

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN  
COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON THURSDAY, 15  
MAY 2014 AT 2.00PM

Present:

Councillor J H Tildesley MBE - Chairperson

<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>	<u>Councillors</u>
D K Edwards P James	R C Jones M Reeves	C E Smith R E Young

Officers:

G P Jones - Head of Democratic Services  
M A Galvin - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

62 CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairperson on behalf of Members, welcomed Councillor James to her first meeting following her appointment to the Committee at yesterday's Annual Meeting of Council.

63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Councillor C A Green - Unwell  
Councillor R L Thomas - Work commitments  
Councillor D B F White - Work commitments  
R Harries - Work commitments  
H Lazarus - Work commitments

64 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on the 13 March 2014 were approved as a true and accurate record.

65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

66 SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

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

The first section of the report referred to Member Referrals, and the table detailed in paragraph 4.12 of the report informed of the total number of referrals made to Directorates/Departments between 1 May 2013 and 30 April 2014.

This showed that 2792 referrals had been completed in the above period.

The Head of Democratic Services then referred Members to the table in 4.13 of the report, which showed the overall completion statistics for referrals between 1 May 2013 to 30 April 2014. This confirmed that during this period, over 96% of the referrals had been completed. He added that the uncompleted referrals related to the more complex matters that took significant investigation. These were regularly monitored by staff with a view to them being completed and subsequently closed.

The next section of the report included a further table the contents of which denoted the completion times of Member referrals raised between 1 May 2013 and 30 April 2014.

This revealed that just over 41% of the referrals had been completed in ten days and just under 73% completed in 20 days. The Head of Democratic Services pointed out that any future rationalisation of staff within the Authority or in the Democratic Services Team, was likely to affect performance in terms of how quickly referrals were processed and completed in the future.

A Member asked if it would be feasible if the Democratic Services Section could facilitate referrals from representatives of Town and Community Councillors as well as County Borough Council Members.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that this would not be feasible due to staffing restraints and on-going levels of work commitments, as well as savings that had to be made in Legal and Regulatory Services which amounted to £400k in the next financial year.

A Member felt that it was not necessary to receive as much information and other data in future meetings on the Members Referrals/System.

The next part of the report identified a proposed Member Development Programme, and highlighted in the first instance the pre-Council briefings arranged, proposed and requested.

In terms of the topics so listed, Members were in agreement with the topics scheduled as pre-Council briefings before the next three scheduled meetings of Council, and of the opinion that subsequent pre-Council presentations cover the following items on the dates so stated:-

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 15 October 2014  | - M.T.F.S. update  |
| 12 November 2014 | - Individual Electoral Registration  |
| 10 December 2014 | - Highways issues including the potholes or Young Carers in the County Borough |
| 21 January 2015  | - Highways issues including the potholes or Young Carers in the County Borough |
| 18 March 2015    | - Dementia   |
| 8 April 2015     | - TBC  |

The Head of Democratic Services added that a further potential pre-Council briefing may be listed in the future on the subject of elective home education, whereby children could be taught at home rather than in school, under the appropriate legislative requirements.

Members then proposed a session similar the recent Round Robin event as an alternative to having a large number separate pre-Council briefings. This type of event would provide Members with short detailed “bursts” of appropriate information. It was suggested that following and similar topics could be included in a subsequent round robin event:-

- Out of hours call outs and Emergency Planning;
- Public Protection and the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme;
- Wood B/B-Leaf.

The Head of Democratic Services welcomed this proposal as this would enable prioritisation of pre-Council briefings, particularly as the number of Council meetings had been reduced for the forthcoming year.

Members asked if ‘gaps’ experienced between sessions on the Round Robin events held on 8 May 2014, could be reduced in any future such events.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that he would try and address this in future sessions, and he would also timetable sessions later, e.g. 4pm - 6pm, in order that Members who were in employment could more easily be available to attend.

Also in response to Members, the Head of Democratic Services confirmed that he would give further consideration as to the relevance of listing training on the topic of Superfast Cymru (i.e. Implementation of a Broadband System).

The Head of Democratic Services then outlined dates for further Member Development activities including, School Performance - Outcomes for Learners in Bridgend Schools, a Social Media training event and Members Webcasting training.

He then referred Committee to paragraph 4.2.10 of the report, where further Member development activities were planned as follows:-

- |                |   |   |
|----------------|---|---|
| June/July 2014 | - | Completion of School Performance Data sessions.                               |
| September 2014 | - | Community engagement, advocacy and leadership for elected Members.            |
| October 2014   | - | Performance Framework Management session/Financial Management and Governance. |

The next two monthly activities, i.e. in November and December 2014, would cover Public Engagement and a Budget Workshop.

The Head of Democratic Services then referred to ‘other’ Member development activities such as the Leadership Programme for Elected Members to be held in Bridgend in June 2014, that would be funded by the WLGA. Details of this event were shown in Paragraph 4.3 of the report.

He then referred to Members Annual Reports and Personal Development Reviews (PDR), adding that Members would have increased support this year from Officers in the compiling of their Annual Reports. He added that it was hoped that both the above would be completed by all Members by end of September 2014.

The next section of the report then covered Town and Community Council Website Grants, advising that the Democratic Services Section were facilitating the

administration of a Welsh Government Grant of £500 to each Town and Community Council in the County Borough to develop any website facility. Although to date only a few Town and Community Council's had completed grant agreements and had submitted claims, all Town and Community Councils would be encouraged to do so before the deadline of 31 March 2015.

The Head of Democratic Services then made reference to the Armed Forces Day (AFA)/Armed Forces Community Covenant (AFCC) event on 28 June 2014.

He confirmed that £16k in grant funding would be made available to support this event, which was being supported by Bridgend County Borough Council, Bridgend Town Council and Bridgend Veterans Association and would involve a public signing of the Covenant by representatives of all Town and Community Councils, military display stands and activities in the town centre stalls for the support of veteran organisations to promote their services, a veterans parade and ceremony and a veterans concert.

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the report be noted.
  - (2) That the topics for pre-Council briefings be as is listed above.
  - (3) Agreed the Member development topics for inclusion in the Member Development Programme as shown in the report highlighted above, including topics for the Round Robin Event.
  - (4) Approve the planned Member Development Events as shown in paragraphs 4.2.8 and 4.2.9 of the report.

67 MODERN.GOV UPDATE

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an update on the progress made in respect of the Moder.gov committee administration system and to demonstrate some of the functionality of the system.

He gave some background information on this item, then confirmed that this new system was procured in March 2014 and the first training sessions have been undertaken with the Democratic Services Team.

The Head of Democratic Services then explained that the initial implementation dates for the system had been revised due to the complexity of the process reviews that are needed to optimise the use of the system without adversely compromising the intentions of the current procedures. This had been compounded by changes due to the development of the Digital Office he added.

The Head of Democratic Services then explained that the training sessions had provided a greater understanding and knowledge of the System's capabilities. The following schedule was considered both appropriate and achievable in terms of the full development of Modern.gov and these would form targets for the Democratic Services team to deliver upon the system.

Completed by

Phase 1          Installation and initial setup

31 Mar 14

Phase 2	Committee functions and training	30 Jul 14
Phase 3	Report approval workflow	01 Dec 14
Phase 4	Extended functionality implementation	31 Mar 15

The Head of Democratic Services then provided Committee with a short demonstration of the Members, Committee and web page functionality of the system including a recent 'mock' Committee electronic send-out that had been circulated via the new system.

The Head of Democratic Services concluded his report by advising that the system would be bi-lingual and suggested, that Modern.gov be subject of a future Round Robin Member training event when its functionality had been developed further.

RESOLVED: That the Democratic Services Committee:

- (1) Received a short demonstration of the Members, Committee and web page functionality of the Modern.gov system.
- (2) Agreed with the suggested direction for the ongoing development of the Phase 2 state of implementation of the system.

68 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report the purpose of which was to inform the Democratic Services Committee of the proposed items that will be considered at its subsequent meetings, in the form of a Work Programme.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that it was anticipated that the Committee would be presented with the following items for consideration at its meeting on 15 May 2014.

- Proposed Changes to the Member Referrals System
- Social Media Protocol

He explained however, that the Committee Proposals to make Changes to the Member Referral System had now been withdrawn as these could not be implemented due to technical issues and the impact knock on effect proposed changes would have upon other aspects to the system.

He further added that consideration of the Social Media Protocol had been deferred due to issues regarding the availability of funding to make changes to the ICT infrastructure. These changes were required to facilitate effective messaging when using the social media sites. It was hoped that these issues would be addressed before the next meeting of the Committee when the updated Social Media Protocol would be presented.

Committee and the Head of Democratic Services also agreed that there would need to be more interest shown by Members regarding their access to social media, if the training session was to go ahead on 7 July 2014 as was planned. If further interest was not forthcoming, then it was agreed that consideration of this topic be delayed until further interaction takes place on the Social Media Protocol.

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The Head of Democratic Services then referred Members to the proposed items for inclusion at the subsequent meeting of the Democratic Services Committee shown at Appendix 1 to the report.

In terms of other suggested topics for the Work Programme, it was agreed that should Members have any then they pass these onto the Chairperson, who will in turn feed these onto the Head of Democratic Services accordingly.

**RESOLVED:** That the report and the proposed work programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm