

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

Members Present:

27 July, 2017

Chairperson: Councillor J.D.Morgan

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Councillors: S.Ap Dafydd, S.Miller, M.Protheroe,
L.M.Purcell, S.Purse, A.J.Richards, A.J.Taylor
and R.L.Taylor

Officers In Attendance Mrs.K.Jones, S.John, R.George, R. Jenkins,
N.Evans, A.Manchipp and N.Headon

1. **MINUTES OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 15 SEPTEMBER 2016**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee of 15 September 2016, be noted.

2. **PRESENTATION ON THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE AND THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

As the Committee now comprised of both returning Members who were new to the Committee and also newly elected Members, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services gave a presentation on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services.

Members then raised the following points:-

- Regarding the Timing of Meetings, this could be carried out on a Committee by Committee basis. This had been done during the last administration, however Members may now wish for further changes to the timing of meetings etc;
- Could the timing of meetings be perhaps on a rotation basis (am, pm or evening) as it was acknowledged that there was not

a “one size fits all” position due to Members’ different circumstances. This option would be included in the survey to be issued to all Members and referred to in Minute Number 3 below;

- Members asked that the survey be amended to allow Members to indicate any difficulty with the day of the week of meetings as well as timings.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted, and the survey instrument to capture Members’ preferences as to meeting arrangements be amended in light of Members’ feedback.

3. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

The Committees then considered the report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services on the following:-

Head of Democratic Services – Role and Resources

The Committee noted the content of the report and in particular the proposed staffing structure of the Democratic Services Section. It was noted that the proposed structure included the temporary post of Senior Executive Officer which would provide support to the Executive. The proposals would be reviewed at the meeting to be held on 1 February 2018.

RESOLVED: That the basic role and responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services and the Democratic Services Committee, as contained in the circulated report, be noted, and that the revised staffing structure, as contained therein, be approved and reviewed at the meeting to be held on 1 February, 2018.

Members’ Facilities

Members considered the report in relation to the improvements made to the Members facilities at the Port Talbot Civic Centre together with the proposals for the Neath Civic Centre.

Members noted that a survey had been undertaken prior to any improvements being undertaken, however concern was expressed regarding the disabled access to both Civic Centres. In particular the use of motorised wheelchairs was an issue as these would not fit into the lifts and there was no facility for motorised assistance in opening doors that provide access to the committee rooms.

There was a request for the provision of additional chairs in the Members' Room to cater for Members with mobility issues.

Members also mentioned the issues surrounding those users with hearing difficulties and noted that this had now been addressed.

Members were pleased with the workstations in the Members' Room in the Port Talbot Civic Centre and hoped that this layout would be mirrored in the Members' Room in the Neath Civic Centre. The Committee requested that a further survey be undertaken in relation to any specific needs.

RESOLVED: That the programme outlined in the report, be supported, subject to Officers incorporating the feedback from Members into the current programme of work. Further work to be undertaken to establish if there were any other reasonable adjustments that should be considered to improve disabled access for both Members, staff and the general public.

Overview and Scrutiny Development Update

Committee received the report in relation to the progress made on the development of the Overview and Scrutiny function of the Authority.

Members were pleased to note the improvements to date and felt that improved scrutiny led to better decision making. Members agreed that regular updates be provided to Committee and that the scrutiny champion, Councillor A.N.Woolcock, be invited to the meeting for that item.

In relation to the reports being considered at Scrutiny Committees, Members were advised that a report template had been developed and rolled out to all Officers, in order to standardise information being considered. Members were encouraged to bring to the attention of the Democratic Services Section, any reports that had information omitted, in order for the issues to be addressed as soon as possible.

Members noted the process by which the views of the Scrutiny Committee was considered by the Executive and that any views considered would be included in the Decision Record, for information purposes.

The development of Annual Reports to Scrutiny Committees was discussed and supported whereby the impact of scrutiny could be described.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Timing of Council Meetings

Members were advised that, in accordance with Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Authority was required to carry out a survey of all Members, once during the administration, regarding the timing of meetings. Attached to the circulated report was an updated copy of the last survey undertaken, for Members' comments.

During the discussions Members asked for the following amendments to be incorporated within the questionnaire:-

- Question 2 to be amended to include Days of the Week;
- A further question be added at Question 6 for any further comments.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the above additions to the questionnaire, the proposal to undertake an all Member survey in relation to the timing of meetings be endorsed, and that the survey be undertaken in early September, with an end date of 1 October 2017 and reporting back to the Special Meeting on 19 October 2017.

4. **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME VERSION 1**

Committee received a copy of the Democratic Services Work Programme for 2017/18. Following discussions at today's meeting it was:-

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Planner be updated with the addition of a Special Meeting of Committee at 9am on 19 October, 2017, and that the following items be placed on that agenda:
 - An update on the Welsh Government White Paper on Local Government Reform including proposals relating to the broadcasting of Council meetings;
 - A review of the Members' ICT Scheme and consideration of the establishment of a Members' IT Reference Group;
 - An update on Overview and Scrutiny;
 - Review of the use of the Welsh Language within committee proceedings;
 - The outcome of the Members' Survey on Timings of Meetings;
 - Progress on Member Accommodation.

 2. That the Review of the Staffing Structure of Democratic Services be placed on the agenda for the meeting to be held on 1 February, 2018.

CHAIRPERSON

This page is intentionally left blank