

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

Members Present:

17 July, 2015

Chairperson: Councillor Mrs.L.H.James

Vice Chairperson: Councillor Ms.C.Morgans

Councillors: M.Harvey, E.E.Jones, R.G.Jones and
A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance Mrs.K.Jones, D.Michael, S.John, R.George,
Mrs.A.Manlipp, Miss.S. Sullivan and
Mrs.T.Davies

1. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING ON 12 FEBRUARY 2015**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February, 2015, be confirmed as a correct record.

2. **MEMBERS IT REFERENCE GROUP**

Members received an overview of the work undertaken by the Members' IT Reference Group, which included an update on the implementation of the software system Mod.Gov.

In particular, it was noted that

- the e mail notification had been switched on, allowing Members to be advised that a report pack had been published and was available to view either through Mod.Gov or on the Website;
- the Mod.Gov. App had been rolled out to a trial number of Members, which would allow them to access public Committee papers on the iPad - access to private reports would be available in due course via a separately purchase licence;

- feedback from the Members' IT Reference Group would be reported to the next meeting of Committee;
- the availability of equipment within the Democratic Services Section allowing Members access to advice on problems or issues relating to the new system;
- the switching on of the Members attendance/apologies statistics, which would in turn provide information to Members for inclusion within their Annual Reports.
- In relation to the rolling out of ipads to both Members and Officers, Committee was advised that it was important to test the system/equipment thoroughly prior to the roll out in order to minimise any issue that could arise.

Members then responded as follows:

The recording of Members' apologies on the Mod.Gov system was questioned. Officers agreed to look at this again and update Members at the next meeting. In relation to recording the percentage of attendance at meetings, it was noted that the system would be checked to ensure cancelled meetings were not included in the figures.

Members asked whether the Mod.Gov app would be available on iphones, but were advised that the app would only be available on ipads.

Generally Members were pleased with the new software , although there had been a few teething problems but these had been dealt with by Officers. Some Members expressed the view that papers were easier to read on the ipad.

It was felt that all Members should be provided with the link to access all papers, including private reports, whether they sat on the meeting or not. In response the Head of Legal Services gave Committee a brief overview of the legal position in relation thereto.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services advised Committee that the Members' IT Scheme would also be reviewed in order to take into account the use of ipads by Members.

Following the discussion Members agreed that the new use of the Mod.Gov software was the way forward, both in terms of efficiency and also in contributing to the savings required in the Forward Financial Plan.

3. **MEMBER'S FACILITIES**

Members received an overview of the programme of improvement work carried out to Member facilities, in the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms in the Port Talbot Civic Centre, which had not been updated since 1996. The improvements, which included the renewal of the sound system in the Council Chamber and its installation in the Committee Rooms, would facilitate the use of the rooms for Members, Officers and Members of the public. Screens had also been installed.

Improved Wi-Fi access had also been installed by way of additional hot spots, which would support the work currently underway in introducing the Modern.Gov software, as referred to above.

Member noted that additional work would be carried out, such as vertical blinds and chair replacement, all of which had not been updated since at least 1996.

Members expressed concern at the lighting in the Council Chamber and were advised that this would also be addressed as part of the improvement work.

RESOLVED: that the report in relation to Members' Facilities, be noted.

4. **ANNUAL MEMBER SURVEY**

Members were advised that the Annual Member Survey was underway and that Officers from the Democratic Services Section would be contacting all Members to undertake the survey face to face. To date 43 surveys had been completed. (This figure was updated verbally at the meeting).

RESOLVED: that Members note the progress to date in under taking the Annual Members' Survey and that a Special Meeting be convened in the Autumn to consider the findings and develop an action plan.

5. **ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT 2015/16**

Committee noted the report in relation to Members' Annual Development Reviews (ADR's) and Member Development and noted, attached as an Appendix to the circulated report, a copy of the draft Schedule of Member Seminars and a copy of the training available via the WLGA. A copy of the draft Schedule of Seminars would be circulated following agreement by Committee today.

Members suggested that the training section be approached regarding the training being provided either internally to Officers or by Officers in relation to, for example, new legislation etc, with a view to this being extended to include Members, where appropriate.

Some Members felt that the ADR process helped Members focus on their development to date and to also identify any future training needs. Members also asked whether the training sessions provided were accredited. It was confirmed that they were not, however Officers would look into the provision of accredited training and report back to Committee.

Members raised the times of Seminars (9am and 3pm) and requested an analysis of attendance at the Seminars. In addition Members requested that consideration be given to surveying all Members to ascertain the preferred times for the start of meetings and seminars.

- RESOLVED:**
- a. that the Draft Member Development Programme, enclosed at Appendix 1 to the circulated report, be approved and circulated to all Members for information;
 - b. that Members of the Committee promote the participation in the second round of Member Annual Development Reviews, in line with the revised scheme;
 - c. that Officers undertake a review of attendance figures at Seminars, and also consider undertaking a survey of all Members in relation to preferred start times of meetings/seminars;

- d. that Officers look into providing accredited training for Members;
- e. that discussions be held with the Training Section, in relation to Members being included in the training provided, if appropriate.

6. **ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

RESOLVED: that the Organisational Structure of Electoral and Democratic Services, as contained in the circulated report, be noted.

7. **DELIVERY OF COUNCIL AGENDAS BY COURIER SERVICE**

Members received the report of the Head of Legal Services in relation to the above wherein it was noted that the Courier Service to Members could not be undertaken during the working day without causing serious disruption to the service provided by the section in, for example, mail dispatch and printing, etc.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Head of Legal Services, be noted.

CHAIRPERSON