

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON THURSDAY, 23 JANUARY 2014 AT 2.00PM

Present:-

Councillor J H Tildesley MBE - Chairperson

<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>
D K Edwards	M Reeves	J C Spanswick
R C Jones	C E Smith	R E Young
J R McCarthy		

Officers:-

G P Jones - Head of Democratic Services
A Rees - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

46 WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor J C Spanswick who was attending his first meeting of the Committee.

47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:-

Councillor C A Green - Other Council Business
Councillor R Thomas - Work commitments
Councillor D B F White - Unwell

48 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that in relation to Minute 43, the Council would not be publishing the number of referrals made by Members. The Head of Democratic Services also confirmed that in accordance with Minute 45 that he would add an item on Committees Terms of Reference to the Work Programme for the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee of 6 November 2013 be approved as a true and accurate record.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

50 OUTCOMES OF THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

The Head of Democratic Services advised the Committee on the outcomes of the Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) which had been undertaken and that during 2013, 43 Members approximately 80% had completed their PDR's which included all senior/civic salary holders. He stated that from the completed PDRs, a number of experienced Members identified that they would continue with their current practices and did not need additional support or specific development activities. However a majority of elected Members did identify topics which may form the basis of future member development

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events either as pre-Council briefings, monthly member development events or possible individual training activities.

He outlined the common themes which were highlighted as a result of the completed PDRs;

- Engaging with Communities;
- Developing Effectiveness at Council or in Committee Meetings;
- Enhancing their Personal Effectiveness as a Councillor;
- Making Better use of Existing Support.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that some of the development topics identified by Members were very specific and individual. Cost effective individual training would be identified to ensure these development needs were met.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that the 2014-15 PDR process would commence in May following the Annual Meeting of Council.

The Committee considered that the timescale for the process of completing PDRs in 2014-15 seemed reasonable but their completion was time consuming. The Committee also considered that it would be to the benefit of every Member if they were to complete PDRs.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee on the value of the process and whether it was the best use of resources given cutbacks in service, the Head of Democratic Services stated that the process of PDRs gave Members the opportunity for a discussion with their peers and also the potential to identify development needs where training and support could be given. The PDR process also gave evidence in order to provide Members with training and support. The Committee also considered that there was a need to monitor the PDR process once another cycle had been completed, in terms of it being value for money.

The Committee discussed the role of Member mentoring in that it had diminished as newer Members became more experienced.

In response to a request from the Committee, the Head of Democratic Services stated that he would make electronic copies of PDR forms available for completion for the forthcoming period.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that it was proposed to introduce multiple topics over the course of one day for training and development activities.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Committee noted the content of the report and identified modifications or improvements made to the process prior to the commencement of the 2014-15 PDR process.

51 SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL - UPDATE

The Head of Democratic Services reported on a proposal to review the Social Media Protocol for elected Members and to endorse the revision of the protocol for submission to Council. He stated that since the introduction of the protocol, three elected Members had expressed an interest in utilising opportunities offered by the use of the Social Media Protocol. Work had been ongoing to provide additional social media training for elected Members with an offer of attending a session provided by the WLGA in Neath Port Talbot on the 12 February 2014.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee of amendments to the protocol which had been proposed by elected Members which he had considered with the Council's

Marketing and Engagement Manager. He stated that the protocol would be available electronically on the Members Zone, with hyperlinks being used to provide direct access to related information from other policies and legislation. Members would also be provided with access to the Data Protection E-Learning module which had recently been developed by the Legal and Regulatory Services Department to undertake data protection training as part of their role as data controllers. He stated that the presentation and notes from the Social Media Training provided by the WLGA would also be made available on the Members Zone as a source of reference following attendance at the training events.

The Head of Democratic Services also informed the Committee that amendments had been submitted by one elected Member for consideration.

The Committee questioned the use of Council supplied IT equipment during election times. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that access to social media sites from Council supplied computer equipment would not be provided in the run up to an election.

In relation to elected Members having a presence on Facebook, the Head of Democratic Services advised that it would be preferable for elected Members to have separate Facebook accounts for their personal life so as not to detract from their role as a Councillor.

A Member of the Committee stated that he was also interested in utilising opportunities offered by the use of the social media protocol.

RESOLVED: That:-

- (1) The Democratic Services Committee considered the proposals for the amendment of the social media protocol for elected Members;
- (2) The revision of the protocol be deferred until the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee in order for the amendments proposed by Councillor M Jones to be considered in more detail.

52 SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report, the purpose of which was to update Members on performance in relation to the services provided to elected Members.

He presented a table which showed the number of Member referrals made to Directorates/Departments and external organisations between 1 October and 31 December 2013 and the percentage of referrals that each Directorate or Department received. He also reported on the completion rates of referrals and the current overall completion levels for each Directorate for the referrals raised during the period. He also reported on the overall completions statistics for referrals received between 1 May to 31 December 2013. He stated that consultation had begun with the Communities Directorate to determine how the Member referrals system can be improved. The Directorate had proposed possible methods for streamlining processes and had identified team leaders who would be responsible for the different types of referrals by service area. Discussions would continue with other Departments and it was anticipated that suggested changes to the referrals system would be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

Concern was expressed by Members of the Committee and the difficulty of tracking whether individual potholes had been refilled and a lack of response to street lighting referrals. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that the Group Manager Highways had confirmed that he would respond to all referrals. Members of the Committee were aware of the service cuts which the Communities Directorate had to make and that referrals were being dealt with in addition to Officers' day jobs. In addition, the

After Dark Team in the Communities Directorate no longer existed and the reporting of faulty street lights had fallen on Members to report. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that the ICT Forum would be looking at the feasibility of Members being issued with smart phones which had a GPS facility to enable the tracking of referrals.

The Head of Democratic Services also reported an update to the Member Development Programme and stated that the topics for inclusion in the Member Development Programme were anticipated to include regional or national topics. He outlined to the Committee the pre-Council briefings which had been scheduled as well as those potential briefings which had yet to be scheduled. The Committee was also informed of the topics for the forthcoming Member Development activities and those activities which were planned to be scheduled or for possible inclusion in the Member Development Programme. He requested the Committee determine the priority for the Member Development events to be scheduled between February and April 2014. He also reported on the planned Development Control Committee training sessions.

The Head of Democratic Services reported on an update on the Scrutiny function, in that a number of representatives from the Authority had attended a Spotlight on Scrutiny Wales Audit Office event in Cardiff on 28 November 2013. The event was extremely useful and examples of best practice on key aspects on Scrutiny were given. The Wales Audit Office had advised at the event that their report "Characteristics of Good Scrutiny" was anticipated to be published in March.

He also reported that there had been no further developments in respect of the draft Scrutiny Development Fund bid for the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Education Committee submitted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny to the Welsh Government on behalf of the constituent authorities. He stated that a draft bid had been developed by Swansea Council regarding "Community Resilience in response to Welfare Reform" and Officers were assessing the bid to ensure that it did not duplicate any work currently involved being undertaken by the Authority.

The Head of Democratic Services reported on the topics discussed at the second meeting of the Elected Members ICT Forum and as a result of that Forum a pre-Council briefing had been arranged for Members to receive a briefing on plans for the digital office on 5 March 2014. He also informed the Committee of the planned dates for future meetings of the ICT Forum.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Head of Democratic Services undertook to investigate the feasibility with the Head of Regeneration and Development of holding a site visit to view the delivery of convergence projects in Maesteg and Bridgend.

In relation to the potential pre-Council briefing on OTED (the Community Transport Provider for Bridgend), the Committee considered that there was a need for the Council to have a wider discussion on the wider use of community transport and requested that the Volunteer Drivers Group also be invited to the pre-Council briefing on community transport. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that he would confirm at the next meeting of the Committee as to what could be delivered at the pre-Council briefing on Community Transport.

The Committee considered whether the proposals for merging councils in Wales and how it would impact on service delivery in the future could be the subject of a pre-Council briefing. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that the recommendations of the Williams Commission on Local Government Reform in Wales would be submitted to the Welsh Government for decision and that he would speak to the Monitoring Officer and CMB on the feasibility of scheduling a pre-Council briefing on Local Government Reform should the Williams Commission report be accepted by the Welsh Government.

RESOLVED: That Democratic Services Committee noted the content of the report and identified the following topics to be scheduled for pre-Council briefings:-

30 April 2014 - SEWCED Project and Future Economic Opportunities for Social Enterprises in Bridgend.

28 May 2014 – Community Transport

17 September 2014 – Delivery of Convergence Projects

53 FAMILY ABSENCE - DEMOCRATIC SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE

The Head of Democratic Services reported a proposal to establish a Sub-Committee to consider issues relating to the family absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013. He stated that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 made available to Members of local authorities an entitlement to a period of family absence, during which a Member is entitled to be absent from local authority meetings. The Measure created an entitlement to five types of family absence, namely maternity absence; new born absence; adopters' absence; new adoption absence and parental absence.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that Council at its meeting on 11 December 2013 had approved changes to the Constitution and the establishment of a Sub-Committee of the Democratic Services Committee to undertake appeals in respect of family absence. The Sub-Committee would comprise three elected Members from the Democratic Services Committee and he outlined the remit of the Sub-Committee. He stated that it was unlikely that the Sub-Committee would have a significant workload.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that in order to ensure that any family absence issues arising for consideration by the Sub-Committee be dealt with in an effective and timely manner it was proposed that an ad-hoc Sub-Committee be formed as necessary by the Chairman of the Democratic Services Committee and two other Members of the Committee. Should the Chairman of the Democratic Services Committee be unable to participate in a Sub-Committee meeting, the Sub-Committee should be as politically balanced as possible and it would elect a chairperson in accordance with existing procedures.

RESOLVED: That the proposals for the establishment of the Democratic Services Sub-Committee be approved.

54 FAMILY ABSENCE - INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL CONSULTATION

The Head of Democratic Services reported on a proposal for the Committee to consider the proposals of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in respect of family absence and to make recommendations to Council prior to a response being made to the proposals.

He reported that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 made available to Members of a local authorities an entitlement of a period of family absence, during which a Member is entitled to be absent from the Measure created an entitlement to five types of family absence, namely maternity absence; new born absence; adopters absence; new adoption absence and parental absence.

He reported that the entitlement created by the Measure was subject to Members satisfying conditions prescribed by the Welsh Ministers in Regulations and that Council at its meeting on 11 December 2013 had approved changes to the Constitution to establish a Sub-Committee of the Democratic Services Committee to undertake appeals in respect of family absence.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that the Independent Remuneration Panel had issued a draft supplementary report in respect of family absence and was seeking responses to their proposals from all local authorities before 7 February 2014. The IRP had considered that an elected Member taking family absence would be entitled to retain their basic salary for a period of six months in accordance with the current regulations. However, there could be instances where the Member concerned had already accumulated absences prior to the commencement of an agreed family absence. He stated that potentially senior salary holders would be affected by absence taken under the regulations and proposals had been incorporated into the IRP's determinations. He outlined the determinations proposed by the IRP, together with the impacts of each of the determinations.

The Committee considered that the proposals from the IRP raised the question of equality of treatment in that Members may also have carer responsibilities for elderly relatives.

The Committee considered in relation to Determinations A and B, this would not change the current remuneration of Elected Members and the "6 month rule" would continue to be applied by the Authority. In relation to Determination C, the Authority welcomed the opportunity to be able to provide substitutes for senior salary holders during period of family absence and for those substitutes to be remunerated for the additional responsibilities that they undertake.

The Committee also considered that in relation to Determination D, this determination would not change the current remuneration of Elected Members. In relation to Determination F, the IRP will be provided with regular updates to the Authority's Schedule of Remuneration.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that he would e-mail the draft response of the Committee in advance of its being submitted to the IRP.

RESOLVED: That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to draft a response to the consultation on behalf of the Committee for approval by Council prior to its submission to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

55 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report on proposed items to be considered by the Committee at its subsequent meetings.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Service Committee approved the Work Programme appended to the report and added the Terms of Reference of Committees to the Work Programme to be reported to the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm