DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY 12TH APRIL 2018 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor C.P. Mann – Chair
Councillor D.T. Davies – Vice Chair

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, D. Cushing, W. David, C. Forehead, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, Mrs G. D. Oliver, Mrs M.E. Sargent, C. Thomas and R. Whiting.

Together with:

G. Williams (Acting IT Operations Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer), J. Davies (Business Development Officer) and C. Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Andrews, G. Kirby, G. Simmonds 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 – 23RD NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd November 2017 be approved as correct record and signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

4. USE OF PERSONAL DEVICES (PRESENTATION)

Mr G. Williams, Acting IT Operations Manager provided Members with an update on options available to use their own devices to access information on the Authority's network, following a Member request.

The Committee were provided with background information on the Public Services Network (PSN) which is a private, secured network that enables a number of critical front line services to be delivered by the Authority, which includes The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), Individual Electoral Registration Database (IER), The Blue Badge Scheme System and The Registrar's 'Tell Us Once' System. The PSN has been developed over time by the Government. Only public sector bodies and service providers that meet the stringent security requirements and who provide services to the public sector can connect to the PSN.

The PSN enforces strict rules regarding the connection of personal devices and all networks that connect to the PSN have to comply with the rules of the PSN for continued connections. This includes the devices that are connected to the network. It was noted that all data must be encrypted whilst it moves between device and the Authority's network to reduce the risk of data capture by unauthorised people. Devices should be locked when not in use and Business data should not be stored locally on the device, and should be stored on the Authority's secure network.

The Committee noted that in order to use Personal devices, they would need to have security software installed to protect all parties against threats such as viruses and malware and the protection must be updated every time the device connects to the internet to ensure protections against the latest threats. The installation and update of such security software is the responsibility of the owner as they may have preferences for their particular device.

In order to provide a solution, it was proposed that specialised Mobile Device Management (MDM) software be provided, which is an application that would reside on the personal device in the same way as other applications and would provide strict security measures to protect business data from outside threats. The MDM software enables the segregation of business emails and data from personal emails and data and enables encryption of emails and documents through the application.

The Officer outlined the costs for the solution and it was estimated that, based on all Members and their IT support staff, having a maximum of 2 personal devices per user (approximately 160 devices) costs in Year 1 would equate to £39,340 and Year 2 onwards at £11,942. However, Members were asked to note that, these costs would vary depending on take up and number of devices required.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the presentation and discussion ensued.

Members explained that the report was requested as it has been noted that other Authorities, such as South Wales Fire and Rescue Service have access emails etc. on their own devices. Officers explained that the solution is available, in the form of the application, which will enable emails to be accessed securely on their own devices. The technology is currently being piloted with Officers. Members were asked to note that there is currently no budget for this, however, should Members be interested in this technology, please provide details to the Head of Democratic Services, who can determine estimated costs, but Members were asked to note that there would be a requirement to consider cuts to other areas in order to fund this.

Members raised concerns that a number of emails from external bodies such as South Wales Fire and Rescue and WLGA are being blocked. Officers explained that the filtering solution can be configured to allow such emails to reach the appropriate Member.

Members discussed various options, including the reduction in printing costs through use of links on papers, instead of appendices or going paperless.

Member sought clarification on some of the recent Data Leaks in other organisations and whether these were linked to the use of personal devices. Officers explained that they were as a result of a link being opened on a suspicious email, which downloaded the malware.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and requested that the presentation be circulated for information.

Officers offered to show Members the MDM application working on a Council supplied smartphone following the meeting.

5.   ANNUAL REPORTS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS 2017/18 (VERBAL UPDATE)

Mrs Emma Sullivan, Senior Committee Services Officer provided the Committee with details of the requirements to complete Annual Reports for Elected Members 2017/18.

The Committee were asked to note that, as outlined in the 'White Paper', this would be the last year for Annual Reports reported in this way.

Councillors elected in 2017 were provided with examples of previous Annual Reports for consideration and Members were advised that the templates for 2017/18 would be circulated at the end of May 2018. As in previous years, the templates would be pre-populated with Councillors committee membership, outside body membership, attendance and training records and space would be provided for the inclusion of constituency activity. It was noted that the information for inclusion would be accepted in any format and there would be provision for Councillors wishing to come in and complete their report on a one-to-one basis. Members were reminded that completed reports needed to be returned by the first week of July, in readiness for publication on 31 July 2018.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member queried whether School Governor and Outside Body attendance information could also be included on the template. Officers explained that, Members themselves are welcome to keep a personal record and provide that information for inclusion; however it would not be possible for Democratic Service Staff to source and supply this information for all Members, due to the significant amount of time it would take. Members were reminded that the templates are pre-populated with a large amount of information, which isn't provided to Members in other Authority's.

Officers explained that, should there be concerns for attendance, this is usually raised by the individual Outside Body with Democratic Services who will make then make the appointed individual or the Leader of the appropriate political group aware of the issues to find a way forward.

The Committee noted the report and thanked the Officer.

6.   ELECTRONIC VOTING AT FULL COUNCIL

The report informed the Democratic Services Committee of the recent training sessions on the electronic voting system available in the council chamber and sought views on whether a recommendation should be made to Full Council to re-introduction the system at all Council meetings.

It was noted that on 7th October 2014, the Council agreed to implement the webcasting of Full Council meetings and to also commence electronic voting at Full Council meetings. The Council had received a £40,000 grant from Welsh Government for webcasting and the equipment was installed. The Council webcast its first live meeting on 10th March 2015. Electronic voting was tested in meetings in November/December 2014 and January 2015 but the process significantly increased the length of meetings. Since then, voting at Full Council has been by way of a show of hands. Voting is clearly recorded within the minutes which are published on the Council's website.

Democratic Services Committee when considering the Annual Report for Democratic Services on 31st May 2017 asked that the use if electronic be re-visited and it was agreed to hold training for all members on the system and that a further report on the outcome of the training would be brought back to the committee before making any recommendations to Full Council.

The report outlined that three training sessions were arranged between October 2017 and January 2018, which was attended by a total of 44 Members. The training enabled Members to vote in a mock environment and use the system for a series of questions. Members were shown how to confirm their attendance and choose yes, no or abstain. There were a total of 4 votes taken at each session and at every training session there was an improvement where Members recorded their presence more accurately by the time they had been through one round of voting. The report asked Members to consider a recommendation to Council, the implementation of electronic voting at future meetings of Full Council. Members were asked to be mindful that there would be an impact on some meetings, in that the voting process may be slowed, and therefore the length of meetings could increase as a result. In addition, it was noted that should there be motions proposed during the course of the debate, these would have to be input into the system, before a vote could be taken.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed,

> RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report it be recommended to Council that Electronic Voting be re-introduced at future meetings of Full Council.

The meeting closed at 6:10pm

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2018 they were signed by the Chair

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CHAIR