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Date: 20th May 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of the **Democratic Services Committee** will be held in the **Sirhowy Room, Penallta House, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach** on **Wednesday, 27th May, 2015** at **5.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Chris Burns'.

Chris Burns
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

	Pages
1 Apologies for absence.	
2 Declarations of Interest. Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.	
To approve and sign the following minutes: -	
3 Democratic Services Committee held on the 17th March 2015.	1 - 4

To receive and consider the following reports: -

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4 Annual Report for Democratic Services.

5 - 8

5 Annual Reports for Elected Members 2014-15 (verbal update).

Circulation:

Councillors Mrs G. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, D.G. Carter, H.W. David, W. David, D.T. Davies (Vice Chair), Mrs C. Forehead, Mrs P. A. Griffiths, Ms J.G. Jones, G. Kirby, C.P. Mann (Chair), Mrs G.D. Oliver, Mrs D. Price, Mrs M.E. Sargent, Mrs E. Stenner and J. Taylor,

And Appropriate Officers



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH (SIRHOWY ROOM) ON TUESDAY 17TH MARCH 2015 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

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

Together with:

A. Price (Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs G. Bevan and Mrs E. Stenner.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 15th December 2014 be approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Cllr Mrs C. Forehead referred to minute no. 6 and the update provided on the webcasting system, she congratulated Officers on the successful webcast of the last Council meeting but referenced the difficulties experienced with the guest speaker microphone connected to the lectern. Officers confirmed that improvements to the webcasting system were on-going and these included the introduction of a 'lapel' microphone facility; this would enable speakers to move more freely without losing amplification.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

5. SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer) introduced the report which proposed a programme to address the issues for improvement contained in the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report 'Follow-up of the Special Inspection and Reports in the Public Interest'.

The Scrutiny Research Officer summarised the main findings of the report and outlined the role of the Improving Governance Project Board (IGPB) in overseeing the improvements to scrutiny. It was noted that in order to identify how improvements could be made a Project Group would be established to report to the IGPB.

The composition of the Project Group membership was outlined and noted that the Chair of Democratic Services Committee, Councillor C.P. Mann, would Chair the Project Group with the Vice Chair, Councillor D.T. Davies, acting as substitute. The Project Groups' scrutiny oversight would be provided by the Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Group, Councillor H.W. David, with the Vice Chair, Councillor S. Morgan, acting as substitute. Members were advised that the group would be supported by Jonathan Jones and Catherine Forbes-Thompson.

In order to ensure that all interested parties were involved in the improvements programme a series of four workshops would be organised. The workshops membership was highlighted and would include a Cabinet Member, CMT representative and a Scrutiny Chair with the remainder of places mixed proportionally. It was noted that in order to ensure fair representation the Backbench membership of four places per scrutiny committee would be politically balanced across those 16 places.

Members were referred to section 4.9 of the report which outlined the purpose of the workshops and section 4.11 which detailed the programmes timetable in order to meet the October 2015 deadline agreed by Council.

The Project Group would consider the options drawn up by the workshops and following consultation with all Members and Senior Officers make recommendations to the IGPB based on those options. The IGPB would then make recommendations to the Scrutiny Leadership Group and Democratic Services Committee who in turn would make recommendations to Cabinet and then Council for decision.

The Chair thanked the Scrutiny Research Officer for her report and full discussion ensued.

Members expressed their support for the report and its recommendations and welcomed the proposals to improve the scrutiny function. The need to ensure that Senior Officers as well as the Executive understood the importance and purpose of scrutiny was emphasised as a vital element of the process going forward.

Clarification was sought as to whether there was any scrutiny representation on the Improving Governance Project Board. The Cabinet Member for HR/Governance and Business Manager informed Members that the work of the Board was coming to an end and confirmed that the Board membership did not include scrutiny representation.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons given in the Officer's report the project plan be agreed.

6. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2015-17

Ms A. Price (Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services) introduced the report which advised Members of the outcome of the Members Training Needs Analysis (TNA).

Members were advised that the questionnaires had been distributed both electronically and in hard copy with a response rate of 42% achieved. Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report which provided an overview of the responses and to Appendix 2 which detailed Members preferences in relation to meeting and training times. It was noted that the TNA programme would not begin until September 2015 to allow the mandatory and recommended training sessions currently underway to be completed. TNA sessions would be facilitated by a mix of external providers and internal Officers and in order to make the best use of Members and Officers time alternative methods of delivering training such as e-learning tools and the recording of sessions were also being looked at. The Officer welcomed Members views on the training offered, the timing of sessions and any other considerations they would like to see in the programme going forward.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and sought Members views on the outcome of the Training Needs Analysis.

Members expressed concern at the volume of training and seminars currently underway and were pleased to note that the requested training programme would not start until the mandatory and recommended training programme had been completed.

Concern was expressed that a 42% response rate from the questionnaires were too low to give a clear indication of Members preferences. Clarification sought as to whether Members who had not expressed an interest through the TNA would be still be able to attend the training sessions. The Officer confirmed that all Members would be offered the opportunity to attend all of the sessions, however first choice would be given to those who had expressed an interest.

A Member requested that consideration be given to including a training session on dealing with 'the press', in particular building successful relationships and dealing with the pitfalls. The Officer confirmed that this would be looked at and advised Members that the Communications Unit would be able to provide support.

A Member noted the course on Public Speaking and Presenting to an Audience and welcomed this session particularly now that meetings of full Council were being webcast. Reference was made to the limited number of Councillors that spoke during meetings and it was hoped that this course might encourage more Members to speak up. Given that more meetings would eventually be webcast it was suggested that this training should be included on the mandatory programme.

Distance and E-Learning opportunities were welcomed by Members and clarification was sought as to how this could be facilitated. The Officer confirmed that a training session could be recorded using the current webcasting equipment, a secure link could then be emailed to Members unable to attend allowing them to view the training session.

A Member referenced the training time preferences in Appendix 2 and asked that consideration be given to offering alternative timings with perhaps a morning and evening timeslot provided for each session. The importance of providing opportunities for those Councillors that worked full time was discussed and agreed that the programme would benefit from offering a wider choice of timings, particularly for mandatory session.

Having fully considered its content the Democratic Services Committee noted the report.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th May 2015 they were signed by the Chair.

The meeting closed at 17:35pm.

CHAIR



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 27TH MAY 2015

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 211 committee meetings arranged between the annual meetings of Council in 2014 and 2015. This includes a number of special scrutiny meetings to consider the medium term financial plan. In addition thirteen Planning Committee site visits have been held.
- 4.3 There have been eleven members' seminars, which included a wide range of issues (medium term financial plan (4), common housing register, NATO Summit, school categorisation, Website ReLaunch, WIMD, Caerphilly collection services and 20 mph zones).
- 4.4 All meetings were properly advertised, agendas and minutes produced. In 2014, the Democratic Services Committee also successfully implemented the Modern.Gov system which contains all documents relating to Council meetings.

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 due course.
- 4.6 Following the Members training needs analysis which was presented to the Democratic Services Committee on 17 March 2015, the Democratic Services team are working on a programme of requested training to start in September 2015 incorporating recommendations from the committee.
- 4.7 The Council was recently awarded the WLGA Charter for Members Support and Development in line with the report to Democratic Services Committee in December 2014. This included a programme of personal development reviews commencing for those who have senior salaries. This programme is currently underway.

Scrutiny

- 4.8 Members of the Democratic Services team have provided support and advice to the Council's 4 Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in 2014/15, including several special scrutiny meetings to consider the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Scrutiny Research Officer also provided support to task and finish groups and was instrumental in organising the Many Hands – Sharing Public Accountability in Wales event in Llandrindod Wells on 27 March 2015.
- 4.9 Members will be aware, following the report to Democratic Services Committee on 17 March 2015, that a review of scrutiny is currently underway following recommendations from the Wales Audit Office and that the outcome of the review will be reported to the September meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.

Civic Office

- 4.10 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. Between 2014-2015, the Mayor attended 370 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

- 4.11 Members will be aware that the Democratic Services team have implemented and are operating the webcasting system for full Council meetings. The protocol agreed by the Democratic Services Committee in September 2014 is being used for these purposes and so far 3 Full Council meetings have been webcast live.
- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 The Social Media Protocol approved by the Democratic Services Committee in September 2014 is being used by Members for guidance and social media has been used to promote the webcasting and other important events.
- 4.14 The Council had provided all Members who required it with broadband lines, and iPads or laptops or Weiss machines so that they are able to access online reports and Council emails in order to carry out their role as Councillors. The Council's systems are to be upgraded and all Members are currently being trained to use any new software. Printing costs are still high and Members views are sought about any suggestions to reduce these costs.

- 4.15 One member with specific requirements was provided with software to enable reports to be read out to ensure that their needs were met. Any requests for special assistance by Members are always met by the Democratic Services team.

Staff and resources in Democratic Services

- 4.16 In May 2014, the Democratic Services Committee designated the Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer as the 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.
- 4.17 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 other Committee clerks and the Scrutiny Research Officer takes a key role in coordinating the FWP and deals with member/public requests as well as attending the scrutiny officers' network meetings.
- 4.18 The Democratic Services Manager who managed the team under the overall responsibility of the Interim Head of Democratic Services left on 1 May 2015. It has been proposed that this post is not replaced and that existing members of the team provide these duties by utilising the support of the wider Legal and Governance team, including the Business Manager and other solicitors.
- 4.19 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. However, the Welsh Government funding for progressing Webcasting was based on a one off support grant opportunity.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct implications as a result to this report although reference to the wider Directorate structural review undertaken has been made.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Members and officers have been involved in various stages of the component parts of the support and services outlined in the report. Some areas of work, such as scrutiny are also subject to external consultation with bodies such as the Wales Audit Office.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Democratic Services Committee note the contents of the report and provide any comments about support for 2015/2016.

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 POWERS

- 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.

Author: Angharad Price, Interim Head of Democratic Services
Consultees: Cllr Colin Mann, Chair of Democratic Services
Cllr Christine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Governance
Gail Williams, Interim Head of Legal and Governance/Monitoring Officer