area Committee to discuss the issue of pylons on the islands and the proposed routes suggested by National Grid. Letters have been sent by the Area Committee to National Grid setting out the concerns of the sector on the island.