

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

Members Present:

19 October 2017

Chairperson: Councillor J.D.Morgan

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Councillors: S. ap Dafydd, S.Miller, M.Protheroe, S.Pursey,
S.Renkes and A.J.Taylor

Officers In Attendance R.J.George, A.Manchipp, D.Michael, C.Griffiths,
S.Lewis, J. Woodman-Ralph

1. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 27 JULY 2017**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 27 July 2017, be noted.

2. **FEEDBACK FROM THE MEMBER SUPPORT OFFICER MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER, 2017 (VERBAL)**

Members received a briefing on the Member Support and Development Lead Members and Officers Network meeting which the Chair attended on the 7 September 2017. The meeting provided guidance and best practice information, particularly in relation to the introduction and implementation of new legislative requirements. Some of the items discussed in the meeting were the Welsh Government White Paper on reforming local government and the consultation on electoral reform, further detailed reports would be published by the Welsh Government in late Spring 2018. In addition, the network discussed the national report on the findings of the exit survey for Councillors, experiences and challenges in relation to the member induction process and e-learning opportunities available for Members.

RESOLVED: That the briefing be noted.

3. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Members received an overview of the rules in respect of access to meetings and reports which apply to all meetings of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council convened under the Local Government Act 1972 as detailed in the circulated report.

During the discussions it was confirmed that the Access to Meetings information does form part of the Members Induction Training and that today's report be circulated to all Members as a reminder.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and circulated to all Members.

4. **CIVIC BUILDINGS - ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY**

Members received an update on the outcome of the accessibility survey of Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres and The Quays as detailed in the circulated report.

It was highlighted that Neath Civic Centre, which was built in 2005, and the Quays completed in 2009 both comply with Part M of the Building Regulations and were designed to be fully accessible. With regard to Port Talbot Civic Centre, which was constructed in 1987 prior to the introduction of any significant legislation to improve access for disabled people, a number of areas were identified as needing improvement.

Members asked if further views could be gathered from Members of the Public on how they felt improvements could be made and any difficulties they have had in accessing the public areas. It was agreed that a request would be made to the Local Disability Network Action Group to undertake an assessment of Port Talbot Civic Centre to highlight areas for improvement and for a report to be prepared for consideration at the next meeting of Democratic Services Committee.

In addition it was proposed that, the Chair write to all Members asking them to identify any access issues that they felt needed to be addressed and to forward them to the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That arrangements be made for the Local Disability Network Action Group to undertake an assessment of Port Talbot Civic Centre and that a report to be prepared identifying the issues for consideration at the next meeting of Democratic Services in February 2018;
 2. That access arrangements for elected Members be kept under review.

5. **OUTCOME OF MEMBERS' SURVEY ON TIMING OF MEETINGS**

Members received an update on the outcome of the Members' Survey on Timings of Council Meetings, as detailed in the circulated report.

It was highlighted that under Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to undertake a survey of Members regarding the timing, frequency and location of meetings at least once during the term of that administration.

Discussion took place on the difficulties that some Members experienced but noted that the survey suggested that the current arrangements were satisfactory for a significant number of Members with the main preference being for morning and afternoon meetings.

Members asked that a canvas of individual committees take place to establish if there was an overall consensus to mornings and afternoons or a combination of both and that the outcomes be brought to the Democratic Services Committee in February 2018.

Members also discussed whether there was a need to have an end time to meetings to enable working Members to manage their diaries. Members agreed that this would be put on the agenda for the next meeting of Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting for consideration.

The Democratic Services Committee asked that after consultation with the whole committee via the survey and if agreement was received from the majority of the Committee that the next meeting in February start at 9.30am and to end two hours later. If any items on the agenda were not considered in that time an additional meeting was to be arranged. Members of the Committee were also asked to

submit any questions prior to the meeting to assist in the running of the meeting.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That arrangements be made to canvas the views of individual Committees Members on their preference for the convening of Committees and a report be brought back to the Democratic Services Committee in February for consideration;

6. **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members agreed that the following items would be added to the Work Programme for the February 2018 meeting:

- Councillor A.N.Woolcock, Scrutiny Champion to be invited to the meeting;
- Consider re-convening the Members I.T. Reference Group to look at arrangements that might be useful to Members;
- Review of the use of the Welsh Language Standards in regard to the publishing of agendas and minutes;
- Review of Timings of Meetings (follow-up survey)

Items to be added to the Work Programme for future meetings:

- Local Government Reform – Draft Bill expected to be published by Welsh Government in late Spring 2018.

7. **URGENT ITEM**

Because of the need to deal now with the matter contained within Minute No. 8 below, the Chairman agreed that this could be raised at today's meeting as an urgent item pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Reason:

Due to the time element.

8. **INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

Members received a verbal update on the recent publication of the draft annual report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales which recommended an increase of £200 or 1.49% effective from April 2018 for the basic Members salary resulting in a salary of £13,600. No increase was proposed for senior salaries but would receive the increase in their basic salary element.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CHAIRPERSON