



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - 20TH SEPTEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE
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, and the conclusion is that adequate arrangements are currently in place.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Democratic Services Committee note the contents of the report and provide any comments on the support provided during 2022/23.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 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.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Democratic Services has several different functions to support members: Committee services, Members training and development, Scrutiny, Leader and Cabinet support, Civic Office and all types of day to day procedural/administrative support for Members.

Committee Services

5.2 There have been 125 committee meetings arranged between the annual meetings of Council in 2022 and 2023. There were several cancelled meetings in September 2022 due to the period of national mourning following the death of her Majesty the Queen. The following table illustrates the number of meetings held during the past year:

Type	Committee	Number of Meetings
Council	Council	9
Cabinet	Cabinet	18
	Cabinet Rights of Way	1
	Cabinet as Trustees of Blackwood Miners Institute	3
Sub Total		31
Scrutiny	Education Scrutiny Committee	5
	Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee	7
	Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	5
	Partnerships Scrutiny Committee	4
	Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee	7
	Social Services Scrutiny Committee	7
	Joint Scrutiny Committee	5
Sub Total		40
Regulatory	Appeals Panel	0
	Appointments Committee	3
	Governance and Audit Committee	5
	Caerphilly Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	3
	Democratic Services Committee	2
	Licensing and Gambling Committee	0
	Licensing and Gambling Sub Committee	4
	Non Domestic Ratepayers Committee	1
	Pensions Compensation Committee	0
	Planning Committee	10
	Standards Committee	2
	Taxi and General Committee	1
	Taxi and General Sub Committee	11
Sub Total		42
	Caerphilly Local Access Forum	2
	Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee	2
	Corporate Health and Safety Committee	3
	Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group	2
	Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee	3
Sub Total		12
	Total	125

Along with the formal committees detailed above, committee services have also supported a few informal meetings such as the Bryn Engagement Group and SACRE RVE training and support events for its Members.

Petitions

- 5.3 Committee Services have progressed 12 petitions submitted between May 2022 and May 2023, co-ordinating responses from Corporate Directors/Heads of Service to Lead Petitioners in line with the Council's constitution. Work is also planned to implement an electronic system whereby petitions can be submitted electronically (e-petitions) in addition to paper and email format.

Members Stationery Requests/Support Request

- 5.4 Committee Services co-ordinate Members requests and deliveries of stationery, reformatting of digital agenda packs, sourcing screen filters, magnifiers, guidance on the 'read alone' function and offering digital solutions and support with basic IT queries, particularly on accessing information, joining meetings on line, the use of cameras and microphones.

Hybrid Meetings

- 5.5 Members will be aware that in 2020, as a result of the Covid pandemic the legislation surrounding in person meeting arrangements was amended so that council meetings could be held on a wholly remote basis. The Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021 included provisions to continue with these arrangements and also included the requirement for Council's to hold meetings on a multi-location basis (commonly termed hybrid meetings). This meant that members could attend remotely or from the Council Offices at Penallta House. In addition, for certain meetings, legislation specifies that they must be broadcast live.
- 5.6 To facilitate these changes Council at its Annual Meeting in May 2022 adopted a Multi-Location Meetings Policy as part of the changes to the Constitution and can be found in Part 5.
- 5.7 In order to implement the above provisions new hardware and software has been installed in the core meeting rooms namely the Chamber, Sirhowy, Ebbw and Rhymney rooms. All meetings are currently held on a hybrid basis with the Chamber currently being the room utilised for the livestreaming of the meetings (except for exempt items).
- 5.8 Work is ongoing to develop the functionality of the Sirhowy Room which it is anticipated will also facilitate the livestreaming of hybrid meetings in the coming months.
- 5.9 The requirement to provide hybrid meetings has created significant demands on Democratic Services staff resources to both support members who attend either in person and from a remote location as well as managing the voting and live streaming of the meeting. This is in addition to the co-ordination and publication of agendas, decision notices and minute taking.

Pre/Post Election Member Induction

- 5.10 Prior to the Elections last May a significant amount of preparation work was undertaken by the whole of the Democratic Services team to ensure a seamless transition in to the new council for those members returning and to ensure that new members were equipped with the knowledge and understanding of processes and procedures they required to function effectively as a member. This included providing laptops to new members and providing training on the meeting platform.
- 5.11 In the days and weeks which followed the start of the new council, the Democratic Services team facilitated the induction programme which had been endorsed by Council and ran from 9th May to 6th June 2022 (albeit there were some changes to the way the training was delivered due to the ongoing works to transform the meeting rooms into hybrid facilities).
- 5.12 Democratic Services staff have been on hand to assist members with any queries or any requirements they may have in order to facilitate their work as a councillor.

Member Training and Development

- 5.13 Democratic Services Committee received a report providing an overview of the training and development at its meeting on the 14th of March 2023 and the member training needs analysis questionnaire is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

Seminars

- 5.14 In addition to the Members Induction Programme, Democratic Services has also supported 15 Members Seminars from May 2022 to May 2023. Topics included Members Safety, Introduction to the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Local Development Plan (LDP) – Preferred Strategy, Ukraine, Introduction to the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, Grass Cutting Regimes and Biodiversity, 20mph Zones, Renting Homes (Wales) Act, Housing Solutions and Caerphilly Homes Landlord Functions, Houses of Multiple Occupancy, Developments of National Significance, Draft Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives for 2023-2028, City Deal and Treasury Management.

Seminars are held on a Teams' only basis and utilising this platform has seen an improvement in attendance figures with most seminars achieving 70% attendance.

Scrutiny

- 5.15 Members of the Democratic Services Team have provided support and advice to the Council's scrutiny committees during 2022/23. There has been a total of 35 scrutiny committee meetings plus 5 joint scrutiny committee meetings in the past year.

Education Scrutiny Committee

- 5.16 Education Scrutiny Committee met on 5 occasions and considered 13 agenda items and received 10 information pack items. The committee scrutinised items such as Update Report on the Curriculum for Wales, Shared Ambitions Strategy 2019- 2022, Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, Report 2022-2027, Safeguarding, Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme - Trinity Fields School Expansion Update, Early Years - Expansion of Flying Start and Capital Programme, and Formalising the Youth Service Model.

Attendance for Education Scrutiny for Councillors was 72 out of a possible 80, or 90%.

Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

- 5.17 Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee met on 7 occasions and considered 10 agenda items and 8 information pack items were circulated. There were also 4 Notices of Motion discussed on the following; Section 99 of the Environmental Protection Act; B 4251 Ynys Ddu to Wyllie Highway; Fuel Poverty and Ty Llwyd Quarry.

The scrutiny committee scrutinised items such as Marriage and Civil Partnership Fees - Registration Service; Public Protection Enforcement, Consumer Advice, and Covid-19 Response 2021/22; Implementation of Green Infrastructure Strategy - Progress Report; Street Lighting Review; Caerphilly Biodiversity Report 2022; Grass Cutting Regimes; Local Toilet Strategy and the Update on Decarbonisation Action Plan and future Approach.

Attendance for Councillors who sit on Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee was 100 out a possible 112, which is 89%

Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

- 5.18 Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee met on 5 occasions and considered 10 agenda items and 12 information pack items were circulated. The scrutiny committee scrutinised items that included Enforcement and Compliance of Minimum Energy Efficiency standards in Private Rented Domestic Properties procedure; Renting Homes Wales Act 2016; HRA Rent Review Policy; Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment; Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy and the Caerphilly Town 2035.

Attendance was 66 out a possible 80, which is 82%

Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

- 5.19 Partnerships Scrutiny Committee met on 4 occasions and considered 9 agenda items. The committee scrutinised items including Gwent PSB Response; Job Growth & Employment Action Area; PSB Annual Report; Regional Scrutiny of Gwent PSB; Caerphilly Cares Action Area; Update on Enabler Areas Wellbeing Plan and the Final Report of the Caerphilly PSB.

Attendance was 50 out of 64 which is 78%.

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

- 5.20 Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee met on 7 occasions and considered 14 agenda items and 8 Information pack items were circulated. The scrutiny committee scrutinised items that included Workforce Capacity; Agile Working; Cash Collection; Community Hubs; Procurement reform; Agile Policies; Wales Audit Office Spring Forward; Cap Strategy and Treasury Management.

Attendance was 98 out of 112, which is 87%.

Social Services Scrutiny Committee

- 5.21 Social Services Scrutiny Committee met on 7 occasions and considered 19 agenda items and 1 Information pack items were circulated. The scrutiny committee scrutinised items that included Corporate Safeguarding; Complaints; Budget; Hospital Discharges; Regional Market Stability; Myst; Directors Annual report; Youth Justice; Day Services and Regional Partnership Board. The committee also considered a Notice of Motion regarding Foster Family Friendly Employer.

Attendance was 88 out of 112 which is 78%.

The scrutiny committee received the final report of the Task and Finish Group on Tackling Potential Mental Health Issues Post Pandemic at the September 2022 meeting. The group was established to examine how Caerphilly County Borough Council works with partners to tackle any potential mental health issues post-pandemic. The report made 6 recommendations which were subsequently considered by Cabinet and fully agreed.

Joint Scrutiny

- 5.22 There were 5 Joint scrutiny committee meetings during the year which considered 6 agenda items. The items considered included; Corporate Performance Assessment; Self-Assessment; Budget for 2023/24; Proposed Voluntary Termination of the Caerphilly CBC School PFI Contract and the Waste Strategy presentation.

Attendance was 193 out of 219 which is 88%.

The Car Parks Task and Finish Group was jointly established by Environment and Sustainability and the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. The review made 4 recommendations with suggested options on parking charges and budget to the joint meeting on 28th July 2022. The scrutiny committee selected option 1 and made an additional recommendation to Cabinet, these recommendations were subsequently agreed by Cabinet subject to confirmation that the charges would be delayed and budget would be met from earmarked reserves.

Civic Office

- 5.23 Members will be fully aware of the activities of the Civic Office as the Mayor gives regular updates at each full Council of the engagements attended. During the civic year for 2022-23 a total of 120 engagements were attended and 15 gifts of flowers were organised for people celebrating special events such as 100th birthdays. The

Mayors Assistant provided continuous support to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in all of their duties including organising the Civic Service and Christmas concert.

The Council Chauffeur provides a chauffeuring service to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Council Leader and other senior Councillors all of whom on occasions may be accompanied by officers including those senior officers who form part of the Corporate Management Team. The Chauffeur is also available to drive any council officers for council related business when it is a more cost-effective transport solution. In addition, he provides support to Legal Services by delivering documents and liaising with Court and Barristers Chambers. There is also a relief chauffeur available to cover periods of absence and when there are multiple events, however this is limited and there has been difficulty recruiting additional relief resource.

Leader and Cabinet Office

- 5.24 During 2022/23 the PA to Leader and Deputy Leader and the PA to the Cabinet have continued to provide support which includes dealing with complaints, correspondence, diary management, organising appointments and engagements.

Additional resources were made available to allow the PA to Cabinet post to be made permanent in May 2022. This resulted in the recruitment of a new Mayors Assistant, who took up the position in September 2022. Following these changes, the support to the Cabinet is now working well with both PA's able to provide cover for each other and also support the new Mayors Assistant.

Gwent Police and Crime Panel

- 5.25 The Gwent Police and Crime Panel is hosted by Caerphilly County Borough Council on behalf of the 5 Gwent Local Authorities, the Panel is classed as a stand-alone body and not a joint committee. All costs are funded from the Home Office Grant provided to CCBC every year.

The Panel has a statutory responsibility to hold the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner to account and meets on average 5 times per annum. The Scrutiny Manager and Scrutiny Officer support the Panel and organise Panel meetings. The support to the Panel includes advice and guidance as well as managing the Panel website, administration and complaints.

Staff and Resources in Democratic Services

- 5.26 The Democratic Services Team is managed by the Head of Democratic Services and each member of the Democratic Services Team provides specific support in the areas mentioned above.

The Senior Committee Services Officer oversees the committee services function and supervises the 4 Committee clerks. The Scrutiny Manager manages the scrutiny function and oversees the Scrutiny Officer, the PA to the Leader, and Deputy Leader, the PA to the Cabinet, the Mayors Assistant, and the Chauffeur and relief Chauffeur.

5.27 **Conclusion**

This report summarises the support provided by Democratic Services during the 2022-23 municipal year.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 The level of support provided to councillors and committees and the overall democratic service must ensure that the Council can comply with legislative requirements but should also be sufficient to take into account guidance and good practice and be able to support the governance arrangements set by Council.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 This is an Information Only report therefore an IIA is not necessary.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report and the function is managed within the allocated budget.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no direct personnel implications as a result of this report.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The views of the consultees have been reflected in this report.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 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.

Authors: Lisa Lane Deputy Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services
Catherine Forbes-Thompson Scrutiny Manager and Emma Sullivan Senior Committee Services Officer

Consultees: Christina HARRY, Chief Executive
Dave Street Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Director of Education and Corporate Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer
Mark S. Williams Corporate Director – Economy and Environment
Councillor M James Chair Democratic Services Committee
Councillor L Phipps Vice Chair Democratic Services Committee
Councillor Nigel George, Cabinet Member Corporate Services and Property

Background Papers:

Democratic Services Committee 14th March 2023 – [Agenda Item 4 Member Support and Development.](#)

Multi Location Meetings Policy link – [Please click](#)