

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2017

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2017 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor RM James – Chairperson

S Aspey
G Thomas

AA Pucella
E Venables

KL Rowlands
SR Vidal

B Sedgebeer

Apologies for Absence

SG Smith

Officers:

Julie Ellams
Gary Jones

Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Head of Democratic Services

108. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

109. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 17 November 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record.

110. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - STRUCTURE, SERVICES AND SUPPORT

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report informing the Democratic Services Committee of the current structure, services and support provided to Elected Members.

He explained that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 required the Authority to designate one of its officers to discharge the democratic services functions in section 9. That duty was placed upon the Head of Democratic Services but it was the Democratic Services Committee that had responsibility for exercising the function of the Local Authority, reviewing the adequacy of provision by the Authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions and to make reports and recommendations to the Authority in relation to such provision.

With the implementation of the Measure the responsibility for Scrutiny was included within the remit of the Head of Democratic Services and therefore the Scrutiny section formed part of the Democratic Services team.

The Democratic Services team provided a number of diverse support services and liaised with internal departments for example the ICT Department and external agencies including the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to provide the necessary support to enable elected members to undertake their role effectively.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that his team provided a comprehensive administrative service to all Elected Members and the Members support section also

provided specific support to the Mayor and the Civic Office and administrative assistance to the Leader and Cabinet Members. The team also dealt with member referrals, Corporate and Civic Functions and Overview and Scrutiny Support.

He explained that the Committee Section supported the Council's Committees and formal decision making processes. The section co-ordinated and serviced the 24 formal committees of the Authority, a Joint Committee (Coychurch Crematorium), School Admissions and Exclusions Appeals Panels and various Scrutiny Panels. The section also co-ordinated a number of informal or partnership meetings. This equated to over 200 meetings a year for which they arranged suitable dates, prepared agendas, co-ordinated report approval, circulated documents, draft minutes, recorded decisions and attendances and published appropriate information on the various websites.

The Committee Section also administered the Council's Scheme of Delegation handling approximately 210 decisions a month or 2533 decisions per year. The section also provided quarterly Corporate Training in the administration of the Scheme of Delegation, and regular updates to the register of Gifts and Hospitality for Officers. The section also co-ordinated the delivery of the webcasting facility for the Authority.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that much of the support provided to Elected Members was undertaken by other Departments and Directorates although the provision of this support was co-ordinated by the Democratic Services Team.

He provided a list of the networks the Democratic Services team participated in such as the Member Support Officer (MSO)/Member Development Champions Network, the Regional and National Scrutiny Champions and Scrutiny Officers Networks and the National, Regional and Local Networks for Modern.gov Users.

The Head of Democratic Services outlined the key tasks for the Democratic Services team over the next 12 months including providing the highest possible level of support to Elected Members using the available resources, completing the Elected Member induction, determining and delivery of the Member Development Programme, reviewing the Member Referral process and delivering effective scrutiny using the new scrutiny model and undertaking a review in April 2018.

Members referred to the email sent to members regarding the survey of meeting times and dates and asked if the timing of member development sessions could be included in the survey.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that the survey did include member development options and he explained that when the responses were received, a report would be presented to Council and future plans would be adjusted if required.

A member suggested that it would be helpful if information contained within the report was published on the website for members to access in future.

RESOLVED: The Democratic Services Committee noted the content of the report.

111. **SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report updating the Democratic Services Committee on the performance of services provided to Elected Members.

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He outlined the current position with member referrals and referred members to tables which showed that 96.79% of 13880 referrals had been completed since November 2011 and that 72.3% of all referrals fell within the Communities directorate.

He explained that between 8 May 2017 and 30 June 2017, 961 referrals were made which compared to 258 for the same period in 2016 and to 518 in the last post-election period in 2012. This was a very heavy workload and provisional plans were being considered to update the referrals system.

The Head of Democratic Services referred to a table showing member induction activities held since the election and highlighted the fact that all members had to attend the Intro to Local Government & Code of Conduct training but to date, only 72% had attended. He corrected the total attendance figure for the Active Travel Plans from 18 to 16 and referred members to the programme of member development sessions scheduled for delivery this year. He also introduced a list of topics being considered for inclusion in the programme and asked members to prioritise three topics and identify any additional topics for delivery.

Members agreed the Community Action Fund, the E-Learning Modules and ICT Training for Members for inclusion in the programme and suggested that it would be useful to have training on the procedure at Council meetings at the next Pre-Council briefing as it would be useful to clarify the various processes such as follow-up questions etc. Members agreed that Protocols at Council meetings, update on the Awen Trust and Halo should be listed for Pre-Council briefings for the next few months.

Members discussed Code of Conduct training and that attendance of the course was also a requirement for Community Councillors. Some had received an email offering training from other organisations and they were advised to attend BCBC training if available.

Members asked how the Community Action Fund was administered and if not used during the year, could it accumulate to be used in a later year. The Head of Democratic Services explained that it was £5,000 allocated to each member to spend within their ward and if it was not used before the end of the financial year it was returned to the "corporate pot". The application process was simple and on completion of the relevant paperwork a confirmation e-mail would be sent and the funds would be transferred into an appropriate bank account. Funds could not be allocated to a group if there was a personal or prejudicial interest. A report was being presented to Council which would finalise how and when the fund could be used and training sessions would be arranged to provide more detail.

Members queried the level of importance of certain meetings and if they could only attend one, they would prefer to attend one of high importance. The Head of Democratic Services referred to the survey and said that future meeting times would reflect the outcome of the survey and that might make it easier to attend more meetings. He added that an e-learning facility was being developed and he would e-mail members when it was available. This would allow members to undergo corporate and mandatory training online, a certificate would be issued upon completion and their HR record updated. He explained that there were presentations for most topics and these were posted online so that if a member was unable to attend they could still read the presentation.

The Head of Democratic Services referred members to the WLGA Regional Induction Training for new members on 10 November in the Swansea Marriott and the second option on 17 November at the Cardiff All Nations Centre for some new members. He outlined the Development Control Committee training sessions held at 12.45 on the day of Development Control Committee.

He advised the Committee that all Elected Members were provided with the opportunity to complete an Annual Report for the previous year's activities but all senior salary holders were expected to complete annual reports. A sample of the report template was included in the papers for information. Details of the number of members who had published their Annual Reports were reported to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

Annual Reports were published on the BCBC website but following the introduction of Welsh standards, there was a requirement for reports to be translated. The cost of this could not be justified and so Annual Reports were removed from the web although the facility to use the template to create reports was still available. A member asked if in-house translators were used. He was advised that there was a framework in place which was also used by other authorities that had their own translation unit.

The Head of Democratic Services explained the background to webcasting and respective viewing information including the figures following the change of webcasting provider in October 2016. In 2012 all Councils were given £40,000 to get webcasting systems up and running. A number of authorities spent this in the first year however BCBC still had funds available for webcasting. The webcasting equipment belonged to BCBC.

He explained the I-Call system, a check call management system designed to monitor and provide reassurance to people working alone. He asked for three volunteers for the I-Call trial and if the trial was successful it would be offered to all members in due course. Councillors B Sedgebeer, E Venables and K Rowlands agreed to trial the system.

The Head of Democratic Services outlined the budget for 2017-18 for Member training of £13,650. This included a sum to cover training from external providers and funding for individual training if required.

Following the elections, members were issued with an induction pack which included an ICT self-assessment survey. The outcome of the survey was detailed in the report. Members were also requested to identify any immediate ICT training needs and a provider was being sought to deliver the training.

The Head of Democratic Services explained the role of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and the visit planned for 22 September 2017.

Members were reminded of the importance of not sharing constituents data with Cabinet Members, MP's or AM's without first obtaining permission from the member of public. Members were advised to attend Data Protection Training.

Members asked if the social media training would be mandatory. The Head of Democratic Services explained that training had been provided in the past. All members had signed the ICT Code of Conduct and attended training so the Council was not responsible for the activities of members. A member suggested ad hoc training be provided because a number of members were already familiar with social media. The Head of Democratic Services explained that this could be expensive and there would probably be a broad sweep or multiple sessions.

RESOLVED: The Democratic Services Committee noted the content of the report and

1. Agreed additional topics for pre-Council briefings and prioritised them accordingly.
2. Agreed additional member development topics for inclusion in the Member Development Programme and prioritised them accordingly.
3. Agreed that Cllrs B Sedgebeer, E Venables and K Rowlands trial the I-Call system.

112. **ACHIEVING THE WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (WLGA) CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report considering proposals for the Authority to achieve the WLGA Charter for Member Support & Development.

He explained that the Charter aimed to provide a broad framework for local planning, self-assessment and review together with networking and comparison amongst authorities and the sharing of good and innovative practice. There were three levels of award, Standard Charter Award, Advanced Charter Award and the Good Practice and Innovation Award for Member Support and Development.

Members were presented with three options to consider, do nothing, re-apply for Standard Level Charter Status in 2018 and remain at that level or to re-apply for Standard Level Charter Status in 2018 followed by Advanced Level Charter in due course.

Members asked for more information regarding the benefits to individuals or BCBC. Members were advised that processes could be put in place to complete tasks in a better way and there would be external recognition from other bodies such as WAO.

An initial assessment had been completed on the implications of achieving the Charter at Standard level. Only one topic, "Arrangements in place for all members to be offered a PDR" required significant change to existing processes and activities or the introduction of new processes or activities.

A member commented that it could lead to more money being spent on translation etc and less in the community. Comments were also made that staff would be required to put other work aside to complete these tasks and overtime would not be available. Also senior officers could refuse to support the process although Council would have to approve the report before any action was taken.

RESOLVED: That Democratic Services Committee:

1. Considered the content of the report and recommended that the Authority re-apply for Standard Level Charter Status in 2018 and remain at that level.
2. Approved that the Democratic Services Committee submit a report to Council requesting endorsement of the recommendation made above.
3. Noted that the draft Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy would be presented to the Committee at a subsequent meeting before being submitted to Council for endorsement.

113. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

114. URGENT ITEMS

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm