



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON WEDNESDAY 26TH MAY 2016 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

W. David, Mrs C. Forehead, Ms J.G. Jones, Ms L. Jones, G. Kirby and S. Morgan.

Together with:

C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, D. Carter, Mrs P.A. Griffiths, Mrs G.D. Oliver, Mrs D. Price, Mrs M.E. Sargent, Mrs E. Stenner and J. Taylor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 2ND MARCH 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd March 2016 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

4. ANNUAL REPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Interim Head of Democratic Services introduced the report which detailed the current and planned services and support provided to Elected Members. The report also provided an overview of how the resources within the Democratic Services Team are being maximised to ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place for Members.

The different Democratic Services functions to support Members were outlined and were noted to include Committee Services, Members Training and Development, Scrutiny and the Civic and Cabinet Office. The Officer referred to relevant sections of the report and the types and nature of the support provided in these areas were summarised for Members information.

Members were advised that this year had seen the introduction of the Senior Councillor Development Programme an entirely new style of programme developed specifically for Caerphilly Councillors that hold or aspire to hold senior office. The Officer confirmed that a submission had been made to the WLGA for a Good Practice and Innovation Award for the Programme and this had been successful.

The Officer confirmed that Committee Services were currently working on implementing the new Welsh Language Standards via the Mod.Gov operating systems and the translation and publication of all committee agenda's and Cabinet minutes would be achieved by the end of July 2016.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Members questions were welcomed.

Members referred to the Member's seminar and training programme and commented on the number and frequency of the courses offered and that many experienced low attendance levels. The Officer appreciated that with the many demands on Members time it was not possible for everyone to attend all the opportunities presented but every effort was being made to encourage attendance and confirmed that training materials and presentations were posted on the Members Portal for information.

With regard to Members seminars, Members requested that consideration be given to delivering a seminar on the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act and its introduction and impact was discussed at length. During the course of the debate it was moved and seconded that committee's request be taken forward to the appropriate Officers and arrangements made for said seminar and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

In this regard the Officer confirmed that in order to facilitate the requirements of the legislation significant changes had been made to the terms of reference for the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, when sitting as the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee, who would now take on the scrutiny of the Public Services Board. It was noted that Members would be provided with specific training on the committee's new remit and its role and responsibilities under the Act.

Scrutiny services were discussed further and reference was made to the changes to the Forward Work Programme process and the limiting of agenda items to four. It was noted that the new system had already been implemented by the Education and Health committees and been well received. Members discussed the process in terms of emergency items and prioritisation.

Members acknowledged the work of the Civic Office and the fantastic sum achieved for the Mayor's Charities.

Members congratulated the Democratic Services Team on their successful submission to the WLGA for the Good Practice and Innovation Award and those that attended the training complemented Officers on its content and organisation.

Reference was made to the web-casting of full Council meetings and the viewing figures achieved, Members expressed concern with regard to the low numbers recorded considering the cost of the facility. The Officer accepted that live views were very low however historic viewing figures were growing month on month. Clarification was sought as to whether other meetings would be webcast. The Officer confirmed that there were no current plans to increase the number of meetings webcast as the equipment was a static feature of the Chamber and this location did not lend itself well to other meeting formats such as scrutiny.

Further clarification was sought with regard to 'bring your own devices' facility where Members would be able to use their private phones or tablets to access their council email accounts and information. The Officer explained the issues in relation to data control breaches and the responsibilities of the individual. It was noted that an investment would need to be made in additional security software that would need to be implemented at a corporate level across the whole of the borough in order to achieve the required usage. Furthermore mobile device management software upgrades, and firewalls would need to be managed appropriately and this would place additional demands on IT Services. Members agreed that they would like to receive information of the technical aspects and costs involved with Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD) and asked the Officer to make further enquiries. The Officer agreed to feed this back to IT services and request that they submit a report and invite them to the next appropriate Democratic Services committee meeting and this was agreed.

Finally in terms of Democratic Services staffing and resources Members noted the appointment of Cath Forbes-Thompson as the new Interim Head of Democratic Services and the additional support provided by Legal Services' Solicitors at scrutiny and the Officer confirmed that additional support would be provided in due course.

Having fully considered its content the Democratic Services Committee noted the Annual Report.

5. ANNUAL REPORTS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS 2015-16

The Democratic Services Officer outlined the report which updated Members on the continued support provided by the Democratic Services team to assist Members in producing an Annual Report.

The Officer thanked Members for all their support and hard work last year and confirmed that once again Caerphilly was one of only two Councils to publish 100% of their Members Annual Reports by the prescribed deadline.

Members were advised that templates would be sent out over the next few days for completion by the 1st July 2016. Once again the activity information would be accepted in which ever format worked best for the individual, handwritten, typewriting, emailed or verbally over the phone. Members were reminded that they would be welcome to schedule time with the Democratic Services Officer if they would prefer to receive one-to-one support.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and having fully considered its content the Democratic Services Committee noted the update.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2016 there were signed by the Chair

The meeting closed at 17:41pm

CHAIR