

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

Members Present:

7 March 2019

Chairperson: Councillor J.D.Morgan

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Councillors: S. ap Dafydd, S.K.Hunt, S.Purseley, S.Renkes,
A.J.Richards, A.J.Taylor, R.L.Taylor and
A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance K.Jones, D.Giles, C.Furlow, J.Davies and
A.Manchipp

1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 7 NOVEMBER 2018**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 November 2018 be approved.

2. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES**

The committee received information in relation to the Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales as contained within the circulated report.

Members expressed concerns that the carers allowance was taxable, and queried whether it should be classed as a reimbursement of cost to an individual instead. Members queried whether there had been any interest from members to receive the carers allowance. Officers stated that there had been no interest from members, and there appeared to be a reluctance across Wales to receive the allowance.

RESOLVED: That officers liaise with the Director of Finance for advice before writing to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for further clarification on why the carers allowance was classified by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs as an

income rather than a reimbursement.

3. **MEMBER SCRUTINY CHAMPION - UPDATE**

The committee received information in relation to the Member Scrutiny Champion - Update as contained within the circulated report.

The committee agreed that issues regarding grammar in reports and minutes should be raised with the relevant officers outside of the meetings.

The committee acknowledged the importance of non-committee members giving advance notice to the relevant chair of their intention to attend a meeting. The committee also agreed that non-committee members should only attend for the relevant items that they had expressed an interest in. Officers advised that a firm rule for non-committee members' attendance at meetings might not be a suitable arrangement as flexibility should be built in for exceptional circumstances.

The committee commented that pre-briefings provided committee members with an opportunity to discuss matters on the agenda and to organise themselves in preparation for the main meeting. The committee stated that pre-briefings added value by seeking different perspectives in advance of the main meeting and reaching better conclusions.

Members raised concerns with regard to the timing of pre-briefings, particularly Cabinet Scrutiny which began at 9:00am, and posed an issue for those taking their children to school first. The committee recommended that discretion be given to chairs to slightly alter commencement times for meeting to accommodate members with childcare responsibilities. Officers stated that this could be raised during the re-constitution of Council.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Digital Officer circulates an e-mail to all members reminding them that grammatical issues contained in reports and minutes are to be raised with relevant officers and dealt with outside of meetings
- b) That the Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Digital Officer and Head of Legal

- Services prepare a report at the next meeting regarding non-committee member attendance at meetings
- c) That the attendance of members at pre-briefings be monitored by the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Forum, and any issues to be reported back to the committee

4. **MEMBERS' DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME - UPDATE**

The committee received information in relation to the Members' Development and Training Programme as contained within the circulated report.

Officers reported that following the meeting on the 5th September 2018, social media training and committee procedures training had not yet been delivered. Due to the multifaceted nature of both topics, officers requested a steer from the committee. Members commented in relation to social media that it was difficult to identify specific training that met the needs of all members as knowledge and skill levels varied. Members requested for two courses to be arranged in relation to social media; a beginners course which provided members with basic knowledge, such as how to register accounts, publish posts, make comments, 'do's and don't's,' code of conduct issues in relation to social media; and an intermediate course which would provide a refresher as well as how to maximise the use of social media and provide members with the knowledge of which platforms to use when attempting to target a particular audience. Members also requested for the courses to include information on how to deal with harassment and abuse on social media and the impact on individuals.

In relation to committee procedures, members requested training and further guidance on the following areas:

- the 'Call-in' process;
- legislation and the process in place to request the attendance of external organisations/partners at meetings;
- how to put motions forward at meetings;
- notice of motions and amendments;

- procedures for full council;
- recorded voting;
- general powers available to committees.

- RESOLVED:**
- a) That beginner and intermediate social media training be arranged for members
 - b) That the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer and Head of Legal Services deliver a course to members on the areas identified by the committee in relation to committee procedures.

5. **MEMBERS' ANNUAL PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW (PDR) - UPDATE**

The committee received information in relation to the Members' Annual Personal Development Review (PDR) as contained within the circulated report.

The committee were informed that nominations had been received from group leaders and that training had been arranged for nominees on the 15th April which would be provided by the Welsh Local Government Association.

RESOLVED: That the committee note the report.

6. **DISABILITY AUDIT**

The committee received information in relation to the Disability Audit - Update as contained within the circulated report.

The committee were informed that Proudlock Associates (sub-contractors of Shaw Trust) had been approached to carry out the disability audit for the Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres, and that the Disability Audit Working Group were due to meet on the 14th March to consider the proposal. If the proposal was accepted by the working group, then the audit would take place in April.

RESOLVED: That the committee note the report.

7. **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES STAFFING STRUCTURE**

The committee received information in relation to Staffing Structure – Democratic Services and the Re-modelling of Scrutiny Support as contained within the circulated report.

Officers explained that due to the extra demand placed on Democratic Services as a result of the Swansea Bay City Region, further resources were required as indicated in the report. Officers reported that the additional hours required in the team were still being worked through.

Members queried whether the posts would still be required if the Swansea Bay City Region was disbanded. Officers stated that they were waiting for an indication on the future of the Swansea Bay City Region which was due imminently. Officers informed the committee that there was a separate strand of work being carried out to develop the scrutiny support for members, and that Dave Mckenna was currently assisting with this.

RESOLVED: That the structure be endorsed by Council once the hours for the new posts were determined.

8. **MEMBERS IT REFERENCE GROUP - UPDATE**

The committee received information in relation to the Members IT Reference Group as contained within the circulated report.

Members queried whether there were any plans to install Microsoft Word on members' i-pads. Officers stated that Microsoft 365 was currently being trialed by the IT department, and if successful would provide functionality on i-pads for the entire Microsoft Office Suite.

RESOLVED: That the committee note the report.

9. **DEMOCRATIC SERVICE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Officers advised that with further legislation anticipated from Welsh Government, that the committee may wish to review the frequency in which it convenes each year.

RESOLVED: That an additional meeting be arranged for July, and that the meeting in September be re-arranged for November. The meeting in March 2020 to remain in place.

10. **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

The committee received information in relation to the Chairpersons report as contained within the circulated report.

The Chair explained that the report was a summary of the activities undertaken by the committee during the civic year.

RESOLVED: That the committee note the report.

11. **URGENT ITEMS**

Members raised concerns with regard to the timing of some meetings that fell during the school holidays, which provided difficulties for members with child care responsibilities. Officers stated that this would be explored and reported back to the committee.

Members requested for pre-briefings and Planning site visits to be inserted into members' electronic calendars. Officers stated that this would be explored and reported back to the committee.

Members requested that when members' seminars were cancelled, that the word 'cancelled' be added first in the subject box before sending the e-mail notification in order to eliminate the possibility of members missing the information. Officers agreed to change the wording in the subject box when cancelling members' seminars.

Members asked for pre-briefings to be added to members' weekly lists. Officers agreed to add pre-briefings to the members' weekly lists.

CHAIRPERSON