

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON THURSDAY, 11 JULY 2013 AT 2.00PM

Present:-

Councillor J H Tildesley, MBE - Chairperson

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

Officers:-

G P Jones	- Head of Democratic Services
H Lazarus	- ICT Support Manager
R Harries	- Scrutiny Officer
M A Galvin	- Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Observer:-

T Richardson

23 WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting, and in particular student T Richardson who had been shadowing him for the past week, and the new Member on the Committee, Councillor C E Smith.

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officer for the reasons where given:-

Councillor L Ellis	- Other Council Business
Councillor R E Young	- Unwell
R Peverley	- Other Council Business

25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee dated 17 April 2013 be approved as a true and accurate record.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson advised that Councillor Ellis, even though he was not present at the meeting, had made certain recommendations on Agenda Item 4 which had been shared with all Members of the Committee. The Chairperson confirmed that Cllr Ellis would be required to declare a prejudicial or personal interest in this item and complete the relevant declaration of interest form.

27 ELECTED MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to consider the draft 'Elected Member Learning and Development

Strategy' (attached at Appendix 1); propose any appropriate amendments to this Strategy as deemed necessary, and that it be in turn referred to Council for approval at its next ordinary meeting.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that at its ordinary meeting on 6 March 2013, Council approved the Authority's intention to make a submission for the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Charter for Member Support and Development.

He stated that the Member Learning and Development Strategy had been drafted to provide a framework which set out the structure of Elected Member Learning and Development from their election and during their term of office.

The report confirmed that the Strategy was divided into the following five phases:-

1. Administration - to establish the newly Elected Members within the Council;
2. The Essentials - to provide Elected Members with sufficient knowledge to prepare them to undertake their initial role in the support of Council business;
3. The Core Functions - to provide Elected Members with the knowledge and skills to enable them to undertake their core functions as Elected Members in their wards and on the committees they are appointed to;
4. Identifying the needs of the individual Councillors - the provision of Personal Development Reviews (PDR) with either an Elected Member peer or with assistance from suitably trained officers as soon as possible. This will be "dovetailed" with Member Mentoring and the use of the Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) process.
5. Continuing Development:- to provide Members with knowledge and skills related to leading the community, working with external partners developing those individual and specialist requirements identified within the PDR process and learning and development identified by the Democratic Services Committee.

The Head of Democratic Services added that a key component in the successful delivery of the Strategy, was to encourage every individual elected Member to actively engage with the various Member Development processes as explained in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

The report further explained that it was envisaged that the Strategy and associated annual budget, would facilitate a total of 11 monthly development opportunities, i.e:-

- 6 events being provided by external facilitators;
- 2 events delivered on a regional basis;
- 3 events being provided by Directorates linked to their services.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that there would be support for individual Member training activities, with this being agreed by political Group Leaders and co-ordinated by himself. He added that identified training needs would be limited to the allocated budget. Activities could be provided either internally by the Authority or externally by specialist providers. The Head of Democratic Services added that training activities identified during the Personal Development Review (PDR) process would be shared with the Democratic Services Committee.

The Head of Democratic Services referred Members to page 11 of the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy, and information regarding training and development, and how this would be resourced. He emphasised that the budget for this was modest, i.e. in the region of £15k per year.

The new Member on the Committee advised Member that he had been impressed with both the level and quality of Member training he had received as part of the Member Development Induction process since he had become a Member following the bi-election in the Llangwydd and Brynhyfryd ward.

A Member welcomed the report, and he noted that training would be tailored to suit Members differing needs and requirements. He did consider however, that the majority of Councillors would benefit from training in ICT in order to improve their general IT skills. He was informed that this was something that the newly formed Elected Member ICT Forum was to look at in accordance with the proposed intentions identified during the visit of Independent Remuneration Panel to the Authority. It was queried whether it was the intention long term, in conjunction with Members receiving further such training, to reduce the distribution of hard copy agendas and reports for formal Committees.

The Head of Democratic Services advised, that Members had been forwarded Personal Development Review questionnaires to complete, and a section of the form highlighted any training requirements they were interested in receiving, and though only three forms had been returned to date, one of these had highlighted a need for further IT training.

He added that when the forms were all returned, he would look areas of training Members had highlighted, including training in IT on a 1:1 basis in order that they may enhance their basic skills. From this Members could then be trained to a more advanced level perhaps in the form of being trained as a group.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that a report of the Independent Remuneration Panel would be available for consultation in a month or so, and this report may identify more prescriptive training for Members.

In terms of a reduction in the distribution of hard copy agendas and reports, he added that the Workwise Team had been looking as part of their service area reviews, to reduce the amount of paper documents circulated by departments as part of a cost cutting exercise, and that in the not too distant future, there may be a directive for Members to increase their access to electronic documentation, and to make reference to these at formal committee meetings, as opposed to relying on paper copies. This could be achieved by projecting agendas and reports at Committee meetings through the use of a projector and screen.

The ICT Support Manager added that limited resources only allowed for three designated ICT Engineers to give direct support to Members and Officers of the Council, however, upon request, he could accommodate a more personal form of IT training for Members, including on a 1:1 basis. This could be achieved by Members logging a ticket with the ICT Service Desk specifying their individual training requirements.

A Member asked if increased use of social media, for example, such as the use of Facebook, Twitter and Flickr would be available to Members in the future.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that this topic had recently been the subject of debate by the Community Safety and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that it was on the Democratic Services Committee's Forward Work Programme. He added that the Authority was looking to put in place a Social Media Policy in accordance with guidance received from the WLGA. Members and Officers who wished to use sites such as listed above would undertake training and then be set up on the appropriate accounts.

The Social Media Policy, after being considered by the Committee in draft format, would then be referred to Cabinet and/or Council for adoption. Due to the risks associated with the use of social media sites, Members and Officers would have to complete appropriate training in advance of being set-up on these type of sites.

A Member felt that the Council had an over stringent policy in relation to ICT, given that there were a considerable number of sites on the web that could not be accessed through the Council's network due to over robust security restrictions.

The ICT Support Manager confirmed that the Council were in the process of introducing a new web filtering system that would allow users of the Council's website increased access to internet sites.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (1) Considered the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy attached to the report at Appendix 1.
- (2) Endorsed the submission of the agreed Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy to Council for approval at its meeting on 24 July 2013.

28 SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report, which updated the Committee on the additional information requested at its previous meeting, and to advise of the performance and updates in relation to the services provided to Elected Members by Departments of the Council and other organisations.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report, outlined a table which contained information on service performance with regard to Member Referrals made to Directorates/Departments between 1 March - 31 May 2013, together with the percentage of the total number of referrals that each Directorate/Department received. The Head of Democratic Services pointed out to Members that it was worth noting that over 58% of these were referrals made to the Street Scene Department of the Communities Directorate.

Paragraph 4.1.3 of the report then outlined in table format the completion rates of Member Referrals raised between 1 May 2012 - 30 April 2013, and this reflected that over 97% of referrals were completed within this period.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that all such referrals received an initial response within the agreed 10 day period, with data indicating that 60% of referrals being completed within 10 working days, and over 80% completed within 20 working days. This corresponded with the summary of completed referrals over month long periods reported previously.

He explained however, that some referrals were of a more complex nature, and therefore unlikely to be completed within a 10 day period, such as those relating to pot holes, derelict houses, traffic calming measures or environmental health investigations etc.

Paragraph 4.1.7 of the report then gave a number of other reasons as to when the 10 day completion rate for referrals was adversely affected, and the Head of Democratic Services expanded upon these.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that a report would be submitted to the next Committee meeting, confirming the accuracy of the reporting tools behind the 10 day completion rate and giving further assessment on the reasons why certain referrals were taking longer than 10 days to complete, whilst others were not.

The next section of the report gave information regarding proposals for the Member Development Programme, and details regarding forthcoming pre-Council briefings. The

Head of Democratic advised verbally that the Independent Professional Advocacy Session scheduled for 24 July 2013 would now be held on 16 October 2013.

Paragraph 4.2.6 of the report then gave details of up and coming Member Development topics, whilst paragraph 4.2.7 listed topics identified for possible inclusion in the Member Development Programme.

Paragraph 4.3.1 then gave details of training sessions that related to the Development Control Committee and the Head of Democratic Services confirmed that these sessions were available for non-Members of the Development Control Committee, and that any such Member wishing to attend these sessions, should contact the Group Manager - Development.

The next part of the report, alluded to an evaluation of the Member Induction Programme initiated by the WLGA. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that details of this evaluation had only recently been received, and he would forward this onto Committee Members accordingly outside of the meeting.

He next expanded on some extracts from the above, and in terms of the quality of delivery of the Programme, the WLGA had commented that this was broadly seen as good from both local staff and external facilitators, however, not all the external facilitators were used to deliver to an audience of Members. It was also commented upon that Members appreciated the interactive nature of much of the training. He added that it was also considered that:-

- Refresher training on the Code of Conduct should be held annually and also be extended to Town and Community Councillors;
- It would be useful to have half term holidays included in Members calendars;
- Opportunities for e:learning would be welcomed;
- Advice from the Human Resources Department on employment law would be helpful.

Paragraph 4.5 of the report then included updates on the Authority's scrutiny function, and particularly with respect to the Wales Audit Office Improvement Study; the Scrutiny Development Fund and the Ministerial Visit, where following a presentation from certain Council Members and Officers, the Minister for Local Government and Government Business had advised that Bridgend County Borough Council were an exemplar in terms of its Scrutiny function, and recommended that other local authorities follow their practices and procedures.

Paragraph 4.8 of the report then gave an update regarding the Local Service Board (LSB) Scrutiny Panel, whilst paragraph 4.9 confirmed information in respect of the WLGA Charter submission update covering:-

- Preparations for the submission of a bid for the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development;
- The completion and submission of Personal Development Reviews (PDR's);
- The submission of Members draft Annual Report.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that Officers from departments were meeting to review the finalised drafts of these in early August, and that it was proposed that the Chairperson of the Democratic Services Committee reviews the finalised Charter documents, to ensure their completeness prior to full submission in September.

A Member pointed out that it would be helpful in terms of Member referrals, if all Departments who replied on these applied the same consistency by not only displaying the

ticket number, but also sending back the original referral in order that Members could see the personal contact details of their constituent, and the subject matter of the referral, etc.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that he would look into this issue through the IT Department, and possibly put in place a procedure whereby the contact details of the constituent is specified in the relevant part of the referral form as a matter of course.

A Member also noted that on occasions referrals are sometimes closed before they are fully concluded or resolved.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that if such an occasion arises Members are able to reinstate the referral using the original ticket reference number, and the process would recommence from the date of the original referral.

In terms of the topics identified for possible inclusion in the Member Development Programme shown in paragraph 4.2.7 of the report, a Member asked if a further topic could be scheduled on the subject of Age Concern: Advocacy for Older People.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that he would accommodate this suggested further item.

A Member asked if successful achievement of Charter Status for the Authority was dependent upon all Members completing and submitting their Annual Reports.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that whilst under the Charter there was a requirement to request Members to submit their Annual Reports, successful achievement of the Charter was not dependent upon Members completing and returning Annual Reports.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Committee:

1. Noted the referral statistics and the fact that Democratic Services Officers will work with other Directorates and Departments to confirm the accuracy of the Member referrals reporting tools and assess the types of referrals that are taking longer than 10 days to complete.
2. Considered the Member Development opportunities shown in paragraphs 4.2 – 4.2.7 of the report, and:
 - Identified a further topic for inclusion in the Member Development Programme that would benefit all Members, namely Age Concern: Advocacy for Older People activities that have not yet been scheduled.
 - prioritised the pre-Council briefings and member development activities that have not yet been scheduled.
3. Noted the Scrutiny and WLGA Charter Submission updates.

29 **THE MEMBER ZONE**

The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report together with an accompanying power point presentation by the Head of Democratic Services on the subject of the Member Zone.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that the Member Zone was developed to provide elected Members with a dedicated Intranet, where they were able to access information that would facilitate them when undertaking their role. Access to this facility was limited to Councillors and a few members of staff in Democratic Services, who updated the content of the Member Zone through Microsoft Sharepoint software.

Paragraph 3.2 of the report gave details of areas that the Member Zone was linked to on the Council's Intranet. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed, that as part of the WLGA Charter submission there was a requirement for the provision of an information portal for Elected Members, and in view of the fact that the effectiveness of the content of the Member Zone had not been reviewed since the local government election 2012, (and due to the plans to transfer it to another software platform), he confirmed that now was an opportune time for Committee Members to review the content of the Member Zone before implementing any planned software changes, they may feel are required.

The Head of Democratic Services then proceeded to give Members an overview of the Member Zone so as to show its full extent of functions and facilities.

Following conclusion of the presentation, the Chairperson considered that it would be helpful for Members and their constituents, if the front page of the Member Zone displayed an emergency contact number of the Council out of normal operating hours.

The Head of Democratic confirmed that he would look into this request.

Members noted that training on the Mapping System was required within the immediate future.

The Head of Democratic Services then confirmed that the Scrutiny Timebank facility, of which the Scrutiny Section were formerly the lead Authority, had since been passed on to CSPS and was now referred to as "Scrutiny Connect".

Members also suggested that it may be useful, if contact details for the Glamorgan Gazette and the GEM could be added to the media link itemised on this web page.

A Member asked if they could obtain access to the Member Zone via OWA.

The ICT Support Manager confirmed that this was possible through the Internet Explorer/Browser on their personal PC or Smartphone via the URL System. It could be accessed via the BCBC network by firstly entering in their user name and password.

RESOLVED: That the demonstration on the Member Zone be noted, and that Officers consider the recommendations of Members detailed above, in order to enhance the content, facilities and functionality of these web pages.

30 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to inform the Democratic Services Committee of the proposed items that will be considered at its subsequent meetings.

The proposed items that comprised the Work Programme were outlined at Appendix 1 to the report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered and accepted the items that comprised the Work Programme, appended to the report of the Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services report.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm