



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

JULY 2019

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEMBER SUVERY – CONSIDERATION OF FEEDBACK

REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the feedback obtained from the recent Member survey undertaken during April 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:

- (i) Consider the feedback obtained from the Member Survey 2019 as outlined within the report.
- (ii) Take forward any actions deemed appropriate in relation to that feedback as outlined within the report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 At the Democratic Services Committee meeting on the 12th November, the Interim Head of Democratic Services provided Members with his report which advised on the support provision available to Members and sufficiency of resources. A copy of which can be access through the following [link](#).

4 MEMBERS SURVEY

4.1 When considering the Interim Head of Democratic Services report in respect of sufficiency of resources at its meeting, Members of the Democratic Services Committee commented upon the good practice of undertaking a 'Members Survey', to allow all Members the opportunity to comment on the provision of support available.(Minutes No.9 refers)

4.2 Following Members comments a draft bilingual survey, was developed and agreed for circulation by the Committee at its meeting on the [19th March, 2019](#).

- 4.3 The survey was undertaken for a two week period from the beginning of April, through a dedicated website link. Hard copies of the survey were also made available to those Members that required them.
- 4.4 At the Council meeting on the 10th April, the Interim Head of Democratic Services took the opportunity to remind Members of the survey and of the closing date for submissions.
- 4.5 Following close of the survey, 40 responses were received and an outline of the comments received is detailed below:

5 SURVEY RESPONSES

- 5.1 Overall the responses to the survey were positive with
- 78% of respondents happy to proceed with the paper light approach to committee meetings going forward
 - 98% happy with the level of support provided to Members through the Council Business Unit – with suggested improvements detailing the provision of remote access to inform ; training for Members prior to their first meetings of a committee in respect of the expectations of Committee meeting outcomes and bringing forward the provision of webcasting.
 - Feedback in respect of the timings of meetings are outlined in section 6 of the report, although Members are reminded that the Calendar of Meetings was approved at the Council AGM on the 15th May, 2019.
 - 87% of respondents were happy with the training provision provided to Members although further feedback was provided which is highlighted in section 9 of the report.
 - 87% of respondents were happy with the facilities provided at the Council Chamber, although further feedback was provided which is highlighted in section 10 of the report.

6 Timings of meetings.

- 6.1 Members were asked to provide their preferences of start times for each of the Council Committees and in general the consensus was for the times to remain unchanged. This was agreed at the [Council AGM](#) during consideration of the Calendar of Meetings.
- 6.2 Some additional comments in respect of start times of Committees were noted by Members in respect of:
- A meeting start time of later than 5pm;
 - Start times to accommodate working members of the public;
 - Transport links at committee venues going forward.

7 PAPERLIGHT

- 7.1 Of the comments provided, some Members referenced initial teething problems with their devices which were preventing them from taking forward the paper light approach to Committee meetings. Members are reminded that the paper light approach is a recommended way forward to allow Members to illustrate a

modern approach to conducting and contributing to Committee meetings, boosting productivity, saving space, and making documentation and information-sharing easier. The approach also looks to reduce the carbon footprint of the Authority. It is however an optional step forward for Members to take forward and is not a mandatory approach. It is proposed that those Members who have suggested teething problems or have not got access to the Modern Gov system will be contacted by ICT / Council Business Unit to rectify any issues.

8 COUNCIL BUSINESS UNIT.

- 8.1 Members were positive with their comments in respect of the support provided to Members by the Council Business unit and feedback in respect of any suggested improvements focused on:
- remote access to inform which enables Members to access many internal papers/policies,
 - New members training at the first point of allocation to a committee or group, in order for Members to be aware of what is expected of them and webcasting of meetings.
- 8.2 In respect of the first comments, where possible, Officers will try to insert links into Council reports, to allow Members greater opportunity to access information, especially as Members utilise the paperlight approach in Committee meeting settings. ICT have also been advised of the request and are looking to take this approach forward so that inform is made available on all Members devices, to allow access to policies outside of Committee meetings.
- 8.3 Following an Election, all Members are provided with a detailed induction programme to assist them going forward with their roles. Following this feedback, a review of the training provided will be undertaken to ensure that it is 'fit for purpose'. It is suggested that a meeting with a new Member and Chair of a Committee or Vice Chair as well as the Interim Head of Democratic Services is taken forward prior to a Committee meeting to assist the new committee Member with the Committees expectations and focus.
- 8.4 The provision of webcasting has already been highlighted by the Democratic Services Committee following the recent working group report, and an implementation plan looking to address these recommendations was considered during agenda item 5 of this meeting.

9 TRAINING PROVISION.

- 9.1 Members took the opportunity to discuss the pre-committee training events that were scheduled during the 2018-19 Municipal year during their survey feedback, with Members commenting on their difficulty of attending such training due to work / family commitments and due to traffic issues. Suggestions put forward to resolve the issue were for the training to be provided

at a later start time and also the provision of e-Learning, with the inclusion of welsh language modules.

- 9.2 The Democratic Services Committee has already noted the low level of attendance at pre-committee training events and has welcomed the introduction of the Members Portal, which will look to provide e-Learning options within the Portal. It is anticipated that the provision of e-learning modules would assist Members in their busy working lives as a tool to support Members in undertaking necessary training to assist them in their roles. Although numerous training opportunities have been made available in recent months, the attendance at such events has been poor. The push to e-learning would hopefully solve the low attendance issue allowing Member to undertake training at a time and place that is convenient to them. The recommendation of the Democratic Services Working Group in respect of the training framework should also assist in ensuring that the training provision provided is appropriate.
- 9.3 As the development of the Members portal is being taken forward and work is undertaken with HR in respect of the availability of e-learning modules through this portal, general Member training will still be provided for Members at Council locations. Specific Member training needs will be identified through Members Personal Development Reviews and taken forward through HR. This year such PDRs have been undertaken through the one to one meetings at Pontypridd or Clydach Vale and via telephone meetings to prevent Members having to travel to office locations. However there will be occasions when general training is needed to be provided for all Members i.e. Medium Term Financial Planning, Code of Conduct refresh training, Mental Health training.
- 9.4 It was therefore agreed at the Council AGM that the provision of training no longer be scheduled before Council or other related Committee meetings and that until the provision of e-Learning is available Members be invited to training sessions to be held separate from a Committee meeting date, where possible, and for training to commence at 5pm to maximise Member attendance, unless an alternative time is agreed with the Chair.
- 9.5 It is suggested that a review of the attendance at such training events is monitored by the Democratic Services Committee, with a review undertaken prior to the AGM.

10. MEMBERS FACILITES

- 10.1 Members were asked to comment on the facilities made available to Members within the Council Headquarters in respect of meeting room provision, private rooms for each political party and a Member library.
- 10.2 Comments back from Members revolved around webcasting, microphones, voting system and charging facilities for devices. As referenced earlier in the report and during the meeting Democratic Services Committee have already highlighted issues within the Council Chamber and identified requirements going forward in respect of webcasting and electronic charging points.

Therefore the issues identified above will be captured within the reviews that are to be undertaken.

- 10.3 Additional comments related to the existence of the Members library and the location of the Council chamber and its lack of sufficient transport links.
- 10.4 The Members library is located within Block F of the Pavilions, Clydach Vale and as reported in the report to Democratic Services in November, the location of the library needs to be re-addressed for ease of Members access and the contents of the library with the materials provided. Staff within the Council Business Unit are trying to utilise the Members Library section within Modern Gov to provide access to electronic information to Members. Provision of access to electronic materials will also be made available through an online library through the Members Portal that is being developed.
- 10.5 Private meeting rooms for each of the political groups and independent Member are available in Block C of the Pavilions for Members to utilise.
- 10.6 A further meeting room has been created within Block A of the Pavilions for Members to utilise for smaller Committee meetings rather than having to utilise the Council Chamber, which can sometimes feel to big a setting for small meetings. Although acoustics in the room are good, work will need to be undertaken in respect of the provision of microphones and webcasting if taken forward.
- 10.7 A Members lounge area is available within Block A, with provision for seating, telephone and a vending machine for refreshments. This is a secure location that Members can utilise in advance of meetings.

11 **Additional Comments**

- 11.1 Within the survey Members were provided with the opportunity to provide further comments to assist in the provision of support to Members. Comments included:
 - Dissemination of the Hierarchy of Senior Officers and their corresponding responsibilities;
 - General contact list of officers
 - Timely information on work / issues affecting Members wards
- 11.2 Details of the hierarchy of Officers is contained within the Council Constitution and details of which can be circulated to Members for information. A contact list of officers has previously been provided to Members and the Council Business Unit will update this list for accuracy and again will disseminate to Members, following the agreement of the Democratic Services Committee.
- 11.3 In respect of the access to information in respect of ward issues this comment will have been addressed through the development of the Members Information policy as advised upon during agenda item 6 of the meeting.

12 Conclusion.

- 12.1 Members are thanked for their contributions to the survey and as outlined above, each of the comments will be addressed as and when appropriate.

13 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The results of the survey allow for each Member to put forward their comments and suggestions into the work of the Council Business unit and provide valuable insight into the needs and support for each Member. The report encourages the authority to examine the way that business is conducted to ensure the equality of access and involvement of all Councillors.

14. CONSULTATION

- 14.1 Members Survey 2019.

15. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 15.1 Any financial implications aligned to the suggestions put forward by Members will be considered as and when taken forward.

16 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 None

17. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 17.1 The work of all Councillors is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan, hence ensuring Members are fully supported in undertaking their roles is important to the work of the Council overall.
- 17.2 Ensuring all Members are supported and have equal access to support and development links to the future generations well being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

JULY 2019

REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS - Democratic Services – Support for Members

Democratic Services – 12th November, 2018.