



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 23RD JULY 2018

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, and the conclusion is that adequate arrangements are currently in place, now that the staffing issues are resolved.

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.
- 3.2 The Democratic Services Annual Report 2017/18 contributes to the well-being goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 by detailing how members are supported to carry out their role. Councillors, require resources such as IT and support in order to carry out their role as community representatives. In addition the democratic process needs organisation support and guidance in order to make decisions, on budget, policy etc. and thereby contribute to the following goals:
- A prosperous wales
 - A resilient wales
 - A healthier wales
 - A more equal wales
 - A wales of cohesive communities

4. THE REPORT

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

Committee Services

- 4.2 There have been 210 committee meetings arranged between the annual meetings of Council in 2017 and 2018, and included a number of special scrutiny meetings to consider the medium term financial plan. This was an increase of 17 meetings on last year and at a time when there was a vacant post within the team for a period of 5 months as well as two episodes of long term sickness during the year. However despite this all meetings were properly advertised, with agendas and minutes produced.
- 4.3 Following discussions with Democratic Services Committee and approval at Full Council, Electronic Voting has now been implemented at Full Council Meetings on a staggered basis. The Democratic Services team arranged several training sessions for Members in readiness for its implementation.
- 4.4 Committee Services have successfully implemented and maintained the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards in respect of public meetings. The standards require that all agendas for public meetings are published in Welsh and that Council, Cabinet and Education for Life Scrutiny Committee minutes are also available in Welsh.
- 4.5 Following a report to Full Council, where it was agreed that a Democratic Election Process be undertaken for the 3rd term for the position of Caerphilly Youth Champion, during November 2017, a balloted election was undertaken with a number of schools and Youth Groups across the Borough. Councillors Mark Evans and Donna Cushing campaigned both on Social Media and in Schools and Youth Groups and on 17 November 2017, Councillor Mark Evans was elected Caerphilly Youth Champion.
- 4.6 Since the election, a Social Media presence on Twitter and Facebook has been set up, and a number of visits to schools and youth groups have been arranged. In addition, schools have been afforded the opportunity to use the Council Chamber in order to hold their School Council meetings.
- 4.7 One of the key events during the term of the Youth Champion is the Caerphilly Youth Question Time Event, which was held on 26th April 2018. The event opened with a Marketplace, which was attended by various services relevant to the priorities of the Caerphilly Youth Forum. Politicians from all tiers of Government, along with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent were invited to participate on the Panel. The young people were representatives from schools and colleges and held workshops prior to holding the question time event in order to prepare their questions on issues that are important to them.

Members Training and Development

- 4.8 Following the Local Government Elections on 4th May 2017 an induction programme of training commenced with a Marketplace event held on 9th May followed by a presentation by the interim Chief Executive and Corporate Directors on the key services provided by Council.
- 4.9 The induction programme included a number of Members training and support sessions which included mandatory training, introduction to committee and recommended training. A full report covering the review of the programme will be presented to the Democratic Services Committee in September 2018.
- 4.10 Following the implementation of The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) 2015 Act which was passed in April 2015, mandatory E-Learning Training, from the All Wales Academy website was organised and facilitated during October, November and December 2017. Officers within the team offered IT support to all Councillors undertaking the training, ensuring support was available who may have been personally affected by the subject matter. The training aimed to improve the public sector response by providing the strategic focus to improve the arrangements for the prevention, protection and support for individuals affected by such violence and abuse.

4.11 There have been 6 members' seminars organised during the past municipal year, on a wide range of issues, as follows:

- Gwent Police Priorities
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- 2018/19 Local Government Settlement
- Treasury Management
- Aneurin Bevan Health Board
- 21st Century Education and Schools Band B proposals

Scrutiny

4.12 Members of the Democratic Services team have provided support and advice to the Council's 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in 2017/18. There have been a total of 35 scrutiny committee meetings during the year, including special scrutiny meetings to consider the Medium Term Financial Plan and 21st Century Schools and Education Band B proposals.

4.13 The special Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting was also held to consider the recommendations of the cross party working group on the 21st Century Schools and Education Band B Proposals. In the past year the scrutiny committee has heard from Head Teachers from Schools across the Borough who provided the Committee with details of their school, exclusions and developments. Education Achievement Service has attended on four occasions to update the committee on the business plan, attainment and support and the committee has also heard the priorities of the Youth Forum.

4.14 The Education for Life Scrutiny Committee considered a Notice of Motion, on 'free female hygiene support for all young females within our school setting' members agreed to participate in a cross party working group with a report returning to Education for Life Scrutiny Committee later this year.

4.15 The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee have held meetings in which British Telecom (BT) and Welsh Government (WG) representatives were invited to provide the scrutiny Committee with information on broadband provision across the county borough. Wales Audit Office attended to present their Wales Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) Review and the scrutiny committee agreed to set up a working group to examine the action plan.

4.16 The Chair and Chief Executive of Aneurin Bevan Health Board attended a meeting of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to present their annual update report. During the year the scrutiny committee received a presentation from the Theme Lead of the regional Partnership Team of the Population Needs Assessment and a presentation from the Regional Adviser (Gwent), Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Safeguarding Unit.

4.17 Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee agreed to take part in Cross Party Working Groups to consider Street Scene and Waste Management Arrangements. The Street Scene Working Group have met on 3 occasions and it is anticipated that a further meeting will draw the Working Group to a close, with a report being presented to Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee later in the year. The Waste Review Working Group has met on 2 occasions, one of which was a site visit where Members visited a various Waste Disposal Sites.

4.18 Scrutiny Leadership Group considered the outcome of the Scrutiny Self-Evaluation and Peer Review which was then reported to Democratic Services Committee and Full Council when it agreed to carry out a self-evaluation twice per Council term, in order to monitor scrutiny performance and improvement.

4.19 The support and advice at Scrutiny committee meetings is provided by the Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Officer and Solicitors who attend all meetings.

Civic Support

- 4.20 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 2017 - 2018 a total of 167 engagements were attended. 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.
- 4.21 The Council Chauffeur provides chauffeuring service to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Council Leader, other senior Councillors and the Corporate Management Team. In addition he provides support to Legal Services Team by delivering documents and liaising with Court and Legal Chambers.

Leaders Office

- 4.22 During 2017-18, the PA to the Leader and Cabinet has provided support to the new incoming Cabinet, which include dealing with complaints, correspondence, diary management, organising appointments and engagements.
- 4.23 In order to ensure that Cabinet members have support when the PA is absent or unavailable the Mayors Assistant is also located within the Office. These arrangements have worked successfully, the wider team can provide additional support if required.

Other Support

- 4.24 Democratic Services team have implemented and are operating the webcasting system for full Council meetings since January 2016. In order to webcast each Council meeting an additional member of staff will attend in order to operate the webcast system. The Democratic Services team monitor the number of meetings viewed both live and from archive. The following table shows the number of views up to March 2018. An IP address identifies an individual viewer instead of the number of views.

Webcast title	Live date	Single IP address		Multiple visits by an IP address	
		Live viewers	All viewers	Live views	All views
Council	Thu, 18th May 2017 - 6:00 pm	26	99	30	143
Council	Tue, 13th Jun 2017 - 5:00 pm	6	115	6	155
Council	Tue, 25th Jul 2017 - 5:00 pm	11	92	12	122
Council	Tue, 31st July 2017 – 5:00 pm	6	102	8	150
Council	Tue, 10th Oct 2017 - 5:00 pm	304	603	332	699
Council	Tue, 31 Oct 2017 – 5:00 pm	40	109	57	176
Council	Tue, 21st Nov 2017 - 5:00 pm	13	77	16	100
Council	Tue, 23rd Jan 2018 - 5:00 pm	14	68	17	88
Council	Tue, 22nd Feb 2018 - 5:00 pm	19	104	21	150
Council	Tue, 6th Mar 2018 - 5:00 pm	10	44	12	81
Council	Tue, 28th Mar 2018 – 5:00 pm	33	60	44	93

- 4.25 This Council was one of the only Councils in Wales to publish 100% of Annual Reports for all Members in 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/2017. This was 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 2017/2018 shortly. We are required to publish by 31st July 2018.
- 4.26 The Council has provided all Members, who required it, with broadband lines and IT equipment so that they are able to access online reports and Council email. Support is provided by IT Training Team and Members can request specific training during their PDR or during their annual review of their training needs. Should any Member have any specific requirements such as specialist software to access reports, the Democratic Services Team will assist.
- 4.27 Members who have access to their own or Council provided tablet device can also download the Modern.Gov application. This allows the user to select Caerphilly Council as a publisher and other Modern.Gov users (up to a maximum of three) such as other local authorities or Welsh Government. The application allows users to select specific committees and download all papers whilst connected to the internet, these can then be used whilst offline to read, annotate, and highlight specific areas. The Democratic Services Team can assist any Members who would like further information or advice on this service.
- 4.28 Democratic Services Committee considered the options for new IT equipment to be purchased following the local government elections in 2017. This was considered in order to provide more flexibility for those Members needing access to email away from home. The committee were informed that Members could opt for a smaller laptop or a tablet device in conjunction with a hardware token offering second factor authentication, which allows access through any WiFi to the council email etc. This has been offered to new Councillors during the Member Induction. During 2018/19 it is proposed to review the equipment provided to returning Members with the aim to encourage paperless working. Bring Your Own Device was discussed by Democratic Services Committee and was agreed that 3 Members would trial the application, the outcome of which will be reported at a later date. In this instance Bring Your Own Device will be limited to accessing council emails via personal mobile phones.

Staff and Resources in Democratic Services

- 4.29 In March 2016, the Democratic Services Committee designated the Scrutiny Manager as the Interim 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. The current team chart is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.30 Each member of the Democratic Services Team provides specific support in the areas mentioned above. In particular, the Senior Committee Services Officer coordinates all committee services and manages the 3 Committee clerks and a temporary Administrative Assistant. There have been new staff appointments since January 2018 following the retirement of the former Senior Committee Services Officer. The Head of Democratic Services has kept Members informed of the changes and it is hoped that any interim arrangements will be resolved following the appointment of the new Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer.
- 4.31 The Interim Head of Democratic Services (Scrutiny Manager) also manages the scrutiny function and oversees the temporary Scrutiny Officer, who coordinates the forward work programmes and deals with member/public requests as well as attending the Scrutiny Officers' Network meetings. The Scrutiny Manager and Scrutiny officer attend meetings of Scrutiny Leadership Group and attend all Scrutiny Committee meetings to discuss the forward work programmes, further support is provided at scrutiny meetings by the wider Legal Services team.

Conclusions

- 4.32 The Democratic Services team has had a challenging year following the local government elections in May 2017, implementing Member changes and organising a comprehensive member induction programme. During this period there were staffing pressures caused by two episodes of long term sickness within the team and delays in filling vacant posts following the retirement of the former Senior Committee Services Officer and subsequent backfilling of vacancies. This has had an impact on certain aspects of the work of the team, and was managed by some staff taking on additional work and some additional support from the Business Manager in Legal Services. However this has meant that a significant commitment has been required from staff during this period but this has ensured that committee meetings haven't been affected. The main delays have impacted upon Member Development and Training with delays to the training programme for 2018/20 and the Member Development Strategy. However the vacant posts have all now been filled and the long term sickness has come to an end.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 This report contributes to the well-being goals as set out in links to strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act to ensure that councillors and co-opted members are supported take into account the wellbeing goals when making decisions, reviewing services and policies and consider the positive and negative impacts upon future generations, long term community resilience and economic, environmental and social capital.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's EqIA process does not need to be applied.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct implications from this report.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

9. CONSULTATIONS

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

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 It is recommended that Democratic Services Committee note the contents of the report and provide any comments about support for 2017/2018.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 This report has been prepared following the Statutory Guidance relating to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011; Chapter 3 Section 16: Democratic Services Committee.

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Councillor Colin Mann, Chair Democratic Services Committee
Councillor Gez Kirby, Vice Chair Democratic Services Committee
Councillor Barbara Jones Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Governance
Anwen Cullinane Senior Equalities and Welsh Language Officer
Nicole Scammell Head of Corporate Finance and S151 Officer
Stephen Pugh, Communications Manager
Paul Lewis, Acting Head of Information Technology

Background papers:

Report to Full Council 7 October 2014 Agenda Item 12
Report to Annual Council 10th May 2018 Agenda Item 14
Report to Full Council 25th July 2017 Agenda Item 7
Report to Democratic Services Committee 17th November 2016 Agenda Item 5
Report to Full Council 10th October 2017 Agenda Item 8

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Democratic Services Team Chart