

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 8 JUNE 2023

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB / REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 8 JUNE 2023 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor T Thomas – Chairperson

S Aspey	P Ford	RM Granville	M L Hughes
R J Smith	I M Spiller	G Walter	

Apologies for Absence

D T Harrison, RM James and E D Winstanley

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Michael Pitman	Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

18. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes dated 23/02/2023 be approved as a true and accurate record.

19. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report which provided the Democratic Services Committee with the Annual Report for the period May 2022 to May 2023 and the work of the Committee during that period.

She highlighted the current situation, membership and meeting dates of the Committee as set out in section 3 of the report. She drew the Committees attention to section 3.6 which highlighted the various work undertaken since the elections in May 2022, particularly in relation to the Working Group that was established.

The Democratic Services Manager highlighted the structure of the Democratic Services Team, which had seen some changes since the last annual report. Details of this were set out in section 3.14 of the report.

A Member asked in relation to 3.6 making reference to the Sub Committee. He asked how often this Sub Committee met. The Democratic Services Manager stated that this was not a regular held committee, but held on an 'as and when needed' basis.

A Member asked in relation to 3.15, he was impressed with the level of detail in the minutes taken by the Democratic Services, however he did not want the team to be put under too much pressure. He asked that the team explore ways of alleviating pressures where possible and this may mean shortening minutes down.

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The Democratic Services Manager agreed that this was something that needed to be looked at due to the time taken to draft the minutes, but also the high translation costs that come with the minutes.

A Member added that the use of working groups had proven to be very effective and hoped that this would continue.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Annual Report for submission to Council for information.

20. REVIEW OF ELECTED MEMBER ANNUAL REPORT PROCESS

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report which sought to:

- a) Provide information relating to the Annual Report Process for Elected Members; and
- b) Provide opportunity to review the process and make any suggested amendments or improvements, specifically how to encourage Member take up and promote the final reports.

She explained that there was no mandatory duty on Members or Cabinet Members to make an Annual Report on their activities. However, all political groups will be requested to actively promote the completion of Annual Reports by all of their Members.

She drew attention to Appendix 1 which was the current report template that Members should use. Appendix 2 provided guidance in completing the annual report, and Appendix 3 provided an example. Further details on submitting an annual report were at section 3 of the report.

The Chairperson asked for confirmation on timescales that the annual reports needed to be completed by. The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that June 30th 2023 was the deadline.

The Chairperson asked if there were any data available on how many of the annual reports were read by the public. The Democratic Services Manager stated that this was not monitored in the past but could look into ways of monitoring this for the future.

A Member suggested that attendance statistics were referenced in the annual reports as this may be something members of the public would be interested in.

A Member asked if the number of referrals that are submitted by Members is easily obtainable information, as this would also provide some useful feedback to the public. The Democratic Services Manager stated that the new referral system did not provide statistics as easily as the old one. She said that she would look into providing this information.

A Member suggested that annual reports could be promoted either via social media or through the Town & Community Councils.

RESOLVED: That the Committee

(1) Considered the Annual Report process and provide any comments or suggested amendments,

(2) Considered how to encourage Member take up of the process and how to promote the final reports.

21. **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report

- a) Provided the Committee with an update on the delivery of the Council's Member Training and Development Programme and related activities;
- b) Requested the Committee to identify any further topics for inclusion in the Member Development Programme.

She explained that Appendix A detailed the training and development sessions that have taken place as part of the Member Development Programme since last reported to the Democratic Services Committee on 20 October 2022. Appendix B provided the attendance record to the sessions.

She drew attention to Appendix C which highlighted the future training scheduled over the coming months and asked the Committee if there were any further training requirements.

The Chairperson stated that as Members can attend training remotely, was there a way of ensuring that they were actually in attendance and fully engaged. The public perception could be that if Members have their cameras off, they may not be present.

The Chairperson commented on the future training and believed it to be exciting and informative. He added that consideration for a topic on welfare and benefits may prove very useful for Members in order to be able to signpost their constituents in the right direction.

A Member stated that the directorate surgeries he had attended were particularly useful and informative, however the social services surgery was not well attended and believed that more promotion of these to Members was necessary.

A Member added that if Development Control Committee and Governance & Audit Committee training sessions could be provided to all Members, it would broaden their knowledge even further.

RESOLVED: That the Committee

- a) Noted the report and its appendices; and
- b) Identified any additional Member development topics or briefings for inclusion in the Member Development Programme and prioritise them accordingly.

22. **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report which contained the proposed Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the Democratic Services Committee for consideration and further development.

Attached at Appendix A was a draft FWP for the Democratic Services Committee for 2023-24. Further information was at section 3 of the report.

The Chairperson asked if Members wished to suggest changes or amendments to the constitution, how would they go about this. The Democratic Services Manager stated that they would need to email the Monitoring Officer, these would then be considered by

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herself and the Deputy Monitoring Officer. If the reasons for amendments satisfied legal criteria then these changes would be provided to Council for approval.

A Member suggested with regards to training session length, if they could be kept to between 1 and 2 hours, as longer than this has proven to be tiring for Members to absorb the information and engage with the trainer effectively. This is particularly important when followed or preceding a committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered the proposed draft Forward Work Programme for the Democratic Services Committee attached at Appendix A and provide any comment or suggestions for further items for the Committee to consider at its future meetings.

23. **URGENT ITEMS**

None

The meeting closed at 10:50