

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2022

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2022 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor T Thomas – Chairperson

P Ford	RM Granville	D T Harrison	M L Hughes
R J Smith	I M Spiller	G Walter	E D Winstanley

Apologies for Absence

RM James

Officers:

Laura Griffiths	Principal Solicitor
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Officer – Committees

1. WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed all present to the first meeting of the Committee in this new term. He informed the Committee that he was delighted to be elected Chairperson at an exciting time for the Committee with the development of the new member referrals system, the implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act and the appointment of new Members to serve on the Committee. He stated that all matters relating to Democratic Services should be referred to the Head of Democratic Services who will devise a Forward Work Programme for the Committee.

A member of the Committee asked whether an item could be placed on the Forward Work Programme to evaluate the Member Induction Programme, once the programme had been completed. The Head of Democratic Services stated that she would include a look back on the Member Induction Programme as part of the Committee's Forward Programme.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee of 21 October 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. ALL WALES MODEL CONSTITUTION AND CONSTITUTION GUIDE

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer, the Group Manager Legal and Democratic Services reported for the Committee's consideration the Model Constitution and accompanying guides. Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000 required local authorities in Wales to have a written constitution, while Section 45 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the Act) required principal councils to publish a constitution guide, explaining in ordinary language the content of the Council's constitution. She added that principal councils must also publish their constitution and constitution guide

electronically and provide on request either free of charge or at a charge (representing no more than the cost of providing the copy).

The Group Manager Legal and Democratic Services informed the Committee that the All-Wales Monitoring Officers' Group, via funding from the Welsh Local Government Association commissioned Browne Jacobson to draft a new model constitution and a model constitution guide due to provisions coming into force under the Act. Each local authority has considered the new model constitution and it has become common place. The style of the new constitution is more intelligible to the public, with less duplication. She advised the Committee that whilst the new model contains detailed provisions, adopting the model constitution does not require all of those detailed provisions to be adopted and therefore following a local review by officers, some of the Council's existing provisions have been retained in order to preserve continuity and retain the valuable work that has been done over the years in reviewing each part of the existing Constitution.

The Group Manager Legal and Democratic Services also reported on the constitution guide which was based on the Browne Jacobson model guide, which had been adapted to reflect Bridgend Council's constitutional arrangements. A beginner's guide summarising all the provisions of the constitution was also highlighted for information.

The Group Manager Legal and Democratic Services informed the Committee that the final constitution would require approval by Cabinet and Council and would be published on the Council's website together with the accompanying guides.

Members views are sought on any suggested changes and the Group Manager therefore proposed that the Committee consider the establishment of a Working Group to consider the model constitution and accompanying guides.

The Chairperson asked whether the model constitution had provision for the new hybrid ways of working. The Group Manager Legal and Democratic Services stated that the Constitution makes reference to multi-location meetings and she reminded Members that Council has recently approved the Multi-locations Meetings Policy. She also informed the Committee that the Act also introduces a requirement for the Council to have a Public Participation Strategy.

The Head of Democratic Services recommended that those members of the Committee not sitting on the Working Group could also separately raise any views on the documents.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Committee considered the model constitution and accompanying guides;
 2. That the Committee established a Working Group to consider in detail the model constitution and accompanying guides and it be formed of the Chairperson of the Committee and Councillors M Hughes, RM James, R Smith and I Spiller prior to them being presented to Cabinet and Council for approval and adoption.

5. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 10:22