

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

13th June, 2013

Chairman: Councillor Mrs. L.H.James

Councillors: C.P.Golding, M.Harvey, E.E.Jones, R.G.Jones,
H.G.Rawlings, A.L.Thomas and A.N.Woolcock

Officers in Attendance: Mrs. K.Jones, D.Michael, N.Evans and
Mrs. A.Manchipp

1. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON THE 12TH
DECEMBER 2012**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Democratic Service Committee held on the 12th December, 2012, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

2. **LETTER RECEIVED FROM THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES – RE BROADCASTING OF
MEETINGS**

The Committee received a verbal update in relation to the proposed broadcasting of meetings and in particular the monies to be made available from Welsh Government.

In relation to the development of websites by Community Councils, £500 was available to each community council. The Authority would contact each community council to establish if they wished to take up the grant funding. It would be necessary for the community council to sign an agreement with this Council, if the grant is taken up, to ensure any liability to repay grant monies rests with the community council concerned.

In addition, £40,000 would be given to each Local Authority to facilitate remote attendance (although the technology was not available and there were issues around procedure/Standing Orders) and the webcasting of meetings (the funding would cover approximately 18 months of service). The Welsh Government had confirmed that this was a one off payment. It was unlikely that Officers would be able to recommend acceptance of the grant for these purposes as the funding did not cover the cost of the related activities.

RESOLVED: that this matter be noted.

Report of the Head of Change Management and Innovation

3. **ANNUAL REPORTS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

The circulated report contained an update on the Scheme to support Members with the production of Annual Reports. Members had been invited to training sessions with Officers and to date 4 finalised Annual Reports had been received together with 2 draft versions. It was anticipated that these would be available on the Councillors pages of the Council's website in June/July.

RESOLVED: that this matter be noted and that a further report be submitted to Committee reviewing the Scheme and providing details of the number of times the Annual Reports had been viewed by members of the public.

4. **ANNUAL MEMBER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW SCHEME**

Committee received a progress report on the implementation of the above Scheme. Ten Members, across all political group, had received training from Officers and the WLGA, together with several Officers of the Authority. Twenty three Members had indicated they would wish to take part, and of these 18 had already been carried out.

A list of training needs, as identified during the above interviews was contained in Appendix 1, to the circulated report.

RESOLVED: that the update in relation to implementing the Annual Member Development Review Scheme, be noted, and that a further report be submitted to the next meeting, together with a proposed timetable for training.

5. **TRIAL OF MEETING TIMES FOR SCRUTINY**

Members received details of the outcome of the above trial. From the feedback received following the trial it was noted that meetings which had commenced earlier (i.e. Economic and Community Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – 9.30am) had worked well but that the later meetings (i.e. Social Care, Health and Housing - 4pm) had not. As a result, it was noted that both Economic and Community Regeneration Scrutiny Committee (9.30am) and Environment and Highways Scrutiny Committee (10.00am) would be implemented but that the Social Care, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee would revert back to 2pm.

Members were reminded that at the Annual Meeting the matter was again raised by Members and assurances were given that a further review would be undertaken later in the year. Members suggested that each Committee be asked to identify a preferred starting time to inform this review.

In addition Members noted that legislative changes may affect the timings/venue of future Planning and Development Control Committee meetings and this would be the subject of a further report, if appropriate.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

6. **“WHAT MATTERS” EXERCISE**

The Committee received a presentation on the results of the “What Matters’ exercise recently carried out by Democratic Services on the support that Members wanted from the service in order to carry out their roles. Many of the needs identified would be able to be progressed through the Member Development Programme discussed earlier in the meeting. Officers were asked to provide all Members of Council with a short summary of what had come out from the exercise and how the work would be taken forward.

RESOLVED: that the results of the consultation exercise “What Matters” be noted, that all Members of Council be sent a summary of the issues and actions that would be taken and that a further report be submitted, in due course, in relation to progressing the service improvements highlighted, whilst taking into account the financial constraints.

7. **REVISED STAFFING STRUCTURE – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Committee received, as an Appendix to the circulated report, the Organisational Structure for the first phase of the restructuring of Electoral and Democratic Services.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and that all Members of the Council be sent a copy of the structure with the names of Officers in each post, once the revised arrangements had been fully implemented.

Report of the Head of Legal Services

8. **HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

(Mrs.K.Jones disclosed her interest in this item and withdrew from the room during the discussion and voting thereon).

RESOLVED: that, for the reasons specified in the circulated report, Mrs. Karen Jones be designated Head of Democratic Services under Section 8 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and she be redesignated Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services.

9. **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME/ACTION PLAN AS AT 6TH JUNE, 2013**

(Mrs.K.Jones rejoined the meeting).

Members discussed the progress being made against the Committee’s Work Programme/Action Plan and in particular the Governance Review being undertaken during the summer.

RESOLVED: that an update in relation to the above be submitted to Members at the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN