



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

28<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2018

### COUNCIL

#### RECORDING OF MEMBER ATTENDANCE

#### REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

**Author:** Mrs Emma Wilkins: – Democratic Services - Council Business Unit

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the decision taken forward by the Democratic Services Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, in respect of the recording of Member Attendance.

#### 2. RECOMEMNDATIONS

- 2.1 That Full Council endorses the decision taken forward by the Democratic Services Committee as outlined below:
- i. To the future recording of Members attendance utilising the following categories of apologies:
    - a) **Council Duties** – i.e. attendance at another Council meeting /representing the Council at a specific event – i.e Mayoral duties / Cabinet Member duties.
    - b) **Business Duties** – i.e. LEA School Governor Duties / Community Council duties / Outside Bodies / Community Health Council
    - c) **Carer Responsibilities** – Including caring for both younger and older generations / Family Members.
    - d) **Sickness**
    - e) **Work Commitments**
    - f) **Bereavement**
    - g) **Apology**
  - ii. Subject to 2.1(i) That the Interim Head of Democratic Services notifies all Members of the agreed way forward for all future meetings, taking into

consideration the time required to amend the current attendance recording system.

- iii. Subject to 2.1(i) That the Interim Head of Democratic Services provides feedback to the Council's Standards Committee in respect of the reporting of Member Attendance.
- iv. That the proposed way forward of recording Member Attendance is utilised until the full implementation of the Modern.Gov system in respect of recording of attendance.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The need to ensure Member attendance is recorded accurately, illustrating apologies and absences accordingly.

### **4 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 At the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> November Members considered the report 'Member Attendance', which is attached as Appendix A.

### **5 RECORDING OF ATTENDANCE**

- 5.1 Member attendance data is now publically available on the Council website and can be accessed under each Member's profile, within the ['Councillors webpage'](#)
- 5.2 Information is available regarding the number of meetings held, the number of meetings attended and whether apologies were provided for non attendance, and is updated on a monthly basis. The data runs from the beginning of the Municipal Year.

#### **ACCURACY OF RECORDING**

- 5.3 Since publication of the data, concerns have been raised in respect of the data not reflecting:-
  - whether the apology was provided due to attendance at another Council Business engagement
  - attendance at meetings of outside bodies
  - The recording of apologies when Members have been invited to a meeting but not on the Membership.

### **ADDRESSING THE CONCERNS**

5.4 To address the issues, Members of the Democratic Services Committee agreed that the following six categories are utilised by Members when providing apologies for non attendance, if appropriate:

- **Council Duties** – i.e. attendance at another Council meeting /representing the Council at a specific event – i.e Mayoral duties / Cabinet Member duties.
- **Business Duties** – ie LEA School Governor Duties / Community Council duties / Outside Bodies / Community Health Council
- **Carer Responsibilities** – Including caring for both younger and older generations / Family Members.
- **Sickness**
- **Work Commitment** – Unavoidable work commitments
- **Bereavement**

5.5 It is anticipated that the offering of the above information when a Member is unable to attend a meeting will provide a more consistent and clear picture of Member attendance. For all other reasons i.e. Holidays or traffic issues preventing a Member from attending a meeting these will be recorded under 'Apologies'. If Members do not wish to provide a reason then an 'Apology' will be recorded.

5.6 If no apology or any of the above is not provided prior to a Committee meeting, the attendance record will indicate 'Non Attendance'.

5.7 In respect of the recording of full and partial attendance it has become apparent that there is no clear way of recording this information and therefore going forward partial attendance will not be recorded for the purposes of Attendance stats. However this information will be recorded within the Committee meeting minutes if appropriate.

5.8 All Members are able to attend any Committee meeting, although addressing Committee is at the discretion of the Chair. There have been numerous incidences where all Members have been invited to participate in certain Committees to allow them opportunity to access information / take part in consultations etc. For example at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> June the Committee summons invited all Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs due to discussions in respect of Committee Work Programmes. It has been noted that on such occasions some non committee members offered apologies for attendance which were subsequently recorded against their attendance details. Going forward it is proposed that apologies will only be recorded for Committee Members only and not invitees. If a Member does

attend a Committee that they are not formally a Member of this will however be recorded against their attendance figures.

- 5.9 Members had previously requested that to paint a full picture of Members attendance, attendance at outside bodies meetings also be recorded. In order to allow this detail to be recorded it would be the responsibility of the Member to advise of their attendance or non attendance at these meetings, as Committee Services would not hold or be able to validate such information. Members of the Democratic Services considered that the recording of outside bodies was not practical and would not provide a consistent and clear picture of attendance going forward.
- 5.10 The Democratic Services Committee have also looked for Officers to review the recording of Planning & Development Site Visits and the publishing of Member attendance in other formats, rather than just percentage form.
- 5.10 The recording of Attendance utilising the above categories would need to be from a point of time, with no changes retrospectively to what has already been recorded. Time would also need to be allowed for the new way of recording to be implemented. It was agreed that the Interim Head of Democratic Service would notify all Members of when the changes would be taken forward.

## **6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Recording of Member attendance, as suggested within the report will ensure that all Members attendance records reflect an accurate position of attendance.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Democratic Services Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 None.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 None

## **10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 10.1 The work of all of the Council's Committees is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan, hence Members attendance is important to achieving such delivery.

10.2 With the categorisation of apologies taken forward it links to the future generations well being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

11.1 Members' attendance at Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings are recorded and published in the interests of transparency and good governance.

11.2 If Members wish to take forward the recording of the apologies as outlined within the report, Members will need to allow for the current system of recording to be amended to reflect the changes. Due to the changes needed to accommodate this way forward, time will need to be given to ensure the system can publish the data as required.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2018**

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Attendance**

Democratic Services Committee – [12<sup>th</sup> November 2018](#)

Democratic Services - [October 2016](#)

Corporate Governance & Constitution Committee – [May 2018](#)



## APPENDIX A

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

12<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2018

#### DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

#### RECORDING OF MEMBER ATTENDANCE

#### REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

**Author:** Mrs Emma Wilkins: – Democratic Services - Council Business Unit

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the current position in respect of recording attendance and to recommend a way forward for all Committee meetings.

#### 2. RECOMEMNDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Democratic Services Committee:
- i. Notes the content of the report;
  - ii. Agree to the recording of Members attendance as outlined in section 5 of the report, utilising the 4 categories for absence.
  - iii. Subject to the agreement of 2.1(ii), that the Interim Head of Democratic Services notifies all Members of the agreed way forward for all future meetings, taking into consideration the time required to amend the current attendance recording system.
  - iv. That the proposed way forward is utilised until the full implementation of the Modern.Gov system in respect of recording of attendance.

#### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need to ensure Member attendance is recorded accurately, illustrating apologies and absences accordingly.

## **4 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 At the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2016 Members considered the report 'Members' Attendance at Meetings'. A copy of the report can be accessed [here](#)
- 4.2 In summary the report sought the views of Members of the Democratic Services Committee in respect of the monitoring of Members' attendance at meetings by the Standards Committee and the changes to be made in recording the attendance.
- 4.3 Members were asked to consider whether the following data should be recorded:-
- Members' Attendance/Non-Attendance
  - Recording whether apologies were given (or not) for non-attendance by a Member; and
  - whether a Member remained for the duration of the meeting or left prior to its conclusion.
- 4.4 Following discussion at the meeting, Members resolved that systems be put in place to record and publish the attendance data as outlined above ([Minute 21](#) refers)
- 4.5 Further still, at the meeting of the Corporate Governance and Constitution committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2018 ( [Minute 6 \(11\)](#) refers) Members resolved that *Members' attendance (to incorporate both Council meetings and Outside Bodies, to which Members have been appointed) be published using the Council's website via the dedicated 'Councillors' webpage and that this information be updated on a monthly basis until such time as full roll out of Modern.Gov is completed*

## **5 RECORDING OF ATTENDANCE**

- 5.1 Member attendance data is now publically available on the Council website and can be accessed under each Member's profile, within the '[Councillors webpage](#)'
- 5.2 Information is available regarding the number of meetings held, the number of meetings attended and whether apologies were provided for non attendance, and is updated on a monthly basis. The data runs from the beginning of the Municipal Year.

### **ACCURACY OF RECORDING**

- 5.3 Since publication of the data, concerns have been raised in respect of the data not reflecting :-



- whether the apology was provided due to attendance at another Council Business engagement
- attendance at meetings of outside bodies
- The recording of apologies when Members have been invited to a meeting but not on the Membership.

## ADDRESSING THE CONCERNS

5.4 To address the issues it is proposed that the following four categories are utilised by Members when providing apologies for non attendance, if appropriate:

- **Council Duties** – i.e. attendance at another Council meeting /representing the Council at a specific event – i.e Mayoral duties / Cabinet Member duties.
- **Business Duties** – ie LEA School Governor Duties / Community Council duties / Outside Bodies
- **Carer Responsibilities** – Including caring for both younger and older generations / Family Members.
- **Sickness**

5.5 It is anticipated that the offering of the above information when a Member is unable to attend a meeting will provide a more consistent and clear picture of Member attendance. For all other reasons i.e. Holidays or traffic issues preventing a Member from attending a meeting these will be recorded under 'Apologies'.

5.6 If no apology or any of the above is provided prior to a Committee meeting, the attendance record will indicate 'Non Attendance'.

5.7 In respect of the recording of full and partial attendance it has become apparent that there is no clear way of recording this information and therefore going forward partial attendance will not be recorded for the purposes of Attendance stats. However this information will be recorded within the Committee meeting minutes if appropriate.

5.8 All Members are able to attend any Committee meeting, although addressing Committee is at the discretion of the Chair. There have been numerous incidences where all Members have been invited to participate in certain Committees to allow them opportunity to access information / take part in consultations etc. For example at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> June the Committee summons invited all Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs due to discussions in respect of Committee Work Programmes.

It has been noted that on such occasions some non committee members offered apologies for attendance which were subsequently recorded against their attendance details. Going forward it is proposed that apologies will only be recorded for Committee Members only and not invitees. If a Member does attend a Committee that they are not formally a Member of this will however be recorded against their attendance figures.

- 5.9 Members have requested that to paint a full picture of Members attendance, attendance at outside bodies meetings also be recorded. In order to allow this detail to be recorded it will need to be the responsibility of the Member to advise of their attendance or non attendance at these meetings, as Committee Services would not hold or be able to validate such information. Members will need to consider whether the recording of outside bodies attendance and the approach suggested is practical going forward, and as to whether such recording would provide a consistent and clear picture of attendance.

## **6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Recording of Member attendance, as suggested within the report will ensure that all Members attendance records reflect an accurate position of attendance.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 No consultation is required on this matter.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 None.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 None

## **10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 10.1 The work of all of the Council's Committees is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan, hence Members attendance is important to achieving such delivery.
- 10.2 With the categorisation of apologies taken forward it links to the future generations well being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 Members' attendance at Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings are recorded and published in the interests of transparency and good governance.
- 11.2 If Members wish to take forward the recording of the apologies as outlined within the report, Members will need to allow for the current system of recording to be amended to reflect the changes. Due to the changes needed to accommodate this way forward, time will need to be given to ensure the system can publish the data as required.

**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee*** – Overview & Scrutiny.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**12<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2018**

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Attendance**

Democratic Services - October 2016

Corporate Governance & Constitution Committee – May 2018