

Monitoring and Progress Form - One Voice Wales

Quarter: 2

Year: 2015-16

Months: July to September

Information provided by: Lyn Cadwallader, Chief Executive, OVW

Date:

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENT OF PRIORITY BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. Membership levels

a. Current membership figure: 551

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. Members have been particularly keen during their recent Area Committee meetings to check on the current membership status of all councils in their locality in order that they might lobby colleagues from non-member councils in terms of the benefits of membership. In Carmarthenshire, a small group of members has been specifically appointed in order to tackle the task of increasing membership. 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.

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. We have personally written to the few council's 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.

Recently we have written to the four non-member councils in the Swansea area inviting them to send up to 2 representatives to the meeting on 27 October. One of the Councils has accepted and will be sending their Chair and Vice.

In addition we have invited non members in the RCT, Caerphilly & Merthyr area to attend the Area Committee to observe and/or to go and speak to them.

2. Increase membership income

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

Budget = £170,000. Actual =£176109

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

a. If so, what amounts are involved?

Bank Interest:

Budget = £450. Actual = £26.26

Sponsorship:

Budget = £30,000. Actual = £ 11000

Conference Fees & Charges:

Budget = £17,500. Actual = £16865

Training

Budget = 35,000 Actual = £7387

Consultancy

Budget = £15,000 Actual = £8622

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?

A meeting of the Committee was held on 14 October, 2015 when members received a presentation from the Community Engagement Officer of the Older Persons Commissioner's Office. The Committee also discussed its views on the consultation from the Welsh Government on statutory guidance pertaining to the Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015. A discussion also took place about increasing the level of representation from larger councils. This considered changing the shape and presentation of agenda items; updating member contact details; holding a pilot regional meeting with groups of councils in a specified region to encourage improved attendance and a number of related matters. All those present

however confirmed the value of meetings and it was commented that the current 3 meetings pa should be a minimum and that they might be a need to meet more often if pressing policy matter emerged. The Committee also commented very favourably on the Larger Council's Conference which was exceptionally well attended in 2015. It should be pointed out that representation at meetings has improved this year but we are hopeful that we can achieve a much higher level of attendance through the measures that are to be taken.

b. *How many members are there currently?* 46

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) *The main areas where legal advice has been required has related to cemetery management, land management and contractual issues. 9 requests have been made in the last three months for specialist legal advice via our SLA.*

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. Deputy CEO has been dealing with around 25 enquiries per week.

A total of 70 substantive queries were addressed in the Mid & West region during the quarter.

We have responded to 22 requests for advice by our member councils in North Wales. There has been more than one query regarding problems recruiting clerks, breaches of the code of conduct, and queries relating to the government's Statutory Guidelines on Access to information.

We have received 46 enquiries in the last quarter in South Wales - three of which were referred to NALC. The majority of requests are related to

governance and regulations, employment issues and funding both for asset transfer and supporting other organisations.

c. Publications:

We have launched a local councils sector Manifesto on 3rd October at our National Conference.

An annual report has been produced and made available to our member councils (See attached)

The Chief Executive will be preparing the booklet on 'Working with Young People' to be completed end of October/beginning of November 2015

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: Protecting Community Assets, Public Health (Wales) Bill, Tax Collection and Management (Wales) Bill, Draft Directions – Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales, Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 4.

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).

e. Annual conference:

We held a successful National Conference at the Bont Pafilwn where the Leighton Andrews AM Minister for Public Services gave a keynote address followed by two excellent presentations by [information redacted], and [information redacted], respectively.

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

During the period July to September the following courses were held (Note: We do not offer courses in August):-

*Pencoed TC – Bespoke training course on Finance – 12 in attendance
Penarth TC – Bespoke training course on Community Engagement (Part 2) – 13 in attendance including representatives from Barry Town Council and Llandough Community Council
Langstone CC – Bespoke course on community engagement – 13 in attendance
Charing Skills – 8 attendees*

Programmed Courses:-

Law – 7 attendees
Council as an Employer – 10 attendees
Chairing Skills – 8 attendees
Council Meeting – 8 attendees
Finance – 10 attendees

g. Other:

The Larger Councils Conference was held in July, 2015.

We are working on leads from the Chamber of Commerce and have two meetings with potential advertisers. Costing of the sponsorship brochure has been undertaken in advance of those meetings. We have been also been reviewing existing Award Schemes to identify sponsors with a view to lead sponsor and category sponsors.

We have completed Commercial Strategy, Action Plan and Sponsorship Packages. We are currently investigating ways of gathering information on suppliers used by our members.

A successful team away day has been held during the quarter where we reviewed the format and function of our Area Committee's – several recommendations were made to improve their effectiveness. This will be implemented in the next quarter.

A positive Audit Panel was held in July – [information redacted] Pontyclun CC has now been co-opted onto this group and made a significant contribution to his first meeting.

We held our second NEC meeting of the year in mid September.

We represented the sector on the Local Councils Liaison Committee run by Wales Audit Office where we provided feedback on the draft Auditor General report on the sector for 2013-14.

6. Development of internal policies, procedures and people

a. Anything to report?

A number of our documents outlining standard responses to "Frequently Asked Questions" for the sector have been updated and 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.

b. Progress with limited company status?

A meeting is planned for the first week of November with Geldards to move forward consultation approach with member councils..

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:

Newsletter content is in the process of being finalised, with a view to publishing the newsletter in its new and improved format at the end of October.

We submitted an article to Llyg Woodland Wales for their quarterly newsletter setting out the role community and town councils can play in supporting community woodland development across Wales.

The Chief Executive appeared on the Good Morning Wales BBC Radio Wales show presented by Oliver Hides and was questioned on the future role of the community and town council sector. Positive feedback has been received from member councils on the outputs on the show.

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 Participation Cymru with a view to submitting a business case on developing a training programme on Working with the Third Sector.

Under the Training and Consultancy item on Area Committee agendas we remind members the Strategy is available on the OVW website

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?

South Wales

We have been asked by the Neath/Port Talbot Area Committee to progress the completion of the Charter. The Chief Executive attended the NPT Committee in September when he was asked to progress its completion. I 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.

A letter was sent to the Minister regarding Charter issues as requested by Gwent and Monmouth/Newport Area Committees.

Progress has been made with Cardiff CC due mostly to the efforts of [information redacted], working through the Scrutiny Committee he sits on. Monmouth CC are moving away from the Charter to a new framework of community engagement; we received a presentation from [information redacted], and [information redacted], who invited members to work cooperatively with them to redesign service delivery. We have requested a copy of the proposed new framework but it is not available yet.

No report from RCT on Charter but Caerphilly Charter is under review and it was agreed that [information redacted], will follow up on progress as she is the representative on the Liaison Group.

Newport and Torfaen Charters appear to be working better than the others however there are frustrations with Torfaen members that they have not been given information regarding assets and services that may be cut; they have been trying to get information on plans for Community Centres in the borough but have not had a response.

Blaenau Gwent members report little or no engagement.

All members report issues regarding poor communications often due to cuts in personnel or re-deployment.

Mid & West Wales

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 in particular on the approach to taking these matters forward. 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. 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, with Ceredigion County Council in particular looking at introducing a similar model there. Pembrokeshire has recently increased the number of One Voice Wales delegates invited to attend a smaller, similar forum in that county.

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, providing feedback to colleagues at Area Committee meetings. At Pembrokeshire, the Chief Executive Officer of the Pembrokeshire National Park has promised a series of regular meetings with Committee delegates.

e. Local Service Boards.

No progress to report. We will be responding to the current consultation on the Wellbeing of Future Generations regarding the Public Service Board proposals.

f. Other:

We are continuing to support the WG Diversity in Democracy working group and promoting the initiative at Area Committees.

We attended the NRW meeting on the Wentlooge and Caldicot Levels.

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?*

Updated budget information attached.

11. Other

- a. Details of other developments / achievements.*

A new proposed Annual Awards scheme for the sector has been designed by One Voice Wales and the National Executive Committee has approved a pilot of this scheme in early 2016. Award applications will be invited in six different categories. Liaison between One Voice Wales officers and other external bodies continues to occur, delivering increased co-operation and partnership working across sectors.

Officers also attend numerous seminars and presentations in order to keep abreast with and contribute to current issues and activities.

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 is now critical in a number of counties, in particular in Powys

Partnership Working

Asset/Service Devolution

During the period the Chief Executive has advised the Gwendraeth Valley cluster of community and town councils on the implications of the White Paper Power to the People and on Asset and Service Transfers. Additionally presented to Barry Town Council on service and asset devolution and the implications of clustering and also gave a keynote address to a Vale of Glamorgan CBC/ Community Councils Liaison event on the implications of community and town councils clustering as part of the Vale's 'Re-Shaping Services' agenda.

Bi lateral Meeting with the Minister

A positive meeting was held on 7 July with the Minister for Public Services and Cllr Bryan Grew Chair / Cllr Mike Cuddy vice Chair and Lyn Cadwallader CEO One Voice Wales respectively. One Voice Wales will be working on proposals for the development of urban community councils / use of the precept and WG were asked to investigate support for the development of a sector survey.

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 / Alternative Models of Service Delivery

The Chief Executive has met with [information redacted], on four 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 an Alternative Delivery Model conference in Flintshire at the beginning of July 2015 where the findings of the review will be presented to conference – it was indicated at the conference 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. A separate work stream on Alternative Models is being led by [information redacted], and workshops will be held in the next quarter.

Joint working with NRW

The Chief Executive has represented the sector at a Creating Woodlands Deputy Minister event exploring the future role of community and town councils in woodland creation across Wales – this will be an ongoing work stream for the foreseeable future.

Integrated Reporting Programme Board

The Chief Executive represents the sector on this Welsh Government Pilot Programme Board – one meeting has been held during the last quarter and a webinar is planned for November 2015 to take the project forward.

Public Sector Waste and Resources Advisory Board

The Chief Executive represented the sector on the above advisory board during the last quarter. We will be making a representation to the current consultation.