



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH (SIRHOWY ROOM) ON WEDNESDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2014 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, H.W. David, W. David, R.T. Davies, Mrs P. Griffiths, Mrs E. Stenner, G. Kirby, A. Rees and J. Taylor.

Together with:

J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), A. Price (Interim Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs G. Bevan, Mrs C. Forehead, Ms. J. Jones, Mrs D. Price and Mrs M.E. Sargent.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th September 2014 (minute nos. 1-7) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

4. DRAFT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

The report highlighted the draft determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report relating to Councillors and Co-opted Members for 2015/16.

The Democratic Services Manager outlined the different elements of the annual report and confirmed that the Panel were not suggesting any increases in payments for 2015/16. Members were advised that any feedback on the draft proposals would be forwarded to the Panel as part of the consultation exercise.

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

Having considered its content the Democratic Services Committee noted the report and the Panels draft determinations and welcomed the consistency of approach to this years annual report and that no increases had been suggested.

The Democratic Services Manager agreed to feedback the comments of the Democratic Services Committee in response to the Panel's consultation exercise.

5. WLGA CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report which sought the endorsement of the Democratic Services Committee for the Member Support and Development Strategy 2015/18 and to confirm their commitment to re-apply for the Wales Charter for Members Support and Development prior to its presentation to Council.

The Members Support and Development Strategy 2015/18, as attached in appendix 1 of the report, underpinned the Council's approach to Member Support and Development and had been reviewed to coincide with the re-assessment of Charter Status. The Charter assisted Members in their Councillor role through a programme of training and development opportunities.

It was noted that Caerphilly was the first Council in Wales to be awarded the Charter and the Officer confirmed that the next review would include a self assessment and audit of documentary evidence by the WLGA. Members were advised that as the grant funding from Welsh Government for the WLGA would not be renewed for 2015/16 the future of the charter and WLGA Member support staff was uncertain beyond the end of this financial year.

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

Members noted and endorsed the Members Support and Development Strategy 2014/18, as attached in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report and having considered its requirements also supported the commitment to reapply for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.

The Democratic Services Committee having discussed the report fully endorsed the recommendations contained therein and it was proposed and seconded that they be recommended to Council for approval and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Council be advised of the endorsement of the Democratic Services Committee and recommend that Council re-affirm its commitment to the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development and adopt the Member Support and Development Strategy 2015/18, as attached in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.

6. NAVIGATING THE NEW CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL WEBSITE (VERBAL UPDATE AND DEMONSTRATION)

The Democratic Services Manager provided a verbal update on the launch of the redesigned Council website and its integration with the Mod.Gov document management and repository facility. Members were also advised that following a request from Councillor Davies page numbers would now be added to agenda's for ease of reference. These would be added to

agenda templates in a rolling programme and would be available on all committees by the end of January 2015.

Access to the website was demonstrated and the different areas of improved functionality highlighted. The document library search facility was illustrated and how to locate and access both historic and current documents was explained. The different links relating to elected Members were highlighted and it was noted that the logo for Plaid Cymru had been sourced and would be added to the site shortly.

The meetings calendar was accessed and the Officer confirmed that the site had been well received by the public with positive feedback given on its ease of use and functionality.

In concluding the update the Democratic Services Manager requested that Members make as much use of the site as possible and feedback any gaps or additions they would like to see.

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

Clarification was sought in relation to access to exempt data. The Democratic Services Manager explained and demonstrated how to use the intranet log on function to view exempt data and explained the different security safeguards in place. Members were advised that access was derived from a strictly controlled approved list and the system produces an audit trail of exempt information views.

Members had noted some initial problems with accessing historic exempt data and queried if this issue had now been resolved. Officers confirmed that this had been due to the different controls required for historic and current data, both systems had been updated and Members should now be able to view both historic and current exempt information once logged in.

Members reference webcasting and when this would be included on the website. The Officer confirmed that this would be integrated onto the site via links from Public I and Members would be able to navigate seamless between the two platforms. It was noted that the next meeting of Council would be recorded as a training exercise and following discussion with Members it was envisaged that full Council meetings would be broadcast live in early 2015.

A Member expressed concern that Caerphilly was falling behind other authorities with regard to webcasting. Officers confirmed that most authorities were in the very early days of webcast implementation and were experiencing varying degrees of success due to technical or quality issues with only Torfaen webcasting the majority of its meetings. Reassurances were given that all the necessary steps were being taken to ensure good quality webcasts in terms of video and audio production before moving to a live feed. The importance of leaving the public with a good impression and positive experience of webcasting was emphasised as this would allow them to appreciate and recognise the strength of the debate being undertaken by Councillors during the decision making process.

The meeting closed at 17:32pm

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 4th March 2015 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR