

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2023

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2023 AT 10:00

Present:

Councillor T Thomas – Chairperson

S Aspey
RM James

RM Granville
R J Smith

D T Harrison
I M Spiller

M L Hughes
G Walter

Apologies for Absence:

P Ford

E Winstanley

Officers:

Rachel Keepins
Michael Pitman
Stephen Griffiths

Democratic Services Manager
Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Title of Report	Approval of Minutes
Decision Made	That the Minutes of the 8 June 2023 be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	None

Title of Report	Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales
Decision Made	The Committee considered and noted the relevant sections of the Welsh Government's final 'Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales', issued in June 2023, and provided the following comments and recommendations:

• **Recommendation:**

Members raised concerns about the length of meetings and the need for regular breaks. Scrutiny meetings were particularly long. The Committee acknowledged that all meetings should provide for suitable breaks, for example, a ten-minute break as standard be given after one and a half hours, and a twenty to thirty-minute break if a meeting ran to three hours. It was recommended that all committee chairs be reminded that they should ensure that ample breaks are scheduled during meetings as this promotes a more effective meeting and is essential for participants' health and wellbeing.

- It was proposed that Cabinet announcements in Council could be dealt with via an information report given the amount of time these can sometimes take in Council meetings and especially where there is a heavy agenda. It was requested that this be raised for discussion by Group Leaders, however any change to the business at ordinary meetings of Council would require an amendment to the Constitution.
- In respect of training, Members requested more opportunities to learn more about presentation skills and dealing with the media. In addition, they suggested that the subject of the delivery and timing of training should be explored, especially in relation to the induction process for new members. It was also noted that the Learning and Development site for Members was difficult to navigate. The Committee therefore requested that as well as the site being reviewed, opportunities for Members to meet with Democratic Services Officers possibly once a year to through the online training be provided.
- The Committee requested that the Democratic Services Manager survey all Members for items they may wish to be included in the future Member Development programme.
- In terms of member privacy, especially in respect to the public availability of addresses and telephone numbers, it was suggested that an email be sent to Members, repeated on an annual basis, to establish what information they wanted published on the Council website. It was also requested that a Council number be provided on Member profiles for those Members who do not wish to advertise their own personal number.
- The issue of research support for Members would be the subject of a future agenda item for the Committee.
- In terms of the role of Chairperson, it was felt that there should be more interaction between the Chairs of Scrutiny Committees and the Governance and Audit Committee as proposed in the Welsh Government guidance. There was also a need to address the issue of appointing Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees, a matter not addressed in the Constitution. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to raise this with the Monitoring Officer.
- It was felt that there was a need to co-opt independent professionals with special expertise, as well as Youth Council representatives, to sit on Scrutiny Committees.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was noted that a Public Participation Strategy has been developed and would be subject to a 12-week consultation process. The Democratic Services Manager would consider whether there could be opportunity for the Committee to consider this at their next meeting and if not, it would be emailed out so that Members could participate in the consultation should they wish to.• A Member drew attention to the constitutional limits on the call-in process, and it was agreed that the Democratic Services Manager undertake some research to be reported back to the committee, on what other local authorities do in respect of the process.
Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	None

Title of Report	Welsh Local Government Association's Councillor Support Self-Evaluation Framework
Decision Made	<p>The Committee considered the proposed 'Councillor Support Self-Evaluation Framework' attached at Appendix A and agreed that it was a useful tool for Councils and Councillors and supported the proposal to utilise it, and the Head of Democratic Services Network for continued sharing of best practice with other local authorities.</p> <p>The Committee had no further comments to feedback to the WLGA and only requested that the Democratic Services Manager share the Diversity Declaration, published in July 2021, with Members and consideration be given to reviewing it.</p>
Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	None

Title of Report	Elected Member Personal Safety Protocol
Decision Made	<p>The Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Considered the proposed draft Elected Member Personal Safety Protocol and proposed that the issues surrounding constituents with mental health, drug, and alcohol misuse problems, needed to be highlighted within the document.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2023

	b) Agreed to recommend to full Council that authority is delegated to the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer to consider and determine any requests for funding appropriate security measures where a Member is at personal risk or significant threat of harm in carrying out their role.
Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	None

Title of Report	Multi-Location Meetings Policy Review
Decision Made	<p>The Committee considered and discussed the proposed amendments to the Multi-location Meetings Policy attached at Appendix A prior to submission to full Council and made the following comments and recommendations:</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members were very supportive of keeping cameras on in meetings. This was particularly the case when it came to contributing to discussions and important meetings involving votes. This was an issue of transparency and accountability. The Committee therefore recommended that in support of the policy, cameras remain on for all meetings with exception being given to circumstances where there are possibly network issues, with notification and agreement of this with the Chair. It was noted that where network issues were consistent for an individual Member, provision of additional ICT support would be considered.• The Committee briefly discussed the flexible nature of hybrid meetings and whether some committees could go fully remote in some instances and broadly supported the practice followed by Rhondda Cynon Taff, where Members were canvassed in advance about whether they would be attending a meeting in person or remote. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to research other local authority's approaches and report back to the Committee for consideration.
Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	None

Title of Report	Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2024/25
-----------------	--

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2023

Decision Made	<p>The Committee noted the content of the report.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Members were of the view that the role of the Democratic Services Chair should in some way be recognised and remunerated. The Committee therefore recommended that this be considered at the next Annual Meeting of Council and furthermore provided the following response in respect of the IRPW Draft Annual Report 2024-25:</p> <p>The Committee proposed that the Panel give consideration to the potential for councils to give pro rata payments to chairs not receiving a Senior Salary entitlement which is sufficient to enable those members to carry out their role effectively whilst accepting that such arrangements may vary from council to council.</p> <p>The Committee approved that the response of the Committee be submitted to the IRPW and the WLGA by the deadline of 8 December 2023.</p>
Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	Councillor T Thomas declared a prejudicial interest and left the meeting for the part of the discussion that dealt with the remuneration of the Chairperson for this committee.

Title of Report	Democratic Services Committee Councillor Portal Working Group Update
Decision Made	<p>The Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Noted the update provided in the report on the work of the Democratic Services Councillor Portal Working Group.b) Considered the recommendations from the Working Group at 3.2 and 3.3 of the report and the financial implications therein. <p>Members noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• given the financial constraints going forward that there was a need to address what realistically, could go forward in terms of the Portal.• that the issue of referrals, especially the timeliness of responses, needed to be addressed.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2023

Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	None

Title of Report	Democratic Services Committee Forward Work Programme
Decision Made	Members considered the proposed draft Forward Work Programme for the Democratic Services Committee attached at Appendix A . It was noted that the Democratic Services Manager would amend the Forward Work Programme to take account of issues discussed during the meeting.
Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	None

Title of Report	Urgent Items
Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	26 October 2023
Personal or Prejudicial Interests Disclosed	None