



## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 2ND MARCH 2016 AT 5:00PM

---

---

PRESENT:

Councillor C.P. Mann - Chair  
Councillor D.T. Davies - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, D. Carter, H.W. David, W. David, Mrs P. Griffiths, Ms L. Jones, G. Kirby,  
Mrs M.E. Sargent, Mrs E. Stenner and J. Taylor.

Together with:

G. Williams (Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), C. Forbes-Thompson  
(Scrutiny Manager) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

#### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs C. Forehead, Ms J.G. Jones, Mrs G. Oliver  
and Mrs D. Price.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson declared an interest during the course of the meeting, details of  
which are recorded with the respective item.

#### 3. MINUTES – 18TH NOVEMBER 2015

RESOLVED that subject to it being recorded that in relation to minute no. 5, the penultimate  
paragraph should have included that a Member raised the issue of accessing emails via  
personal devices, the minutes of the meeting held on the 18th November 2015 (minute nos. 1  
– 5) be approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

#### MATTERS ARISING

##### MINUTE NO. 4 – DRAFT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16.

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson explained that in relation to Members accessing email via personal  
devices, the I.T. Department have advised that this option will have risks attached in terms of  
Security. The owners of the personal devices will be regarded as 'data controllers' and will  
therefore be personally responsible for the information/data that can be accessed and should

the device be lost or stolen, significant fines could be issued by the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Chair asked Mrs Forbes-Thompson to email all Members confirming the advice received.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

### **4. DESIGNATION OF INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of this report and left the Committee meeting whilst the report was presented.

Mrs G. Williams (Interim Head of Legal Services) introduced the report and set out the proposals to designate an Interim Head of Democratic Services, prior to its recommendation to Council.

Members were advised that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 contains provisions aimed at promoting participation and strengthening democratic processes within Local Government. As part of these reforms the Measure introduced a new statutory officer role of 'Head of Democratic Services'.

The Measure requires each Local Authority to designate an officer to the statutory post of Head of Democratic Services and provide that officer with sufficient support to discharge their responsibilities and Members were advised of the duties associated with this post. The Democratic Services Committee has responsibility for designating the post following advice from the Chief Executive.

It was explained that the Council's Deputy Monitoring Officer carries the statutory designation as Head of Democratic Services. However the substantive potholder has been appointed to the role of Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. As a result of these arrangements, the Democratic Services Committee at its meeting held on 28th May, 2014, confirmed the designation of the Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer as Head of Democratic Services. The Interim Officer has recently left the Authority and therefore it is necessary to make a new designation.

The Committee were advised that the Head of Democratic Services must not be the Council's Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, or Chief Finance Officer, as these posts already carry a statutory officer designation. It was proposed therefore that the Council's Scrutiny Manager be designated as the Council's Interim Head of Democratic Services initially until 31st August, 2016, when the interim arrangements for the Head of Legal Services are due to be reviewed.

Clarification was sought in relation to the pay grade for the Head of Democratic Services and Members were informed that the salary will be subject to Job Evaluation and will be taken from the Legal Services budget. This post will not incorporate the Deputy Monitoring Officer role.

Having fully considered the contents of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) Democratic Services Committee designate the Scrutiny Manager as the Interim Head of Democratic Services, on an interim basis, initially until 31st August, 2016.
- (ii) Democratic Services Committee recommend to Full Council the designation of the Scrutiny Manager as Interim Head of Democratic Services on an interim basis until

31st August 2016 and the Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer is given delegated authority to make the appropriate amendments in the Council's constitution.

## **5. SCRUTINY REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE**

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson updated the Democratic Services Committee with the progress made in respect of the Scrutiny Review Implementation Plan and the status of actions up to mid-February. She confirmed that the majority of the actions are either completed or ongoing and the aim is to ensure that all actions in respect of scrutiny committee meetings are completed by May 2016.

The recommendations of the Scrutiny Review that were agreed by Council on the 5th October 2015 were summarised.

Reference was made to the implementation plan that was appended to the report and it was explained that this was developed to ensure that changes to scrutiny were introduced in a logical order and the transition is as smooth as possible. This was reported to Audit Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 in respect of the area for improvement in the Annual Governance Statement for 2014/15 that was set out in appendix 2 of the report.

Members were advised that from May 2016, Scrutiny Committees will be implementing the changes to agendas, whereby there will be a maximum of four items to be discussed and items which are listed for information or to be called forward for discussion will cease. It is planned that these reports will instead be placed on the Members Portal and Members will be notified when reports are updated.

Forward work programmes will be discussed at every Scrutiny Committee meeting. The committee will determine what items will be added to the work programme and this will be considered alongside the Cabinet work programme. Officers and the Cabinet Member will be available to provide further details and protocols have been drafted in order to facilitate this process.

The implementation plan includes proposals to provide training on these new arrangements for each Scrutiny Committee, to be provided at the annual scheduled training, which is held following the Annual General Meeting of Council. It is proposed to include the following in the training:

- Forward work programmes
- Request for reports
- Members Portal

Clarification was sought in relation to emergency items being placed on the agenda and the Committee were informed that one of the original four items would have to be removed (with the lowest priority) to accommodate an emergency item. However, the Chair has the right to change an agenda, if considered necessary.

Having fully considered its content the Democratic Services Committee noted the progress made to date and supported the training proposals outlined in para 4.6 of the report.

## **6. WLGA CONSULTATION ON INDUCTION FOR NEW MEMBERS 2017**

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson provided the Committee with an overview of the WLGA and Lead Members and Officers Network's proposals for new and returning Councillor Induction in 2017 as part of the consultation process.

Members were advised that Local Authorities and the WLGA have traditionally worked

together to plan and support induction activities for new Members following local elections. Following discussions with Heads and Chairs of Democratic Services the WLGA are now seeking the views of Members responsible for Councillor Support and Development on possible ways forward. Reference was made to the draft induction programme, appended to the report that seeks the views of Democratic Services Committees as part of the consultation process.

It was explained that the WLGA proposal suggests that consideration be given to a combination of Mandatory and Recommended induction training targeted to specific Committee Members, Chairs plus 'All Councillor' modules

The Committee were informed of the Caerphilly Induction Activities Programme 2012 that included a combination of seminars, exhibitions, presentations and observation opportunities over a four week period, details of which were appended to the report.

Members discussed the Market Style Induction Days that could be offered and a concern was raised in relation to those Members who work, having to use leave to attend an induction day. It was proposed that sessions could be held late in the afternoon or before full Council and this was supported by the Committee.

A Member suggested the introduction of producing cards containing contact details for Heads of Service and other relevant contact numbers for new Members.

Another Member suggested the introduction of a Mentoring Service, where an experienced Member could share their experiences and knowledge and offering an opportunity for the new Member to 'shadow' whilst settling into to their role.

RESOLVED that the above comments are forwarded to the WLGA in response to the Induction for New Members in 2017 as part of the consultation process.

## **7. PRINTING COSTS FOR MEMBERS**

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson presented the report that updated the Committee in relation to the printing costs of committee papers and agendas, as a result of the changes implemented in 2015.

The Committee were advised that the budget heading for Members' printing was reduced as part of the 2014/15 budget proposals, however the estimated reduction in the overall cost of printing was not achieved and as a result, a questionnaire was circulated in the summer of 2015 to obtain Member's views on the subject and how best to address the issues of reducing costs. Some changes were trialled following a report being presented to Democratic Services Committee in September 2015, however the estimated savings as a result of the changes implemented have not been achieved. Members were informed that this shortfall will need to be offset from elsewhere in the Democratic Services Budget.

Reference was made to paragraph 6.2. of the report that sets out the cost of printing for the period April to December 2015 where the estimated costs projected to the end of the financial year would mean an overspend of £4,275.00. However, Members were informed that the estimated savings for this year in relation to postage (£5400), the Civic Office (£5000) and the training budget (£3700) could be used to offset the printing budget.

A Member queried the average cost per annum for printing for an individual Member and Mrs Forbes-Thompson stated this would be difficult to determine as a small percentage of Members request copies of all committee papers. Councillor Lisa Jones confirmed that she would be happy to receive her committee papers electronically.

Concerns were expressed in relation to remote access and difficulty in obtaining planning

documentation. Reference was made to the committee documents section on the Intranet and Members felt that the system is currently running slowly. The Chair advised the Committee that Members are also able to access committee documents including planning applications via the links that are included in the weekly email that is distributed with the timetable of future meetings.

Mrs Forbes-Thompson suggested that this issue could be revisited with the I.T. Focus Group and that an email can be sent to all Members to ascertain if there are general problems with I.T. systems or in relation to individual cases.

Having fully considered the contents of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the estimated savings set out in paragraph 6.2 of the report are used to offset the printing budget;
- (ii) Officers continue to monitor the position and present a further update report at the end of the financial year;
- (iii) the trial arrangements implemented in September 2015 continue and Officers continue to work with Members to encourage more 'paperless' working.

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2016 there were signed by the Chair.

---

CHAIR