



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 25TH MAY 2016

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

REPORT BY: INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Democratic Services Committee with the annual report of the Head of Democratic Services which includes details of the current and planned services and support provided to Elected Members.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The annual report of the Head of Democratic Services sets out the current services and support provided to Members. It also provides an overview of how the resources within the Democratic Services Team are being maximised in the provision of the support, the conclusion is that adequate arrangements are currently in place.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to provide support to Members and for the Democratic Services Committee to monitor the support.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Democratic Services has several different functions to support members; Committee services, Members training and development, Scrutiny, Civic Office and all types of support for Members.

Committee Services

- 4.2 There have been 222 committee meetings arranged between the annual meetings of Council in 2015 and 2016. This includes a number of special scrutiny meetings to consider the medium term financial plan. All meetings were properly advertised, agendas and minutes produced.
- 4.3 There have been 7 members' seminars, which included a wide range of issues, as follows:
- 20 mpg Zones - 15/4/15
 - Social Services Health Wellbeing Act – 15/6/15
 - Medium Term Financial Plan – 6/7/15, 7/9/15 and 14/1/16
 - Treasury Management – 13/10/15
 - Gypsy & Travellers and the Housing Act – 10/11/15

- 4.4 Committee services are currently implementing the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards in respect of public meetings. The standards require that all agendas for public meetings are published in Welsh and that Cabinet minutes are also available in Welsh.

Members Training and Development

- 4.5 A number of Member training and support sessions have also been held as part of the training and development programme (including mandatory training, annual refresher training, and recommended training and requested training). A full review covering the review of the programme will be presented to the Democratic Services Committee in September 2016.
- 4.6 During 2015/16 a Senior Councillor Training Programme was offered to those Members seeking further development of the key skills and knowledge required by Members in senior positions with a view to optimising performance and progressing within the council. The programme was available for up to 15 Members and required significant commitment over a 6 months period. The training was provided on a modular basis through a series of Saturday seminars and workshops, guided personal research and reflection, and observed practice. Participants were expected to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 4.7 The programme was completed by 8 Members who were awarded certificates, should the programme be run in future those members who were unable to complete the programme could ask to complete their missing modules in order to obtain their certificate.
- 4.8 The Democratic Services Officer has made a submission to the WLGA for the Good Practice Innovation Award in respect of the Senior Councillor Training Programme.

Scrutiny

- 4.9 Members of the Democratic Services team have provided support and advice to the Council's 4 Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in 2015/16, including several special scrutiny meetings to consider the Medium Term Financial Plan and a special Policy and Resources Scrutiny meeting to consider Bed and Breakfast Accommodation. The support and advice at Scrutiny committee meetings is provided by the Scrutiny Manager and Solicitors who attend all meetings.
- 4.10 The previous Annual Report informed Members that the Scrutiny Manager was instrumental in organising the Many Hands event in March 2015, which launched the joint scrutiny handbook that Caerphilly jointly produced. Since the launch the handbook has been published on the Centre for Public Scrutiny Website to share good practice. Subsequently a request was received from Essex County Council to attend their joint scrutiny event. The Scrutiny Manager, a scrutiny colleague and Cardiff Business School attended to share experiences on the Prosiect Gwyrdd Joint Scrutiny Panel.
- 4.11 During 2015/16 Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee set up a task and finish group to consider Hospital Discharge. The review group has met on 4 occasions and agreed to delay their final meeting until spring 2016 in order to review the impact of the winter plan implemented by the Health Board, CCBC and Wales Ambulance Services Trust. On 29 March 2016 the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee agreed in to set up a task and finish group to consider the 'Operation and Management of Council Owned Car Parks'.
- 4.12 The Scrutiny Review 2015 was carried out in response to the Wales Audit Office report 'Follow-up of the Special Inspection and Reports in the Public Interest', dated January 2015. The outcome of the review resulted in 22 recommendation that were reported to Council in October 2015. The Scrutiny Manager has been implementing these recommendations since October 2015 and the main changes will take effect at scrutiny meetings from May 2016.

Civic Support

- 4.13 Members will be fully aware of the activities of the Civic Office as the Mayor gives regular updates at each full Council about the engagements attended. During the civic year for 2015-2016, the Mayor attended 316 engagements. Members of the Democratic Services team provided continuous support to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in all of their duties including organising the Civic Service and Christmas concert.

Other Support

- 4.14 Democratic Services team have implemented and are operating the webcasting system for full Council meetings since January 2015. In order to webcast each Council meeting an additional member of staff will attend in order to operate the webcast system. The Democratic Services team monitor the number of meetings viewed both live and from archive. The following table shows the number of views up to March 2016.

Meeting	Date	Single IP address		Multiple visits by an IP address)	
		Live Viewers	Total Viewers (Live and Archive)	Live Views	Total Views (live and archive)
Council	10/3/15	10	166	23	451
Council	21/4/15	36	111	47	170
AGM	14/5/16	8	68	9	84
Council	9/6/15	4	63	7	132
Council	21/7/15	1	36	1	61
Special Council	29/9/15	5	51	5	78
Council	6/10/15	14	63	23	110
Special Council	28/10/15	6	64	12	98
Council	17/11/15	5	69	8	109
Council	26/01/16	6	34	12	54
Special Council	3/2/16	45	301	71	459
Special Council	24/2/16	34	105	43	182
Council	8/3/16	6	58	7	82
Totals		180	1189	268	2070

- 4.15 The Council was one of the only Councils in Wales to publish Annual Reports for all Members in 2013/14 and again in 2014/15. This was partly due to the support provided by the Democratic Services Team in preparing these reports and templates. The team are due to start assisting with the preparation of these for 2015/2016 shortly.
- 4.16 Democratic services team provide support to newly elected members, and during 2015/16 there were an unusually high number with 5 new members to support. The level of support provided varies according to individual needs. However the team will endeavour to ensure that those members who need individual support are able to speak to a member of staff when needed.
- 4.17 The Council had provided all Members who required it with broadband lines and IT equipment so that they are able to access online reports and Council email. Support is provided by IT Training Team and Members can request specific training during their PDR or during their annual review of their training needs. Should any Member have any specific requirements such as specialist software to access reports, Democratic Services Team will assist.

- 4.18 Members who have access to their own or council provided surface device (iPad) can also download the Modern.Gov application. This allows the user to select Caerphilly Council and other Modern.Gov users (up to a maximum of three) such as other local authorities or Welsh Government. The application allows users to select specific committees and download all papers whilst connected to the internet, these can then be used whilst offline to read, annotate, and highlight specific areas. Democratic Services Team can assist any Members who would like further information or advice on this service.
- 4.19 Members have made enquiries regarding 'bring your own device' (BYOD), to allow access to their council email etc. through their personal devices. Advice was received that Members would have to take personal responsibility for the information on their devices and would be considered as data controllers. If there was a subsequent breach of information, if a device was lost for example, this would require them to contact the Information Commissioner, with the risk of a potential fine of up to £500,000. In order to avoid this scenario and safely allow BYOD, the Council would have to invest in a Mobile Device Management (MDM) software system. This would require additional investment and project approval at a corporate level and could not be funded by Democratic Services.

Staff and Resources in Democratic Services

- 4.20 In March 2016, the Democratic Services Committee designated the Scrutiny Manager as the Interim Head of Democratic Services. The Interim Head of Democratic Services has overall responsibility and statutory duties under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and manages the Democratic Services team.
- 4.21 Each member of the Democratic Services Team provides specific support in the areas mentioned above. In particular, the Senior Committee Clerk coordinates all committee services and manages the 3.5 Committee clerks.
- 4.22 The Interim Head of Democratic Services also manages the scrutiny function and takes a key role in coordinating the FWP and deals with member/public requests as well as attending the scrutiny officers' network meetings. Further support is provided at scrutiny meetings by the wider Legal and Governance team and proposals are being considered to provide additional resource in this area.
- 4.23 The Interim Head of Democratic Services will take a key role in coordinating this support for members.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's EqIA process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct implications from this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultations that have not been included in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Democratic Services Committee note the contents of the report and provide any comments about support for 2016/2017.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The annual report of the Head of Democratic Services sets out how the statutory duties under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 have been met.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 This report has been prepared following the Statutory Guidance relating to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011; Chapter 3 Section 16: Democratic Services Committee.

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