



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON MONDAY 23RD JULY 2018 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor C.P. Mann - Chair
Councillor G. Kirby - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

C. Andrews, P.J. Bevan, D.T. Davies, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, Mrs G. D. Oliver,
Mrs M.E. Sargent, G. Simmonds, C. Thomas and R. Whiting

Together with:

C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), Lisa Lane (Interim Monitoring Officer), Jackie Davies (Business Development Officer), Kim Houghton (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Cushing, W. David, Mrs C. Forehead and W. Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on the 12th April 2018 be agreed as a correct record and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 12th April 2018 (Minute No. 1 – 6) be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ITEMS

There were no information items to be considered.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

5. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY COUNCIL BOUNDARIES AND ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Interim Monitoring Officer presented the report which sought the Committee's consideration as to whether the Council should undertake a formal review of its communities in accordance with Section 22 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and to make a recommendation to Council.

It was highlighted that the Council has a duty to monitor community boundaries and community council electoral arrangements and if it feels it is necessary to carry out a formal review.

Members were referred to sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 of the report which outlines the processes and considerations that would be required, to carry out a review particularly in respect to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales' timetable for conducting reviews. The Commission is currently reviewing principal areas in Wales, with the Caerphilly review scheduled for 2019. In addition, a Commission is reviewing the town and community sector as a whole and will be reporting to Welsh Government this summer and making recommendations in the autumn. At the preference of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales and to tie in with the recommendations as a result of the town and community sector review being brought forward by Welsh Government, it was proposed that a Council review take place after the aforementioned commission reviews are concluded.

The Chair thanked the Officer for their report and Members comments were welcomed.

Members discussed Community Council membership specifically in regards to Community Councillor attendance at meetings and the effectiveness of some council's when their membership was full but engagement from their members was low. It was queried as to the extent residents have a say in whether a Community Council should be dissolved. It was clarified that there are existing provisions available to local communities in this regard. Consensus was that Community Councils should be encouraged wherever possible.

Members highlighted the need to address the various boundary anomalies that exist across wards for example one street that is divided between two wards. It was felt that a Council review along with the others being undertaken would be a good opportunity to address these anomalies.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the Officer's report be recommended to Council for approval and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- (i) The content of the report be noted.
- (ii) It be recommended to Council that a full community review of this Council's arrangements be carried out following the conclusion of the Commission's review of Community Councils which would likely be following the next local elections scheduled in 2022.

6. ANNUAL REPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Interim Head of Democratic Services presented the Committee with the Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services which included details of the current and planned services and support provided to Elected Members.

The Interim Head of Democratic Services drew the Committees attention to a number of key areas, identified in the report, that are supported by the Democratic Services Team. This included the team's success in administering 210 Committee meetings in 2017/18, implementing and maintaining the Welsh Language Standards for public meetings, supporting the election of Councillor M. Evans as Caerphilly Youth Champion, delivering a comprehensive induction programme to new Members, supporting the Council's 5 Scrutiny Committees, continuing to support the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in carrying out their civic duties, assisting in the production of Member's Annual Reports and implementing and operating webcasting for all Full Council meetings.

The Officer briefly outlined the development of IT provisions for members and in particular newly elected members. During 2018/19 it is proposed that a review will be undertaken of the equipment provided to members with the aim to encourage paperless working.

It was highlighted that the Democratic Services Team has had a challenging year following the local government elections in May 2017, with implementing Member changes and delivering a comprehensive induction programme. Staff shortages has resulted in additional pressures on the team however core business was fully supported and properly carried out. These shortages have impacted on Member Development and Training resulting in a delay in delivering the training programme for 2018/20 and the Member Development Strategy. The team is now fully staffed so the pressures on the team should now begin to reduce.

The Chair thanked the Officer for their report and Members comments were welcomed.

Members queried as to why there were two 'temporary' positions on the Democratic Services Team and why the team were positioned on a different floor from the main Member accommodation. The committee were advised that the team structure will be taken into consideration by the new Head of Service who is due to start in August, and the comments with regard to location of staff would be fed back

Members discussed notifications for upcoming training sessions. It was requested that a weekly timetable be sent to all members detailing dates, times and locations for training sessions, seminars and workshops. It was also suggested that other meetings which take place but not appear on the Committee timetable, also be included. The Officer stated that several options for disseminating training information are being considered. However Members were advised that only public meetings can appear on the committee timetable.

Members asked that their thanks and appreciation to the Democratic Services team for their hard work, particularly in a challenging year, be formally noted.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the Officer's report be approved and by a show of hands unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The content of the report be noted.
- (ii) The comments of the Committee about support for 2017/2018 be considered by the Interim Head of Democratic Services

7. MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The Business Development Officer presented the report which updated the Committee on the training programme developed using data from the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) previously completed by Members and sought approval of the Members Support and Development Programme 2018/20.

The Members Support and Development Programme comprises of 12 topics covering the majority of subjects highlighted in the TNA and is scheduled to commence in September 2018. All sessions will commence at 5pm on the day of the training except for training on 'Holding Effective Pre-Meetings' as this session will offer to sessions, one at 2pm and one at 5pm.

The Programme also includes e-learning options, in the form of online training modules with a variety of topics available.

The Officer noted that this programme runs separately to the Members Annual, Recommended and Mandatory Training Programme as well as Member Seminars, which will continue to be organised as and when necessary.

The Chair thanked the Officer for their report and Members comments were welcomed.

A Member requested that training around Mindfulness be considered as a future potential training topic. The Committee were advised that this has not been previously requested but can be looked into and Members were advised of the CareFirst helpline which is provided to Council employees and all Members.

In relation to the training sessions on the 'Importance of Questioning Skills', a Member raised concerns with regards to the quality of the answers provided to Members when questions are posed. It was felt that this was not relevant to the item under discussion and the Interim Monitoring Officer asked the Member to raise their concerns directly with her.

Following consideration it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the Officer's report be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Members Support and Development Programme 2018/20 be approved.

8. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL – REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE PANEL'S VISITS TO WELSH PRINCIPAL COUNCILS 2017

The Interim Head of Democratic Services presented the report which detailed the outcome of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' visits to Principal Councils in 2017.

The Officer drew the Committee's attention to 4.1 of the report which outlines the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' main findings following their visits to 22 principal councils during 2017. The Committee were asked to provide comments that could be passed to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

The Chair thanked the Officer for their report and Members comments were welcomed.

It was discussed that it is difficult at a time of increasing local authority cuts to increase remuneration by a significant amount.

Members asked what a senior member position quantifies as, in working hours. Officers stated that the Independent Remuneration Panel has quantified that a senior salary holders is the equivalent of 3 full working days.

Reference was made to the inequity of treatment when a local authority member loses their seats or stand down compared to Members of Parliament or Members of the National Assembly.

Following consideration it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the Officer's report be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the comments of the Democratic Services Committee on the Panel's report are considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

The meeting closed at 17:48pm

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2018 they were signed by the Chair

CHAIR