

# **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – K.JONES**

**17<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

### **SECTION B – MATTERS FOR INFORMATION**

**WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL**

### **MEMBERS FACILITIES**

#### **Purpose of Report**

To provide Members with an update in relation to the progress made with the provision of Members Facilities within the Port Talbot Civic Centre.

#### **Background**

Following the formation of the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services Department in October, 2012, the provision of facilities for Members has been kept under review and, where appropriate, improvements suggested to ensure that the democratic processes of the Council can operate more effectively and support Members in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, as well as assist Members of the Public properly seeing and hearing proceedings.

In particularly, with regard to the Committee Rooms and Council Chamber located within the Port Talbot Civic Centre, very limited investment has been made in maintaining the equipment and facilities within these meeting venues since the creation of the authority in 1996.

As such, much of the audio and visual technology which had previously been utilised by Members had started to malfunction on a regular basis requiring continuous repair and maintenance and resulting in complaints.

This resulted in the necessity to put in place a programme of works to ensure that facilities within the Port Talbot Civic Centre were sufficient to provide adequate meeting venues for the use of all Members, Officers and Members of the Public interested in attending Council meetings.

An outline of the works carried out to date are listed below for Members reference and information:-

## **Progress**

### **Council Chamber**

Within the Council Chamber a new digital delegate microphone system has been installed to replace the previous analogue audio network which had ceased to function. As part of the new system integrated facilities have been installed to assist with Welsh translation during meetings, an enhanced induction loop for Members with hearing aids, and better audio facilities for Members of the Public. Improved speakers have also been installed within the Chamber for better sound clarity, and the ability to utilise streaming media and airplay technology during meetings is also now possible.

In addition, the Chamber has also been fitted with 'in-built' projectors and larger screens which allow for a clear view of meeting presentations to be seen from any seated location, preventing Members and Individual Members of the Public having to strain to read a screen 'slide', and assist those with poorer eyesight.

To complement the newly installed audio and visual equipment, the IT Department have placed four new Wi-Fi Hotspots within the Chamber to give Members the ability to utilise their Mobile devices (i.e. iPads) to a much greater extent during meetings. These works also tie in with the launch of the Mod.Gov App, which allows members to read and annotate Council Papers digitally for the first time.

Further works are also to begin in August to improve the general lighting levels throughout the Council Chamber for future meetings and, due to the poor condition of much of the Chamber seating, options are currently being examined to look to see what alternative arrangements could be offered for Members.

### **Committee Rooms**

Within the Committee Rooms a number of improvements have also been made to again support Members in carrying out their role and assist in facilitating the democratic processes of the Council.

A new wireless digital delegate microphone system is now available in the Committee Rooms to assist Members and all other attendees, during large meetings to ensure that they are able to clearly hear all discussions and presentations.

In addition, Committee Rooms One and Two have been fitted with ‘in-built’ projectors and larger screens, to replace the portable equipment that previously had to be used. While improving the quality of all audio/visual presentations for Members, this will significantly reduce the amount of time and staff resource within the Democratic Service team required in assisting with ‘set-up’ arrangements which can be more effectively used on other work activities.

Due to the smaller size of Committee Room Three it has not been fitted with a projector or large screen, however to assist with meetings two large television screens have been installed again to provide improved audio/visual presentations for Members, Officers and others which can be viewed clearly from any part of the room.

Streaming media and airplay technology will also be available in each of the Committee Rooms along with improved Wi-Fi connectivity for mobile devices.

Works will also begin in due course to look at replacing the damaged and worn vertical blinds within the Committee Rooms.

## **Recommendation**

- 1) That the Democratic Services Committee note the progress made in relation to Member facilities.

## **Officer Contact**

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