

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON WEDNESDAY, 17 APRIL 2013 AT 2.00PM

Present:-

Councillor J H Tildesley, MBE - Chairperson

<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>
D K Edwards	C Jones	R E Young
L Ellis	J R McCarthy	D B F White
C A Green	M Reeves	

Officers:-

G P Jones	- Head of Democratic Services
R Peverley	- Training and Development Officer
R Harries	- Scrutiny Officer
A Rees	- Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

15 MR RICHARD THOMAS

The Chairperson announced with great sadness of the sudden death of the Mayor's Chauffeur Mr Richard Thomas who passed away on 12 April 2013 after a short illness. He stated that Mr Thomas started work as the Mayor's Chauffeur in October 1979 and had worked for a total of 35 Mayors.

All present stood in silence as a mark of respect.

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Member for the reason so stated:-

Councillor R L Thomas - Prior commitment

17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee of the 31 January 2013 were approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the following amendments:-

The name of Peverly being changed to Peverley in the list of Officers present and in Minute number 13 - Page 16 the word 'inspiration' being replaced by the word 'innovation' in the first paragraph.

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J McCarthy declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(i) - Service and Performance Updates as a Director of the Bridgend Lifesavers Credit Union.

Councillor C Jones declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(i) - Service and Performance Updates as an independent advocate for older people.

19 SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report the purpose of which was to update Members on additional information requested at the previous meeting of the Committee and to advise of the performance in relation to the services provided to Elected Members.

He presented a table showing the number of Member referrals made to Directorates/Departments between 1 December 2012 and 28 February 2013 and the percentage of the total number of referrals each Directorate/Department received. He also showed the completion rates of member referrals raised from May 2012 to February 2013. Following a request from the Committee, the Head of Democratic Services stated that he would in future present a summary of Member referrals based on a completion rate of ten days.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that he had met with the Executive PA of V2C following a request made that officers discuss improvements to the timeliness and consistency of responses from V2C to Member referrals. He stated that the meeting was very positive and a greater understanding of each other's enquiry processes was achieved, which had enabled officers from both organisations to adapt existing procedures, improving partnership working and deliver an improved service to Members and the customers of V2C. V2C had now provided Democratic Services with a dedicated pathway for Member referrals, identified an informal point of contact to monitor the progress of referrals and established a formal escalation process. A follow up meeting would be held in May to confirm that the new process had been fully established and operating as planned, with a further review meeting being planned in three months to ensure that the intended outcomes had been achieved.

Members stated that some constituents were reluctant to contact V2C for various reasons and preferred for that their enquiry or complaint is pursued by an elected Member to represent them. The Head of Democratic Services stated that the recent meeting held with V2C resulted in an agreed pathway for Member referrals and a formal escalation process. V2C had indicated that it would be very difficult for them to address complaints and enquiries received from elected Members and would prefer that their customers go directly to them as they are the recipients of their services. V2C had indicated that referrals to elected Members were escalated and given a higher priority than enquiries received from V2C customers themselves. The Committee considered that V2C and the registered social landlords operating in the County Borough are accountable public bodies and that elected Members are there as a conduit for customers who may not be comfortable at representing themselves.

The Committee considered that it would be appropriate for the complaints manager of V2C to address Members due to the concerns the Committee had in Member referrals to V2C being addressed and difficulties customers may have in getting to their new offices. The Scrutiny Officer informed Members that the Community Renewal and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee had invited registered social landlords to its next meeting to discuss welfare reform and its impact on homelessness, which may give rise for Members to raise their concerns regarding the addressing of referrals to V2C raised on behalf of their constituents.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that the Chief Executive had raised issues of Members referrals with the Chief Executive of V2C.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that he had been informed by V2C of a pilot scheme that was being developed, in that it was planned that Councillor M Jones in liaison with the Housing Team Leader compile a brief guide to V2C contacts and services, provide some local information of possible development and on planned/cyclical maintenance programmes. It was hoped that this would be of practical use and improve communication

with customer service, as well as enhance Members' understanding of the challenges and issues faced by V2C and other social landlords. It was also proposed to develop a quarterly cycle of "area walkabouts" / estate meetings with Ward Members where both general and specific issues could be explored and discussed. This would also provide the opportunity for V2C to respond to particular challenges or issues encountered by them. Councillor Jones had requested that this Committee propose additional activities that could be included in the pilot scheme. It was hoped that the pilot would enhance working relationships between elected Members and V2C and in turn benefit the residents of the County Borough and could also be used as a model to take forward with other social landlords.

The Committee in welcoming the walkabouts considered that it would be appropriate to include the maintenance of public realm areas as part of the pilot.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that Members had previously expressed concerns at this Committee regarding the filling of potholes and the regularity with which the same potholes appeared to need repairing, the Highways Department had provided a briefing note to clarify its position in respect of potholes and their repair.

The Committee commented that the biggest issue was the manner of the repair of potholes and the value to the Council of repairs, as a number of repairs had to be repeated. The Committee requested a breakdown of repeat repairs to potholes. The Committee commented that the majority of the repairs to potholes were reactionary and that the Council would previously inspected the road surface for defects. The Committee considered that the system of repairs be changed to more systematic repairs rather than having to react to requests for the filling of potholes.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee that the Community Renewal and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee had established a Task and Finish Group on highway maintenance which had concluded that there were insufficient resources devoted to highway maintenance. The Council was borrowing money on behalf of the Welsh Government for the systematic repair of the highway network.

The Head of Democratic Services gave an update on the Member Development Programme, a pre-Council briefing on Domestic Abuse would take place on 1 May 2013. The Bridgend Lifesavers Credit Union, Independent Professional Advocacy and "Louder than Words" Charter would be considered as potential pre-Council briefings.

He also reported on the Member Development topics which had been provisionally planned but dates were awaiting their confirmation and on the topics for training sessions for Members of the Development Control Committee, which also had an open invitation for all Members to attend if they so wished. The Committee was also informed of the topics for Member development events requested to be undertaken which would be progressed. He stated that the WLGA had agreed to undertake an evaluation of the Member induction programme, which would consist of a representative of the WLGA facilitating a focus group meeting with approximately eight elected Members from Bridgend. All aspects of the induction would be considered and independently assessed and the Head of Democratic Services requested that Members inform him should they wish to participate in the Focus Group.

The Scrutiny Officer reported on an update on the WAO improvement study which aimed at improving standards of scrutiny within Councils by means of a self-evaluation exercise and facilitated by peer learning review. Since the last meeting of the Committee, the Bridgend Learning Exchange Team had observed two Scrutiny Committee meetings at Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, whilst Cardiff's Learning Exchange Team had observed meetings of the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Feedback from those

visits had been generally constructive with all participants finding the experience interesting and beneficial. The study will conclude by means of a further regional event due to be held on 12 April 2013 where Councils would be able to share their experiences of peer review and discuss how they intend to modify their self-evaluation exercises as a consequence.

The Scrutiny Officer also reported that the Committee had been informed at its previous Committee meeting of the intention to put forward a joint proposal between Bridgend and Swansea scrutiny sections to access the Welsh Government's Scrutiny Development Fund. Discussions were on-going at officer level on the proposal to undertake a joint scrutiny project aimed at assessing and addressing the likely impact of Welfare Reform. A bid was also being discussed with five other local authorities and the Centre for Public Scrutiny to develop a model for a joint scrutiny of the Central South Consortium.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that an internal recruitment to the post of Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny had commenced and the backfilling of a Scrutiny Officer post would occur.

The Head of Democratic Services also reported that he and the Chairperson of the Committee and Training and Development Officer had attended a Member Support and Democratic Services Chairperson network on 19 March 2013 at which it received an update on the recent Welsh Government Cabinet re-shuffle, the Local Democracy (Wales) Bill, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Electoral Reform Society Councillor Survey. It received an overview on the current position regarding webcasting, remote attendance and websites for community and town councils. It also received an update on One Voice Wales on the developing role of community and town councils and an update on the key messages emerging from the work being undertaken by the Welsh Local Government Association with local authorities in developing personal development reviews.

RESOLVED: That Democratic Services Committee:-

- (1) Noted the referral statistics and that Democratic Services will continue to work with all organisations to improve the Member referral process and the reporting of future statistics referred to referrals completed in a ten day period.
- (2) Noted the proposals to enhance the community pilot and include the maintenance of public realm areas.
- (3) Noted the response from the Highways Department in relation to potholes and the Committee requested a breakdown of the cost of refilling potholes.
- (4) Noted the planned Member Development Programme and that advocacy for older people be included in the Programme.
- (5) Noted the project and All Wales Updates.

20 **MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTIONS**

The Head of Democratic Services reported on the revised Member Role Descriptions for the consideration of the Committee, requested that the Committee propose and agree any amendments required and confirm the submission of the agreed Member Role Descriptions to Council for approval. He stated that Member Role Descriptions provide a framework which describes the purpose, activities and responsibilities of each of the roles that Councillors may undertake during their term of office. Member Role Descriptions will also assist elected Members during the personal development review process to identify any support that may be required to fulfil those roles effectively.

He stated that Council had approved the adoption of the existing Member Role Descriptions at its meeting on 23 June 2010 and the WLGA Charter achieved by the Council also in 2010 did not require any further use of member role descriptions other than to be approved and act as reference documents. The introduction of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and its subsequent impact on the WLGA Charter, a review of Member Role Descriptions had been undertaken. The current WLGA Charter required that Member Role Descriptions should not only be approved by Council but are used as part of the Personal Development Review process and used to clarify the roles of individual elected Members, particularly those appointed to senior salary posts. It was proposed that the primary Member Role Description be that of the Ward Member, which replaced the original elected Member Role Description. The document was made up of several sections which would be personalised to reflect the activities that are undertaken by each elected Member. Each key role undertaken by a Councillor would be identified in the personalised Member Role Description and have an associated Member Role Description and Members would be requested to date and sign their role descriptions portfolio. It was proposed that the completed portfolios be scanned and published on the Council's website and linked from the individual Councillors webpage and updated when all appointments or responsibilities of an individual Councillor change.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that the revised role descriptions had been developed from the model role descriptions produced by the WLGA and tailored to the requirements of the roles undertaken by Councillors within this Council. He stated that role descriptions for outside bodies were not available and a generic outside bodies role description guidance had been provided, where outside bodies do not currently have specific role descriptions, Members appointed to those outside bodies would be requested to work with a body to which they are appointed and the Democratic Services Team to provide or develop a relevant role description.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Committee:

- (1) Approved the revised Member Role Descriptions and the role description be amended in Appendix 1 in that it be re-titled "Elected Ward Member", the following added to Appendix 1 under the sub-heading making decisions and overseeing Council performance "to act within the budgetary framework of the Council" and the following words be added to the Role Description for the Leader "to appear before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within the portfolio.
- (2) Noted the outside bodies guidance.
- (3) Approved the use of the individual portfolio method proposed for the compilation of Member Role Description for each individual Councillor.
- (4) Approved subject to (1) and (3) above that the revised Role Descriptions and the method of compilation for each elected Member be submitted to Council for approval on 1 May 2013.
- (5) Approved that a School Governor Role Description be drafted for approval.

21 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

The Committee received a presentation by the Head of Democratic Services and Training and Development Officer on proposals for the introduction of a Personal Development Review (PDR) process to be made available to all elected Members. There were three

template options for consideration by the Committee with a recommendation on the Personal Development Review process to be made to the next meeting of Council.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that the Committee at its previous meeting on 31 January 2013 had recommended to Council that a submission be made for the Standard Charter Award as part of the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development. That report identified the need to provide a PDR process which could be offered to all Members and must be undertaken by all senior salary holders in order to achieve the Charter. The Head of Democratic Services and Training and Development Officer had consulted with representatives of the WLGA and other local authorities in Wales to determine a suitable PDR process to be adopted in Bridgend.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that the key elements of the PDR process identified in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 intend that a local authority must make available to each Member of the Authority an annual review of the Members training and development needs and this review must include an opportunity 'to discuss' with a person who is, in the opinion of the Authority, suitably qualified to provide advice about the training and development needs of a Member. The effective use and completion of the PDR process will enable the Authority to meet its requirements in accordance with the measure and secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Members. In addition to this requirement, the WLGA Charter had determined that all senior salary holders must undertake the PDR process. It was also proposed that the interview part of the PDR process be undertaken by suitably trained elected Members, who understand the roles and responsibilities of other elected Members.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that there were three PDR interview template options available:-

- Comprehensive Personal Development Review Document;
- Intermediate Personal Development Review Document;
- Personal Development Review Document.

He highlighted the requirements of each of the templates and the processes to be undertaken to introduce PDRs together with the training requirements to be provided for reviewees and separately for the reviewers. It was proposed that the responsibility for identifying those elected Members that would act as reviewers be undertaken by each of the political groups, who would also determine how they wished to pair or match reviewers and reviewees within their group. Group Leaders were requested to liaise with the Head of Democratic Services regarding their preference of a reviewer to undertake their PDR. A suggested option for the identification of reviewers was outlined to the Committee, which gave a range of options which could be tailored to suit the needs of the political group and the individuals concerned. It was also proposed that the Chief Executive of the WLGA undertake the review of the Leader of the Council, given their close working relationship.

The Head of Democratic Services reported on the deadlines required to meet the deadlines for the submission for the WLGA Charter, the approval of the PDR process, its implementation and successful completion of PDRs for the senior salary holders.

The Training and Development Officer informed the Committee of the requirements of achieving the different levels of WLGA Charter and that the WLGA had informed the Council that it would be willing to accept a submission from the Council for the Good Practice and Innovation Award. In the event of the Council being successful with this submission, it would be the first local authority in Wales to receive the award following the introduction of the Measure.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Committee:

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- (1) Selected the Personal Development Review document template attached as Appendix 3 as the vehicle for commencing the PDR process in Bridgend County Borough Council.
- (2) Approved the proposed activities and timescale shown in the report.
- (3) Confirmed that the proposed PDR process be recommended to Council at its meeting on 1 May 2013 for approval and implementation as outlined in the report.

22 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report on proposed items to be considered by the Committee at its subsequent meetings. He also informed the Committee that he would shortly be presenting a paper to the Corporate Management Board recommending the procurement of a committee administration system for Democratic Services which would modernise the teams systems and enhance facilities for Members.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Committee approved the Work Programme appended to the report.

The meeting closed at 4.05pm.