



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH (SIRHOWY ROOM) ON WEDNESDAY 28TH MAY 2014 AT 5:00 PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs G. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, H.W. David, W. David, R.T. Davies, Mrs C. Forehead,
Mrs P. Griffiths, Ms J.G. Jones, G. Kirby, Mrs D. Price, Mrs E. Stenner and J. Taylor.

Together with:

J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and E Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Rees and Mrs M.E. Sargent.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES - 5TH MARCH 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 5th March 2014 minute nos. 1-7 on page nos. 1-5 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

4. REMOTE ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

The report sought Members views on remote attendance at Council meetings as part of the consultation process. The report to be presented to full Council for consideration sought approval to make standing orders to preclude the use of remote attendance for Members attending Council meetings.

Section 2 of the Local Government Act (Wales) Measure 2011 recently introduced the possibility of remote attendance at Council meetings. This facility would allow Members to attend Council meetings without having to be present at the published meeting place. It was noted that the complexity of the legislation does not make the system readily implementable given that a Member attending remotely must, when speaking, be able to be seen and heard by those Members in actual attendance and additionally members taking part in the meeting must be able to be seen and heard by the remote attendees.

The practical and technological difficulties in achieving remote attendance were noted and the possible constitutional complications were outlined. The advantages of the system for rural councils or those with a wide geographical spread were acknowledged however this authority did not have such significant geographical challenges. With good rail and road links Members were able to travel to Penallta House or Pontllanfraith House within a reasonable time regardless of their home address and therefore would have only limited advantage for Caerphilly County Borough Councillors.

The Officer referred Members to the recommendations as detailed in section 9 of the report and welcomed comments as part of the consultation process.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and full discussion ensued.

Clarification was sought in relation to section 4.5 of the report and how the demand, or lack of it for remote attendance had been established. The Officer confirmed that previous reports had been brought before Members on the Local Government Measure and feedback had been received to support the statement as detailed.

Members who had previously used teleconferencing facilities at other venues confirmed the poor quality of the transmissions and the interruption caused to meeting procedures. Members agreed that the available technology would not be able to sustain the continuity of a meeting and that current costs would make the implementation of such a system prohibitive.

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

5. APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The report sought Members approval to designate the interim Deputy Monitoring Officer as the statutory Head of Democratic Services on an interim basis.

Members noted the responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services as required by the Local Government Measure and the requirement to amend the Council constitution to reflect the appointment.

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 Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer be designated as the Interim Head of Democratic Services.
- ii) Democratic Services Committee recommend to full Council the designation of the Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer as Interim Head of Democratic Services be reflected in the Council's constitution and the Interim Head of Legal

Services and Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to make the appropriate amendments.

6. MEMBERS ANNUAL REPORTS 2013/14

The Democratic Services Manager provided a verbal update with regard to the 2013/14 Annual Reports for Elected Members.

The Officer thanked Members for their cooperation and hard work last year and confirmed that Caerphilly had been the only authority to publish all of their Members Annual Reports by the 31st of July deadline. It was noted that report templates for 2013/2014 had already been emailed to Members along with their completed reports from last year as a guide.

Members were advised that as last year, support would be provided by the Democratic Services team and confirmed that constituency activity information would be accepted whatever format was easiest for Members. The deadline for the submission of reports to the Democratic Services Team was confirmed as 5.00pm on the 30th June 2014. Reports would then be checked and returned to Members for final approval before the publication on the 31st July 2014.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and full discussion ensued.

Clarification was sought with regard to the recording of Special Committee Meetings within the attendance statistics. A Member felt it important that attendance in all forms be recorded so that Members are credited appropriately. The Officer confirmed that Members had traditionally requested that special meetings not form part of their reported statistics due to the short notice associated with the calling of a special meeting. However should Members wish to reconsider this position, a report could be presented to this committee in order to gauge Member opinion on the matter. Members were advised that there would no issue in making the change from a democratic services point of view as long as the statistical information was represented consistently.

The inclusion of special meetings in attendance figures was discussed at length and generally supported however concerns were expressed that Members in employment or with carer responsibilities might find it difficult to attend special meetings called at short notice resulting in poor attendance figures. Members also referenced constituency commitments and the difficulty in balance meeting attendance with those demands.

It was moved and seconded that a report be brought to the Democratic Services Committee on the inclusion of special meetings in attendance statistics and by a show of hands with was unanimously agreed.

The Democratic Services Committee noted the verbal update.

7. UPDATE ON THE REPLACEMENT OF THE AV SYSTEM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

The Democratic Services Manager provided a verbal update with regard to the progress of the replacement of the audio visual system in the Council Chamber

The Officer confirmed that Cabinet had agreed the contract be awarded to Vaughan Sounds and a new BOSCH system would be installed. Members were advised that the new system would support electronic voting, amplification and facilitate webcasting. The installation programme was outlined and would take approximately a week to complete. It was noted that the Public I webcasting system would be installed at the same time in order to ensure the coordination of the two systems. Members noted the proposed timeframe for the introduction of webcasting and forthcoming training programme for both Officers and Members.

Member training would be facilitated by Melanie Dole the ex BBC Wales News Reporter. Ms Dole had been recommended and would take Members through front of camera protocols, pitfalls and presentation best practice. Assurances were given that Members would be fully supported in order to ensure that they were reflected in the best possible light.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update and full discussion ensued.

Members welcomed the upgrading of the Chamber System and clarification was sought that the improvements to the microphone system would extend to those used by Officers and Members of the Public when addressing Council and particularly Planning Committee.

The Officer confirmed that the use of lapel microphones would prevent any drops in amplification and would be made available to speakers. All new cabling within the Chamber and the reconfiguration of microphones, speakers, electronic voting and webcasting into a single integrated system would overcome current issues.

Clarification was sought as to the cost of the replacement AV system and this was confirmed at approximately £56,000. This included all the new hardware, software, cabling, a five year warranty and service contracts. It was noted that the costs of the original system would be lost, however, arrangements will be made for the current system to be resold for parts.

The Democratic Services Committee noted the verbal update.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2014 there were signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 17.30.

CHAIRMAN