

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 20 MARCH 2018

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3 - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 20 MARCH 2018 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor – Chairperson

S Aspey
SR Vidal

RM Granville
KJ Watts

G Thomas
CA Webster

E Venables

Apologies for Absence

DG Howells, RM James, B Sedgebeer and SG Smith

Officers:

Gary Jones

Head of Democratic Services

Michael Pitman

Business & Administrative Apprentice

131. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

The Head of Democratic Services (HDS) advised the Committee that the Chairperson Cllr RM James was unable to attend the meeting. The HDS invited nominations for a representative from the committee to be appointed as Chairperson for the meeting. Cllr K Watts was nominated and seconded as Chairperson.

RESOLVED: That Councillor K Watts be appointed as Chairperson of the committee for the meeting

132. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

133. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 17/01/2018 were approved as a true and accurate record.

134. SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATES

The HDS presented a report updating the committee on the performance of services provided to Elected Members.

Member Referrals

He then took the Democratic Services Committee through the performance data of Member Referrals. He outlined the percentages of referrals completed by directorates within 10 and 20 days and advised that on average more than 50% referrals had been completed within 10 days and that more than 75% were completed within 20 days. He added that there had been a 40% increase in number of referrals made in the last year compared to the average number of referrals received for each of the past 4 years.

Members agreed that 20 day completion percentage should be higher and indicated that a majority of referrals should be completed within the 20 day period. Directorates should also be encouraged to achieve a higher percentage of completed referrals within the 10 day period.

The Committee considered it a positive indicator that more referrals were being made. The HDS commented that some members were also reporting their referrals to other organisations as well as to the Member Referrals System which led to an element of duplication.

The HDS informed the meeting of the recommendation of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to raise their concerns regarding the operation and use of the member referral system to the Democratic Services Committee. This recommendation dovetailed with the planned review of the Member Referrals system which was identified at the last meeting of the Committee. The intention was to review all aspects of the Member Referrals system and processes to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

Members voiced their concerns about the speed and efficiency of some of the referrals as they were being circulated to a service focal point before being sent out to the relevant department. It was suggested that referrals should be made directly to the relevant person so that it can be dealt with quickly and bypass the 'middleman'. Members were also keen to have a prioritisation of referrals to enable those considered as urgent to be processed quickly. The HDS informed the meeting that their comments would be included as part of the review.

The HDS informed members of the introduction of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and how these new regulations would affect Member Referrals. One of the implications would be that personal data could not be kept once it has ceased to be relevant and would need to be deleted. He added that members were data controllers and when handling data about any individual they had full responsibility for that data, and needed to act accordingly. Members agreed to have GDPR training in June 2018 ensure they had a full understanding of the new regulations.

Member Development

The HDS informed members of the member development activities that had been held since October 2017 and the levels of participation at these events. It was noted that while some of the activities had high attendance, many had approximately 50% attendance. The completion level of E-learning modules was also provided. A member stated that many Councillors have not completed the E-Learning modules because they are finding it difficult to navigate to them on the system. The HDS advised that he will work with ICT and the Learning & Development team to make improvements while also encouraging Councillors to complete the modules they haven't yet completed.

Webcasting

The HDS advised the Committee of the number of meetings that had been webcast and the viewing statistics that had been achieved.

Members ICT Forum

The HDS clarified the additional members nominated to Members ICT Forum and advised that a meeting had been arranged for 23 April 2018.

Member Support Officer (MSO) Network

The HDS advised the committee on the topics considered at the MSO Network meeting held on 15 March 2018 which included:

- An update from the Welsh Government on the Local Government (Wales) Bill.
- Guidance for Councillors prepared by the WLGA on online abuse and personal safety

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- The General Data Protection Regulation, the network is invited to share any plans for guidance for members on the new legislation
- Discussion with members of the Independent Review Panel considering the role of community and town councils
- Member Support and development consultants and trainers
- Diversity in Democracy update.

Following a short debate the Democratic Services Committee:-

RESOLVED:

1. That a review of the Member Referral system be undertaken over the next 6 months. The review would consider the following matters:
 - Is a Member Referrals system needed?
 - What topics should be submitted as a Member Referral
 - How do other Local Authorities manage their Member Referrals
 - Prioritisation of referrals Urgent/Important/Routine
 - The timelines for responses to referrals to be made
 - The escalation process when responses are not received with the agreed timescales
 - Difficulties and barriers for officers dealing with Member Referrals
 - Is OTRS the most suitable software package for Member Referrals?
 - Can political party casework software be utilised
 - Provision of training to Elected Members in the use of Member Referrals and Open-source Ticket Request System (OTRS)
 - Undertaking analysis of Member Referrals to identify trends or key topics
 - Providing a suitable response to the scrutiny queries and recommendations
 - The confidentiality of member referrals
 - Establishment of suitable Performance Indicators
 - How members support their AMs/MPs and Town Council regarding referrals
2. The following topics will be delivered as repeated member development sessions in the months identified below:
 - Annual Reports - April 2018
 - Personal Development Reviews - May 2018
 - General Data protection Regulations - June 2018
 - Autism Awareness/ALN/NASC - July 2018
3. The following topics will be added to list of items for future consideration
 - Modern.gov app (restricted version)
 - Jodie's Story – On Track
 - Domestic Violence update (to include information re Calan and domestic violence towards men)
4. Pre council Briefings:

The committee agreed that the following Pre-Council Briefings would be scheduled:

 - 28 Mar 18 V2C - Confirmed
 - 25 April18 The Central South Consortium - Confirmed

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- 13 Jun 18 The Bryncethin Campus – to be confirmed
- 11 Jul 18 Carers/Young Carers – to be confirmed

5. Development Control Committee Training

The following member development topics for Development Control Committee were considered as very useful for all members who should be encouraged to attend:

- 24 May 2018 Section 106 legal agreements – basics and limitations
- 04 July 2018 Cenin Renewables at Stormy Down site visit at Cenin Renewables to view wind turbine, solar panels, cement labs, anaerobic digestion plant, and battery bank.

6. E-Learning Modules

The Committee supported the recommendation that the following topics be completed by all Members by 01 June 2018:

- Data Protection Act
- Safeguarding Children and Adults
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Equalities & Diversity

The HDS will circulate link to the modules and potentially include this in a Round Robin event

7. Elected Members ICT Forum

The Committee supported the recommendation that the first meeting of the Members ICT forum be held in April and that dates of the first meeting be circulated to suit the majority of members. The first meeting will consider the timings of subsequent meetings.

135. REVIEW OF THE FUNCTIONALITY OF MODERN.GOV

The HDS outlined some of the functionality of the Modern.Gov system, which the Democratic Services Team were currently using and the additional functionality which was planned to be introduced.

He explained that Modern.Gov was used facilitate much of the information relating to Elected Members and their roles. The system updated their profiles, attendance records, declarations and other information. He informed the committee that staff intended to increase the use of this feature by adding voting records to their profile to allow the public to gain a better understanding of decisions made by the councillors.

He also explained the 'subscribe to updates' feature of the website. This will allow users to request updates on topics of their choice and which will be circulated to them automatically.

A member asked whether the number of times someone viewed their profile was recorded. The HDS explained that this feature is available from when they began in office.

Another member explained that she did not know a lot of this functionality existed and hoped that a refresher course can be given on the functionality of Modern.Gov.

The HDS acknowledge these proposals and that he would include this topic at a future meeting(s) of the Members ICT Forum.

RESOLVED: Noted the content of the report

136. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The HDS Services submitted a report, which informed the Committee of the proposed items to be considered at its subsequent meetings as part of a future rolling Forward Work Programme (FWP), which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

He also explained that the calendar of meetings for 2019/20 have been completed with provisional dates of all the meetings including Democratic Services Committee contained therein. The calendar would be sent out soon for members' approval as part of the reports for the Annual meeting of Council in May.

A member commented that many of them had been struggling to log into different areas of the website, as well as into Modern.Gov, from their portable devices. The HDS suggested that these problems included at the Members ICT Forum and hopefully this would be beneficial for all members to have their ICT concerns addressed.

Modern.Gov training would also be added to the Forward Work Programme in addition to any current training on other initiatives.

RESOLVED: That the proposed forward work programme be approved subject to the inclusion of an item regarding the Member Referral Review being presented to the Committee on 25 Oct 2018.

137. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 17:59