



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 14TH MARCH 2023 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Phipps - Vice-Chair (Presiding)

Councillors:

C. Forehead, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, C.P. Mann, C. Thomas, G. Ead, A. McConnell, D. Price, J.A. Pritchard, A. Whitcombe and J. Winslade.

Together with:

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer), J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer), A. Jones (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T.D. Davies, M. James (Chair), A. Farina-Childs, and J. Sadler.

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor L. Phipps Vice-Chair presided.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 17TH MARCH 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th March 2022 be approved as a correct record.

4. MEMBERS SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Consideration was given to the report which provided feedback to Members on the 2022 Induction Programme for Elected Members, sought the views of the Democratic Services Committee on the next stages of Members Support and Development and asked for Members endorsement for the circulation of the Training Needs Questionnaire.

Members complimented Officers on the composition of the 2022 Induction Programme, in particular the Directorate Market Place event was considered to be a high point. Clarification was sought as to how the 2017 Programme had been used to inform the 2022 Programme from a lesson learned perspective.

Officers confirmed that feedback from the 2017 had very much driven the 2022 Programme. Changing from a more theoretical programme to one that was much more interactive, and service based. The Market Place and individual Directorate presentations being the major change. However there was still need to sure that Member's received both Mandatory and Recommended training e.g. Code of Conduct, Equalities and Diversity.

Members recognised the improvements and changes particularly in terms of technology and hybrid systems but felt that the induction period should be structured over a longer period giving newly elected councillors more support time. Members requested that another Showcase or similar event be held in order to provide an opportunity for more face to face interaction between Councillors. Officers agreed to feedback to Corporate Directors and Heads of Service as to whether it would be possible to run a further event of this type.

In terms of technology Members discussed equipment and support and particular reference was made to the Maas 360 app, which would allow Members to access Council accounts on their personal phones and if it would be possible for an app to be developed, similar to that used in Blaenau Gwent Council, that would allow Members to report issues, request services, upload photographs on the go.

Officers confirmed that IT Services were currently reviewing the Maas 360 app and the Head of Democratic Services agreed to follow-up and email Members on the current position and she would also reissue an email survey in relation to whether Members would like a second phone purely for Council business. A Member expressed the view that for many a smart phone was more useful than a laptop and felt it important that Councillors be given a choice.

Officers were made aware of a form of 'case work' app for Councillors being developed and would feedback to IT and provide further information at the next meeting.

Members felt that they would also benefit from a frequently asked questions and answers facility on such common issues such as parking, traffic, neighbour nuisance, housing etc. Officers agreed to look into this as a possibility and emphasised the use of the CRM system to report issues and service requests.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

1. The Training Needs Analysis Questionnaire be approved for circulation to All Councillors.
2. The update on the Members Induction Programme 2022 be noted.

5. TIMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS SURVEY

Consideration was given to the report which sought Members approval for a questionnaire to be circulated to all Councillors to establish their preference in terms of meeting arrangements and timings as required by Section 6 of the Local Government Wales Measure 2011.

Members requested that the preferences of Voluntary Sector and Community Councils partners also be sought in relation to the Voluntary Section Liaison Group and Community Council

Liaison Committee meetings and Officers agreed that this would be arranged. It was noted that the questionnaire would also be circulated to Lay Members of the Governance and Audit and Standards Committee and Co-opted Members of Scrutiny.

Following consideration and discuss, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the questions outlined in the survey be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 17:40.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 20th September 2023.

CHAIR