

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor JH Tildesley MBE Chairperson

Councillors:

DK Edwards  
CA Green  
P James  
RC Jones

Councillors:

JR McCarthy  
M Reeves  
C E Cmith  
R Young

Officers:

G P Jones – Head of Democratic Services

76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr E Venables due to childcare commitments.

77. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 2 October were approved as a true and accurate record subject to the inclusion of the apologies for Cllr DK Edwards who was on holiday and the removal of Cllr CE Smith as being in attendance.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

79. SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to advise the Committee on the performance and updates relating to the services provided to Elected Members.

He advised that the re-structure of Legal & Democratic Services which had taken place in order to meet the requirements of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was ongoing and outlined the changes. He explained that all committees were being requested to reduce the number of committee meeting where possible to assist in the achievement of the budget savings for the forthcoming year. He requested the views of the committee in respect of reducing the number of its meeting to 2 per year.

Members requested that where possible future committee meeting should avoid school holiday. It was suggested that since the introduction of the Leader and Cabinet system the business of Council had been dramatically reduced and therefore the number of its meetings could be reduced. The Head of Democratic Services explained that unfortunately meetings for regulatory committees may be required to meet in holiday periods but where possible committees could be scheduled to avoid holiday periods.

Members queried the developments being undertaken in respect of the scrutiny committees. The Head of Democratic Services advised that plans were progressing and it confirmed that the 5 scrutiny committees would remain with updated remits. The number of scrutiny committee meeting was expected to be 6 meetings per committee and this would be achieved with the effective management of the work programmes. Members agreed that the committee could meet only twice a year with the agenda for each committee having significant substance.

The Head of Democratic Services continued with an update of the performance in respect of elected member referrals. He advised that the 5 and 10 day completion rates were 48.11 and 71.88% respectively. Cllr CA Green requested that one of her referrals be followed up as it had been outstanding for over 10 weeks. The Head of Democratic Services would investigate and provide her with an update.

He advised the committee of the forthcoming member development proposals and the planned activities that had been scheduled. He added that with the recent reduction in funding to the WLGA and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) proposals for future funding and service delivery were currently being developed but it was likely that the level of support for Member Development activities from them will be significantly reduced from 31 Mar 15. He requested that the committee prioritise the delivery of the pre-council briefings and other events and suggested that topics be placed in priority order with priority 1 topics being dealt with in the next few months and the priority 2 topics being considered for subsequent sessions. After some debate it was agreed that the following activities be prioritised as follows:

Pre-Council Briefings:

<u>Priority or Proposed date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
18 Mar 15	- Dementia Awareness
28 Apr 15	- European Funding Briefing
1	- Supporting the Transgender Community
1	- Child Sexual Exploitation
1	- Bullying in Schools
2	- Local Transport Plan
2	- Lessons from Fukushima
2	- Dark Skies
2	- Domestic Violence update

Member Development activities

<u>Priority</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	- Young Carers
2	- Round Robin with possible topics to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elective Home Education</li><li>• Highways and depot Rationalisation</li><li>• Procurement Portal</li><li>• Data Protection</li><li>• Equalities Survey</li></ul>
3	- Dementia Champions
4	- Libraries Update

Members were also advised of the member development activities scheduled for the Audit Committee and for a joint Western Bay Scrutiny Seminar.

The Head of Democratic Services requested the committee's view on the survey shown at Appendix 1 of the report. He advised that the survey would be provided to all elected members and that the outcomes would be used to identify the appropriate frequency and timings for member development events over the next year. The committee provided feedback which would be incorporated into the survey before being circulated to all members. It was hoped that the Committee would be provided with the outcomes from the survey at its next meeting.

The Head of Democratic Services updated the committee on the progress being made in respect of Annual Reports and Personal Development Reviews, the Town and Community Council website grants, the agile working programme and the Independent Remuneration Panel's use of Bridgend's schedule of remuneration as a template for the whole of Wales.

He then advised the committee of the planned enhancements to the Modern.gov committee administration system and the planned implementation of webcasting for the Authority.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services noted the contents of the report, and;

- Prioritised the delivery of pre-Council briefings and member development activities as shown above;
- Approved the survey of member development activities timings to be circulated to all Elected Members for completion.
- Approved the reduction of scheduled meetings of the Democratic Services Committee to two per year

80. DEMOCRATIC DIVERSITY

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report which informed the Committee of the action plan being developed to take forward the diversification of democracy initiated by the Welsh Government's Expert Group on Local Government Diversity as set out in the "On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales" report.

He explained that the "On-Balance" report identified a number of recommendations to ensure that the people making decisions on behalf of the people they represent are in tune with their communities and reasonably reflect the diversity of the people they represent. He outlined the key recommendations for this Authority and described the action plan that had been developed.

He added that no additional funding had been made available by the Welsh Government and that detailed costings would be drawn up and a request for funding would be made to the Welsh Government.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Committee noted the report:

The meeting closed at 3.40 pm