

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - 6 NOVEMBER 2013

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON THURSDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 2013 AT 2.00PM

Present:-

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

Officers:-

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

39 APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIRPERSON

RESOLVED: In the absence of the Chairperson, it was moved, duly seconded and unanimously agreed that Councillor Green be appointed Chairperson for the meeting.

Councillor Green took the Chair.

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Councillor R Thomas	-	No reason given
Councillor C E Smith	-	Constituency business
Councillor D B F White	-	Work commitments

41 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on 12 September 2013, be approved as a true and accurate record.

42 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor L Ellis declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4(ii) report on the Work Programme, as Chairperson of ADHD, Bridgend which was mentioned in this report.

43 SERVICES AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report the purpose of which was to advise the Committee performance and certain other updates in relation to services provided to Members.

The first section of the report referred to the processing of Member Referrals within the quarter of 1 July - 30 September 2013.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that of the 812 referrals processed in this period, 747 had been processed fully. 62 referrals had taken longer to process than would be usually the case, due to the fact that they needed to be investigated by more than one

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Directorate of the Council, and/or could not be fully processed within the normal time scales as they were subject to investigation governed by statutory legislation.

Members raised the point of there being a more consistent approach being adopted in relation to the closure of referrals following their completion.

The Head of Democratic Services suggested that Members be given a window period of 5 days from a referral being actioned in order within which to officially close the referral, and Members agreed that this would be useful if introduced.

A Member asked if the cost implications relating to referrals could be reduced by Members making these through their smart phones.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that this was something that was going to be looked into by the Members ICT Forum.

A Member made the point that just because a Councillor makes a considerable number of referrals this did not always portray a true reflection that he or she may be busier than a Councillor sometimes contacted departments directly when they knew who dealt with a particular subject matter, rather than making a referral, a practice which again could question the accuracy of the number of referrals made by Members.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that the Gazette asked for information regarding Member salaries, their attendance figures of meetings and details of Member Referrals. If the Council did not provide such information as a matter of course, then the press or public could request it under the Freedom of Information Act. He added that whilst it was a directive of the Local Government Measure 2011 to provide information on Member attendance figures and salaries, there was no such directive to provide information to the press regarding the number of referrals made by Members and that if Members so wished, making this public could be revisited in the future.

The Head of Democratic Services concluded this part of the report, by advising that it was intended that the following benchmark for referrals now be set at 45% of referrals being completed within 10 days, with overall, the percentage of completed referrals averaging between 90% - 95% at the end of any three month period.

The Head of Democratic Services then made reference to the Member Development Programme and updated Members on the Pre-Council briefings which had been amended from those shown in Paragraph 4.2.3 of the report to that as follows:-

- 13 November 2013 - Mental Health Services Consultation Briefing (NHS) followed by MTFS update.
- 11 December 2013 - Independency Advocacy (for children)/ Adoption Service.
- 16 January 2014 - Private Rental Sector.

In terms of the topics for discussion as potential pre-Council briefings, Members felt that some of these should now take a priority, it was therefore suggested that Y Bont be scheduled before the Council meeting in February 2014, with ADHD and Mental Health being scheduled before the Council meetings in March and April 2014, in either order.

It was further suggested, that a workshop event be set up on a future date to consider the following topics:-

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- (i) Individual Electoral Registration
- (ii) Freedom of Information
- (iii) Ward Census Data

It was noted that there may not be future funding available to continue with Advocacy for Older People, however if there was, this topic would also be considered in due course.

The next part of the report outlined up and coming Member Development activities in relation to School Performance (two sessions in November) and Understanding Equalities and Diversity.

Paragraph 4.2.9 then detailed topics identified for possible inclusion in the Member Development Programme.

In terms of this list, and in order that they could be put in some order of priority so as to be scheduled between December 2013 and March 2014, Members put forward the following suggestions:-

- Social Media training was more important than just media training;
- A session on dealing with conflict (including vexacious letters/phone calls) should be convened as a matter of priority;
- Risk Management and Performance Management could be combined into one session;
- Supporting People Programme should also be prioritised.

The next part of the report confirmed up and coming Development Control Committee training sessions (which were open for all Members to attend) and the Head of Democratic Services pointed out that the topic scheduled before the committee meeting on 14 November 2013 had now been postponed.

The Head of Democratic Services then gave Scrutiny updates covering the following:-

- Spotlight on Scrutiny event (28 November 2013)
- Scrutiny Development Fund (SDF)

He then confirmed that a total of 34 draft Elected Member Annual Reports for 2012-13 had been submitted, and that the reminder had been sent to all Members to complete these, should they so wish.

The Head of Democratic Services then gave a résumé upon Elected Member Personal Development Reviews (PDR's) for 2012-13. He advised that all 20 Councillors in positions that paid a senior salary had undertaken PDRs and that the Council was able to achieve the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development. To date, 42 (78%) of the possible 54 PDR's had been received that included all 20 senior and civic salary holders.

He then outlined information regarding ICT issues affecting Members, and the report confirmed that a meeting of the Elected Member ICT Forum would be held on 5 December next to consider the items shown in paragraph 4.7.1 of the report.

The ICT Support Manager confirmed that in terms of the upgrade of the security software for Elected Members' laptops, just over 50% had been upgraded to date. In terms of the Net consent update regarding ICT Code of Conduct (6 simple rules) only 13 Members had signed up to this at the present time.

The final part of the report explained of increased functions to the role and remit of the Committee introduced by the Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013, and that

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the Committee would assess a report scheduled to be considered by Council at its December meeting on the subject of Family Absence.

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the report be noted, and that the following topics be scheduled for pre-Council briefings between February and April 2014:-
 - Y Bont - February 2014
 - Mental Health – March or April 2014
 - ADHD, Bridgend – March or April 2014
 - (2) That a workshop be arranged on a date to be agreed to cover the following topics:-
 - (i) Individual Electoral Registration
 - (ii) Freedom of Information
 - (iii) Ward Census Data
 - (3) That the following Member Development events be scheduled between December 2013 and March 2014:-
 - Dealing with Conflict
 - Social/other media training
 - Risk Management and Performance Management
 - Supporting People Programme

44 PROCUREMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MODERN.GOV

The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report, the purpose of which was to advise the Democratic Services Committee of the procurement and implementation of the Modern.Gov system during the 2013/14 financial year.

It was determined that a software package was required that would support the full range of service provision not only for Democratic Services but for other areas of the Authority. It was anticipated that the system would provide a central database which would support a wide range of functions including Forward Plans, Members information, decision monitoring and records (including minutes), call-ins and reports, that could be accessed by users.

The proposal and business case for the procurement of a committee administration system was presented to and subsequently approved by the Corporate Management Board and following this, Cabinet gave approval for the procurement of a suitable system, i.e. Modern.Gov.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that there were several types of systems available, but Modern.Gov was a popular choice, used by 165 councils and organisations in England and Wales.

Paragraph 4.2 of the report, then confirmed the facilities offered by Modern.gov and these covered the full spectrum of democratic activities including:-

- (1) Processing agenda, minutes and reports.
- (2) Co-ordination of various plans and programmes.
- (3) Enhancing the Members database/web system.
- (4) Additional miscellaneous facilities and functions.
- (5) Stellant replacement.
- (6) Support to the Council's corporate function.

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The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that it was anticipated that the scheduled timetable for implementation of Modern.gov would be as follows:

Oct 13	-	Preparation for procurement of the system
Nov - Dec 13	-	Technical installation and configuration (up to 8 weeks)
Jan 14	-	Training and implementation of core democratic functionality
Feb - Mar	-	Development, configuration and training of corporate functionality
31 Mar 14	-	Committee Administration operational

He added however, that the above timetable was aspirational and could be delayed slightly, though at latest he wanted it operational by the date of the Annual meeting of Council in May.

Finally, the Head of Democratic Services referred to the financial implications of the report, and advised that it had been planned that a current vacant post of Democratic Services Officer - Committees will fund the implementation of the Modern.Gov system. This has already been identified within the Medium Term Financial Plan. The procurement, implementation and maintenance of the Modern.Gov system will be met from the existing Legal and Regulatory Services budget.

A Member asked if there were ongoing costs associated with Modern.Gov, for example in the form of a subscription.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that there was, and this would be in the region of £7k per annum. He added that the contract was initially for a three year period. The initial outlay payment for Modern.Gov was £17k.

The ICT Support Manager added that there would be a saving also attached to the system, as a result of the de-commissioning of the Stellant system.

A Member felt that the Contract should have been longer than three years, given the costs associated with the acquisition of the system.

The Head of Democratic Services agreed with this, however, as there were possible proposals to re-organise local authorities in the longer term future, this was the reason why an initial three year contract had been agreed to.

RESOLVED: That Democratic Services Committee noted the plans for the procurement and implementation of the Modern.Gov Committee Administration system.

45 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services presented a report, which informed Members of the Committee of the proposed items put forward for consideration at future meetings.

The items for the next scheduled meeting in January 2014, were outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Head of Democratic Services suggested that an added item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting, on the subject of the Committees Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Service Committee considered and noted the Work Programme shown at Appendix 1 to the report.

The meeting closed at 3.40pm