

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2022

- PRESENT:** Councillor Keith Roberts (Chair)
- Councillors Non Dafydd, Carwyn E Jones, Llio A Owen,
Dylan Rees, Jeff Evans, Aled M Jones, Gwilym O Jones
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Solicitor (Corporate Governance) (MY)
Head of Profession HR and Transformation (for Item 4)
Human Resources Manager (CW) (For Item 5)
HR Trainee (AJ) (For Item 5)
Committee Officer (SC)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Ieuan Williams (for Item 4)
- APOLOGIES:** None
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1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meetings held on the following dates were presented and confirmed as correct:-

- 19 October 2021 (Extraordinary)
- 25 November 2021 (Extraordinary)
- 31 May 2022

3 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:-

“Under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act and in the Public Interest Test as presented”.

4 DESIGNATION OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ("HEAD OF DEMOCRACY")

Submitted – a report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer to designate an officer to the statutory role of Head of Democracy, on the recommendation of the Appointments Committee held on 16 September 2022.

RESOLVED that the Democratic Services Committee unanimously endorsed the recommendations of the Appointments Committee, to designate Mr Dyfan Siôn, as the Council's new Head of Democracy.

Congratulations were extended to Mr Siôn on his appointment by members of the Committee.

5 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Submitted – a report by the Human Resources Development Manager on the Member Development Strategy, outlining the Council's commitment to provide training and support to members over the next 5 year.

The HR Training Manager reported that the strategy aims to provide members with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to fulfil their roles efficiently and effectively. She stated that the Council's development programme continues to be reinforced by the principles of the WLGA's Charter for Member Support and Development. It was also noted that the training and development programme will be distributed to members on a regular basis, containing information on future training sessions.

Clarity was sought on the role of the Head of Democracy in relation to member development. The Monitoring Officer responded that under new local government legislation, members have a statutory right to have a 1 to 1 development meeting with either the Head of Democracy, or a member of the development team, to discuss the members' development needs.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report, and adopt the Member Development Strategy.

6 MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

Submitted - a report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer on member role descriptions, which have been updated, based on the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)'s latest templates.

The Monitoring Officer reported that there is an expectation on the Council to adopt role descriptions for members, co-opted members and lay members, in preparation for the review of the WLGA's Member Support and Development Charter. It was noted that the role descriptions will steer the development programmes for this Committee in the future.

RESOLVED:-

- **That the Monitoring Officer rearranges the “Accountabilities” to prioritise each member’s own ward.**
- **To replace the word ‘electorate’ in “Accountabilities” to a more generic term, to include all those living and working in the Council area.**
- **To establish why the Scrutiny Committees have been included in the “Accountabilities” of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council’s role descriptions.**
- **If this Committee’s Chair is satisfied with the explanation, the Democratic Services Committee endorses the member role descriptions, for submission to members.**

7 ANNUAL REPORTS BY MEMBERS

Submitted – a report by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) on members’ annual reports for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) reported that Councils have a duty to ensure that arrangements are in place to enable members to prepare annual reports on their work. She stated that although it is not mandatory to complete annual reports, members are encouraged to do so, to promote good practice and transparency.

The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) reported that the intention is to publish members’ annual reports for 2021/22 in November 2022, and the reports for 2022/23 will be published in June or July 2023, subject to agreement with Group Leaders.

RESOLVED:-

- **To note the report.**
- **To agree that the Interim Head of Democracy advises Group Leaders that their members will need to submit their annual reports for 2021/22 to the Interim Head of Democratic Services by 31 October 2022, for publication in November 2022.**
- **That members are encouraged to use the report template included in Enclosure A of the report to complete their annual reports for 2022/23.**
- **To agree on the timetable presented for publishing members’ annual reports for 2022/23.**

8 TIMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

Submitted - a statutory report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/ Monitoring Officer on the timing of the Council’s Committees, which will need to be confirmed by full Council, but requires a view from this Committee.

Under Section 6(1) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Council is required to review the times at which Committee meetings are convened at least once every term, preferably after the new Council is elected. It was noted that there will be new regulations in force soon, and it will be necessary to repeat the review

process next year. That process will be more extensive in that it will include duration of meetings etc.

A questionnaire was sent to members, co-opted members, lay members and external representatives of the SACRE to obtain their views, with the option to start meetings at 10:00 am, 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm. 17 responses (48.57%) were received from elected members. It was concluded that the majority of responses received were in favour of adhering to the current arrangements of convening meetings during the day.

Further discussion will need to take place regarding the Planning and Orders Committee, which currently starts at 1:00 pm, and the Standards Committee, which starts at 2:00 pm; with the majority of respondents preferring alternative timings.

The possibility of convening meetings on certain days of the week was highlighted, and a proposal was put forward to hold formal meetings on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays only, where possible.

RESOLVED:-

The Council is requested to consider the following recommendations made by the Democratic Services Committee at its meeting on 4 October 2022:-

- **where possible, the current start times be retained for ordinary meetings of the County Council (2:00 pm); the Executive (10:00 am) and all other committees (2:00 pm) subject to the next paragraph below**
- **that the start times of the Planning and Orders Committee, and Standards Committee, should be decided by those committees, following advice from their lead officers**
- **where possible, committee meetings should be held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays; to help with combining other work and responsibilities with the role of a member**
- **that the Council takes the opportunity to raise awareness about the availability of financial support towards the costs of care and personal assistance; and**
- **to note that, in light of draft statutory guidance awaited from the Welsh Government, there is an intention to carry out a further review of the timing, frequency and length of committee meetings early in 2024. The draft survey that will be circulated to members will first be considered and approved by the Democratic Services Committee.**

The meeting concluded at 3.15 pm

**COUNCILLOR KEITH ROBERTS
CHAIR**