

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN  
COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON THURSDAY, 13  
MARCH 2014 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	R E Young
R C Jones	C E Smith	

Officers:

G P Jones - Head of Democratic Services  
J Monks - Democratic Services Officer - Committees

56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members and Officers due to work commitments:

Councillor J C Spanswick  
Councillor D B F White  
Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny  
ICT Support Manager

57 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014 were approved as a true and accurate record.

58 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

59 SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to inform the Committee of the performance and updates in relation to services provided to Elected Members. At the previous meeting of the Committee, Members raised a number of queries on the provision of support to elected Members, which were then passed to the relevant departments and organisations for clarification and to provide further information.

Member Referrals

The Head of Democratic Services referred Members to paragraph 4 and reported that 70% of all referrals related to the Communities Directorate. The total number of completed referrals during the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014 amounted to 396. At the time the report was published, the February reporting period for referrals had not completed the 10 day cycle; therefore the percentage of completed referrals

was not as high as usual. The percentage of completed referrals for the municipal year to date was 93.76%.

He reported that it was his intention to present proposals for changes to the referrals system. However, the proposals from the Communities Directorate had significant implications for performance monitoring and the way they were reported. He informed the meeting that until a suitable solution could be found the proposals would be not be presented to the Committee.

Members considered the current system to be satisfactory and expressed their concerns at any possible changes. One Member advised that colleagues in some other local authorities had commented that this Authority had the preferred system.

### **Member Development**

The Head of Democratic Services reported on the forthcoming pre-Council Briefings:

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014 - Mental Health Update

30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 - Development of Social Enterprises in Bridgend and the changes to funding - to be presented by the Head of Regeneration and Development

28<sup>th</sup> May 2014 - Community Transport - to be presented by the Transportation Policy and Strategy Officer, together with a representative from the OTED Community Transport Scheme

The presentations due to take place on the 25<sup>th</sup> June and 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 were not yet confirmed and the update on the Convergence Project was still provisional.

The two topics shown under paragraph 4.2.4 of the report had been requested, together with the following additional topics:

- An update on potholes (requested by the Cabinet Member – Communities);
- Young Carers in the Borough;
- An update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to be presented at the meeting of the Committee in September;
- Transgender residents of Bridgend.

Members requested a pre-Council Briefing from “Wood B” a work related wood machining project set up in Tondu Enterprise Centre, where COASTAL participants develop wood machining skills. Members further requested that the Committee be kept informed regarding the current refurbishment work in Civic Offices.

The Head of Democratic Services informed Members of the schedule of Member Development Activities for March and April 2014. He advised that Understanding School Performance training had been planned in response to a recommendation from the latest Estyn report. This session would provide Members with a good understanding of school performance issues including the outcomes and impacts identified by the data. He reported that 30% of Members had attended the second session, and only 22% had attended both sessions. He advised that Performance and Management Officers were present at those sessions, and all individual feedback forms had been returned to the Central South Consortium.

Members had mixed views on the training that had been provided by the Consortium. One Member recommended the session on interpreting data, which she had found to

be informative. Another Member commented that a Member could not be appointed as a school governor until they had attended school performance data training. One Member commented that the content of the sessions would need to be looked at, as it had proved laborious in the way some had been presented. Another Member commented that the training seemed to deal with issues of a dubious nature, where schools had no solution to the problems being raised. The Head of Democratic Services advised that this was the first time the Consortium had delivered training to Members and the format and content would be discussed and reviewed to make the topic more accessible for Members.

He reported that the training on risk management would need to be rescheduled due to the Corporate Improvement Manager being unavailable for some time due to an accident. He then referred to the round-robin event scheduled to take place on the 8<sup>th</sup> May and advised that the events covered three topics: Ward profiles, PACT and SARA problem solving, and Data Protection. These subjects did not warrant a full Member Development Session and suggested that this session could be extended to four topics if Risk Management was included. He explained that each of the topics would commence at the same time in different committee rooms. An Officer from the Local Service Board (LSB) team would be available to advise Members on Ward profiles and the Community Safety Team, together with a Police Officer would be available to discuss developments in PACT.

One Member asked that as the South Wales Police were considering the viability of PACT meetings and whether they should continue if Members would be canvassed to establish whether it was worthwhile continuing with those meetings. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that he would make enquiries and report back.

He informed the Committee that to date no Members had signed up for the Data Protection e-learning model, which they had been asked to complete by May 2014, prior to renewing their data registration. He advised that a Legal Officer would be available to answer any questions Members may have, and the programme would take approximately 30 minutes to complete on laptops which will be set up for Members' use.

The Head of Democratic Services informed Members that the Central South Consortium had requested a return visit in June 2014 to deliver a development session on the outcomes for learners. He then referred to paragraph 4.2.8 of the report and advised that he had been in touch with several of organisations regarding training for Members in respect of Social Media. He reported that one provider was a former Councillor in Birmingham Council, who now worked for the WLGA as a training provider. The cost for these externally provided sessions would be between £800 and £1,200 per session.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that Member Development had a budget of £15,000 which was underspent this year. It was hoped to develop more regional training for Members and therefore the level of funding for Member Development was planned to be retained.

The Head of Democratic Services informed Members that the Democratic Services Officer - Members had been tasked to draft the basic data for Members' Annual Reports and to discuss the content with each member individually. He advised that this was intended to speed up the completion time for Annual Reports.

He reminded Members that a report on webcasting and remote attendance was presented to Council in October 2013 and if implemented, Members would need some training with regard to being viewed on camera. He informed the Committee that the Annual Meeting of Council was intended be recorded on DVD as a pilot for webcasting, and a report would be submitted to Council in April as to how this would be progressed. He advised that recording the Holocaust event earlier in the year had proved to be a valuable learning experience.

#### ICT Update

The Head of Democratic Services reported that the Modern.Gov Committee administration system had been installed and initial training had been carried out with the Democratic Services Team. He commented that the system appeared to be user friendly, with a huge capacity to undertake a number of different tasks. He believed that the outcome would be positive not only for Members but also for the public. It was intended that the Committee would be provided with a Modern.Gov update in due course.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee:

1. Noted the report.
2. Identified priority topics to be scheduled for pre-Council Briefings.
3. Determined the priority for Member Development events, as listed under paragraph 4.2.9 of the report, in order for them to be scheduled between May and September 2014.

#### 60 **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to clarify the Terms of Reference of the Democratic Services Committee and also its Sub-Committee. The Committee was appointed by Council in May 2012 and its first meeting took place in October 2012, to date the Committee had met on eight separate occasions.

Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Committee is permitted to establish Sub-Committees which may discharge its functions, with the Chairperson of those Sub-Committees being appointed by the Democratic Services Committee. Council approved the establishment of a Sub-Committee to consider family absence entitlement for elected Members, at its meeting in December 2013.

Members were asked to consider the number of meetings they wished to hold in a calendar year. Following some discussions it was agreed to reduce the number of meetings to three in each year.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the terms of reference of the Democratic Services Committee and its Sub-Committee.

#### 61 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to inform the Committee of the proposed items to be considered at its subsequent meeting detailed at Appendix 1 of the report. It was anticipated that the Committee would be presented with a report on the Social Media Protocol at its next meeting; however the policy was currently

unavailable as it was being revised. He reported that the Information Governance Group was due to meet at the end of March to decide whether or not to allow Members to use messaging when using Social Networking through their Bridgend County Borough Council accounts. If the decision was not to allow this, it would mean a separate server at an additional cost to the Authority. One Member commented that other local authorities permitted access to social media to both staff and elected Members and had not experienced any problems.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee considered the Work Programme appended to the report.