

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present: **1 February, 2018**

Chairperson: Councillor J.D.Morgan

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Councillors: S. ap Dafydd, S.K.Hunt, S.Miller, M.Protheroe,
S.Pursey, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards and
R.L.Taylor

Invited Member: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance Mrs.K.Jones, S.John, R.George, A.Manchipp
and S. Curran

1. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 19 OCTOBER 2017**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 19 October 2018, be noted, subject to it being noted that in accordance with Minute No 4 the Disability Network Action Group had not responded to Officers but that this would be kept under review.

2. **MEMBER SCRUTINY CHAMPION - UPDATE REPORT**

The Chairman welcomed the Scrutiny Champion, Cllr A.N.Woolcock, to today's meeting to provide Members with a verbal update on the scrutiny process.

Cllr Woolcock advised the meeting that he had made a similar presentation to the Chair and Vice Chair Forum on 12 December 2018. He felt that the scrutiny process was being undertaken quite well within the Authority, but could still be improved. To this end a training session on chairing skills had been arranged for 1 March 2018. Cllr Woolcock advised of the different ways in which scrutiny was undertaken and that local authorities in Northern Ireland did not have scrutiny at all. He believed that it was important for the Authority

to scrutinise outside organisations particularly those to which the Authority provided funding. As an example he referred to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 31st January, 2018 where the work of the Public Services Board was scrutinised.

Cllr Woolcock also drew the Committee's attention to the Authority's Constitution, which stated that Members could only speak for 5 minutes. This he felt was not conducive to good scrutiny and suggested that consideration be given to amending the Constitution.

Members agreed that additional training would be useful for Chairs and Vice Chairs but that the Democratic Services Committee would benefit from training on Constitutional issues. The Committee agreed that the Authority's Constitution required amendment to take into account the scrutiny process.

It was noted that following the training for Chairs and Vice Chairs training would be undertaken on a Committee by Committee basis for scrutiny members.

RESOLVED: That the Monitoring Officer be asked to consider amending the Authority's Constitution in line with the Committee's views as outlined above.

3. **REVIEW OF STAFFING STRUCTURE - DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Members received and noted the report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services in relation to the Democratic Services Staffing Structure.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Democratic Services Staffing structure be approved and commended to Council for approval and that the officer currently undertaking the Senior Executive Officer on a temporary basis be confirmed in post.

4. **WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS UPDATE**

Members received and noted the update report of the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services on the introduction of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and in particular Standards 41 and 48 as they relate to Democratic Services.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

5. **MEMBER ANNUAL PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW (PDR) PROCESS**

Members considered the above report on the future of Members Annual Personal Development Reviews (PDR's). Members noted that in line with Section 7 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Authority was required to provide reasonable training and development opportunities for its Members.

Members were advised that the previous scheme had been felt 'not fit for purpose' and as a result Members were invited to consider establishing a focus group to identify or develop a more suitable Scheme.

RESOLVED: That a focus group be established of the following Members to identify or develop a suitable PDR Scheme for Councillors:-

Councillor J.D.Morgan
Councillor S.ap Dafydd
Councillor S.K.Hunt
Councillor S.Miller

6. **MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT SCHEME**

Members considered the above report and noted that in line with Section 5 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Authority was required to make arrangements for every elected Member to provide an annual report at the end of each civic year.

Despite initial early interest from Members there was a rapid decline in the number of reports being prepared to the effect that in 2016/17 there were no annual reports.

The Welsh Government would be publishing its draft Local Government Bill which may well include the compulsory completion of annual reports by Members.

In order to take this forward it was proposed to establish a focus group to review the current scheme. In addition the Head of

Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services suggested that a more modern approach be taken with the use of blogs, Facebook etc. and that a letter be forwarded to Welsh Government to this effect.

RESOLVED: That a focus group be established to review the current Member Annual Report Scheme, comprising of the following Members and that the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services send a letter to Welsh Government, on behalf of the Committee, suggesting that social media would be a more appropriate way of communication:-

Councillor J.D.Morgan
Councillor S.ap Dafydd
Councillor S.K.Hunt
Councillor S.Miller

7. **MEMBERS' IT REFERENCE GROUP**

RESOLVED: That in order to review the ICT facilities available to, or to be made available in the future to Members, the IT focus group be re-established with the following Members, and the Terms of Reference as contained as an Appendix to the circulated report, be confirmed:-

Councillor J.D.Morgan (Chair)
Councillor S.ap Dafydd
Councillor M.Protheroe
Councillor S.Pursey
Councillor R.Taylor
(and that Political Group Leaders be asked to nominate one further Member from each Group).

8. **SUBMISSION OF APOLOGIES FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Members considered the above report and the current Apologies Submission Policy, as contained as an Appendix to the circulated report. Members noted that in addition to the 3 apology categories contained in the Policy, the Committee Documentation Management System provided for additional categories to be added and be visible on the Council's website. In addition Members asked for clarification

on the Policy for long term sickness, where the Member was unable to submit apologies. The Policy would be amended to allow for apologies to be recorded once Democratic Services was aware, but not retrospectively.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Submission of Apologies for Council Meetings Policy be amended in relation to long term sickness and that it be commended to Council for approval;
 2. That Members of the Committee take soundings from their respective Political Groups on whether the recordable absence categories should be extended and report to the next meeting of Committee.

9. **OUTCOME OF MEMBERS SURVEY ON TIMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS (FOLLOW-UP SURVEY)**

Committee received the results of the further Member survey carried out on the timing of meetings and noted that 41 responses had been received. Of the responses received 32 (78%) of responses stated that they were content with the start times of meetings and 9 (22%) were not.

- RESOLVED:** That further consultation be undertaken with the Chairs of the Committees where a number of Members had requested a different start time to that currently in place and that this inform the Cycle of Meetings for 2018/19.

10. **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members received the Work Programme for the Democratic Services Committee.

- RESOLVED:** That following a request by a Committee Member an item on the Security of Civic Buildings be added.

CHAIRPERSON