



## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 5:00PM**

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PRESENT:

Councillor C.P. Mann - Chair

Councillors:

C. Andrews, W. David, D.T. Davies, A. Hussey, Mrs G. D. Oliver, Mrs M.E. Sargent, G. Simmonds, C. Thomas and W. Williams.

Together with:

C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, D. Cushing, C. Forehead, L. Jeremiah, G. Kirby (Vice Chair) and R. Whiting.

#### **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 23rd July 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 23rd July 2018 be approved as a correct record.

#### **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

#### **4. REVIEW OF MEMBER TRAINING 2014-2018**

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson, Head of Democratic Services introduced the report which provided a review of the Member Training and Support Programme for the period 2014 to 2019.

Members were given an update on the training provided since the 2017 Induction and were advised that the current programme is based on three distinct categories namely Mandatory, Recommended and Requested. The Officer confirmed that attendance at mandatory training was very good overall, although mop-up sessions were required in order to achieve the maximum attendance and referred Members to the table at 4.8 of the report. Attendance at seminars was detailed in section 4.14 of the report with the highest attendance noted at 60% for MTFP and the lowest 21% for the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

The Officer sought Members views on the current framework and the frequency and amount of mandatory training being provided in order to gauge opinion which would be fed into the forward planning for further programmes and future Charter applications.

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

Members expressed their disappointment at attendance level and concerns were raised that this seemed to illustrate that Members' did not value seminars as much as other training, however it was generally felt that certain subjects, particularly the Medium Term Financial Plan should be made mandatory.

Members referenced the many demands on their time and how it was difficult to keep track of meetings, outside body commitments and training, and there were often conflicting commitments which were difficult to balance. Officers suggested that Members might like to consider changing to 'Outlook Meeting Requests' for invitations to meetings and training rather than the standard email invitation currently being used. This method would allow Members to accept the request, and on doing so the meeting details would be automatically added to their on-line calendar.

The Committee felt that consideration needed to be given to the sharing of training records with Group Leaders, and again disappointment was voiced that some Members did not even send apologies for non attendance. Discussion then commenced as to whether Members who continuously fail to attend should be marked as absent if no apologies or reason for non-attendance have been provided.

Views were sought on on-line training and the recording of training session as part of the programme. It was noted that the mandatory element can be a cause of annoyance for some Members and it was felt that the recommended annual and update training was far too frequent and that once per Council term would be sufficient. However it was agreed that any new members to a committee should receive this training as an introduction before their first meeting.

Members agreed that failure to attend Mandatory Seminars or All Councillor Training should be referred back to the individual Groups/Group Leaders to action.

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

## **5. IT SUPPORT FOR COUNCILLORS PRESENTATION**

Mrs C. Forbes-Thompson gave a presentation in relation to IT Support for Councillors which also detailed a questionnaire to be circulated to all Members.

Reference was made to current provision and the improvements being made throughout Penallta House with regard to Wi-Fi coverage. Mobile device usage was discussed and Members taking part in the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) trial confirmed it as being very successful.

The Mod.Gov app and its functions were highlighted and opinion sought on paper free agenda options. It was noted that the current print budget was £20K and the questionnaire would be used to ascertain Members' willingness to go paper-free as part of on-going savings proposals. The Officer in outlining the options advised that should Members agree to the use of a 'tablet' and go paper free, it would be on the understanding that Members' individual printing on their home printers would be kept to a minimal.

Members accepted that this route had been taken successfully by other Councils and agreed that it did indeed require further consideration. However concerns were expressed that large reports and associated documentation are difficult to read on line and paper would be preferable under these circumstances. The Officer confirmed that a gradual reduction in paper could be an option while Members gained confidence in using on-line systems.

Broadband options were discussed and the use of the Citrix key, rather than an additional home broadband line was referenced. It was also noted that a SIM card could also be installed in laptops allowing access to the Caerphilly network.

Reference was made to the Independent Remuneration Panel and their determination that Members should be provided with adequate access to IT support and the Committee's opinion sought on current provision. Further consideration was given to providing Members with individual mobile phones or an allowance against the cost of calls, however there would be tax implications should such an allowance be paid.

Members considered the options and it was felt that the BYOD if rolled out to all Members would be invaluable and would eliminate the need for a second device. However some Members had expressed the preference to have Council matters on a separate device to their personal one.

Members who had taken part in the BYOD trial expressed their willingness to speak to other Councillors on the merits of the facility.

Having fully considered the presentation and the proposed questions it was moved and seconded that the questionnaire be approved and circulated to all Councillors.

RESOLVED that the questionnaire as presented be circulated to all Councillors.

The meeting closed at 6:00pm

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

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CHAIR