

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 28 MAY 2015 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor JH Tildesley MBE – Chairperson

| | | | |
|----------|-------------|----------|----------|
| N Farr | CA Green | P James | RM James |
| RC Jones | JR McCarthy | G Thomas | |

Officers:

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Gary Jones | Head of Democratic Services |
| Andrew Rees | Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees |

81. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officers for the reasons so stated:

Councillor M Reeves – Work Commitment
Councillor E Venables – Child care commitments.

82. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

83. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 19 February 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record.

84. WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Head of Democratic Services reported on progress made with the implementation of webcasting for meetings of Council and Committees. He stated that the development of a live webcasting facility would enable greater engagement with the public, meet the requirements of diversifying democracy and some of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee Council on 30 April 2014 approved the recording and broadcasting of meetings and together with initial proposals to take forward the webcasting of meetings and to reduce the cost of its implementation and operation, the Council Chamber would be used for all webcasts. Work had been undertaken to improve the displays and update the presentation systems within the Council Chamber. A pilot webcast of a meeting of Council took place in November 2014 as a proof of concept.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that quotations were invited to provide 150 hours of webcasts over a three year period, which were assessed on a 60% quality and 40% cost basis. He stated that the supplier was awarded the contract and implementation plans put in place with installation to take place in early July 2015. This would then enable the Democratic Services team to set up, record and manage

webcasts, with the Development Control Committee on 23 July 2015 planned as a technical test for webcasting. Further meetings were planned to be webcast from September 2015, which would be publicised on the Council's social media sites.

The Head of Democratic Services highlighted a plan to webcast each of the Council's public formal Committees at least once before 30 April 2016. He stated that the Development Control Committee has a high level of public interest and it was proposed that every meeting of this Committee be webcast. He informed the Committee that statistics from all webcast meetings will be monitored and recorded, with viewing figures being reported to this Committee to identify the future level of webcasting of Committees. It was intended that 50 hours of webcasts be undertaken in 2016-17 and 2017-18 and that webcast refresher training be provided to Members and officers.

The Committee considered that the Council had recently been named as the most deaf-friendly organisation in Wales by Action on Hearing Loss Cymru and that the expertise of the Council's British Sign Language (BSL) trained customer service staff could be utilised to ensure the webcasts of meetings are friendly to people with hearing difficulties.

The Committee requested that the feasibility of utilising sixth form pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd in assisting with translating meetings through the medium of Welsh is looked at.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that the item on Democratic Diversity be considered as a potential item to be webcasted of the meeting of this Committee. He requested Members contact him with ideas of potential topics to be webcasted.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Head of Democratic Services look at the feasibility of utilising sixth form pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd in assisting with translating meetings through the medium of Welsh and utilising BSL trained customer service staff to ensure the webcasts of meetings are friendly to people with hearing difficulties.
 2. That the Committee endorsed the report on the webcasting of Council meetings and that it be submitted to Cabinet and Council for approval.

85. OUTCOMES OF MEMBER SURVEYS

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee of the outcomes of the recent surveys undertaken in relation to maximising attendance at Member Development events and the distribution of agendas, minutes and reports in which 37 out of 54 Members had responded.

In relation to the survey on maximising attendance at Member Development activities, Members expressed a preference for 1 Member Development topic per month.

The Head of Democratic Services sought the views of the Committee that 2 Member Development sessions per topic be provided at Round Robin events and the preferred day and timings Member Development sessions are held. He stated that Members had expressed a preference that pre-Council Briefings be held for 45 minutes prior to meetings of Council.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that in relation to the Agenda & Reports survey, 35 Members had requested hard and electronic copies of agendas, with 2 Members requesting electronic only agendas. He outlined Members' responses in relation to the means by which agendas are despatched, should the courier be unavailable, documents will be circulated by post. He also outlined additional comments made by Members in response to the survey. The Committee requested the Head of Democratic Services investigate the feasibility of Members mail being delivered to local community hubs.

The Committee requested the Head of Democratic Services to take up the issue of Members having to change passwords with the ICT Department. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that ICT are looking at alternative solutions to providing laptops and that a demonstration on alternatives be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the preferred day for holding Member Development sessions be on Wednesdays with the second preference being Tuesdays timed to take place between 10.00 – 12.00 and alternative times of 14.00 – 16.00, 16.00 – 18.00 and 08.00 – 10.00 being explored;
2. That the Head of Democratic Services investigate the feasibility of Members mail being delivered to local community hubs.
3. That the Committee receive a demonstration on alternative solutions to laptops at a future meeting.

86. SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report of performance and updates in relation to the services provided to Elected Members.

He presented a table showing the number of Member referrals made to Directorates/Departments and completion dates for referrals created between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015. He also highlighted the completion rates for referrals raised for the same period, which showed that 99.66% of referrals were completed compared to 96.14% in the previous year. The Committee expressed concern that some referrals were being closed prior to their resolution and that they should remain open until they had been completed satisfactorily. The Head of Democratic Services undertook to investigate this matter.

The Head of Democratic Services reported on the member development activities held since the previous meeting of the Committee. He stated that it had been planned to hold a pre-Council briefing on European Funding on 15 July 2015 but this would now be replaced by a briefing on the Ministerial Announcement on Local Government Re-organisation. He also highlighted a schedule of proposed pre-Council briefings. It was also planned to hold Member Development events on the topic of Universal Credit & Welfare Reform to take place on 26 June and 3 July 2015. He also outlined a list of member Development activities which were planned to be scheduled. A specialist member development activity on Committee protocols and procedures for the Development Control Committee would be taking place on 11 June 2015, with specialist member development activities planned for Scrutiny Members and Chairs in June and July.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that all Members are provided with the opportunity to complete an Annual report for the previous year's activities with senior salary holders expected to complete annual reports. Details of the Members who have completed annual reports are reported to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales. In 2013-14, 30 Elected Members completed Annual Reports which were published on the Council's website. He stated due to staffing reductions in the Democratic Services team the level of support previously afforded to Members in completing their Annual reports would not be available. The Head of Democratic Services undertook to get data on the number of hits to Members' Annual Reports and email this information to the Committee.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that the Elected Member Role Descriptions Portfolios would be updated to account for changes made at the Annual Meeting of Council and would be ready for use in the Personal Development Review Process. He stated that Members will be provided the opportunity to undertake Personal Development Reviews which were required to be completed by 1 September 2015.

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee to date, 12 of the 20 Town and Community Councils had completed the grant agreement and submitted claims for website grants. No further claims could be accepted without reference to the Welsh Government.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the contents of the report, and:

- Approved the amended schedule of pre-Council briefings as follows and that updates on the MTFs be the subject of reports to Council rather than the topic of a pre-Council briefing:

17 June 2015 – Supporting the Transgender Community

15 July 2015 – Ministerial Announcement on Local Government Re-organisation

2 September 2015 – Bullying in Schools

7 October 2015 – European Funding

25 November 2015 – Local Transport Plan

16 December 2015 – Dark Skies

20 January 2016 – Domestic Violence Update

16 March 2016 – lessons from Fukushima

Update on the Cultural Trust – To be scheduled early in 2016.

- Prioritised the delivery of Member Development activities as listed in the report with a preference for the Round Robin event to include Data protection and procurement Portal;

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 28 MAY 2015

- Approved the planned Member Development events listed in the report.

87. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 3.53 pm