

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on Monday, 15th July, 2013 at 5 p.m. at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor M.Webber – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

L.M.Adams
A.Calvert
(Mrs.)A.Crimmings
(Mrs.)M.E.Davies
P.Griffiths
P.Howe
(Mrs.)S.Jones
R.K.Turner

Officers in Attendance

Mr.C.B.Jones – Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services and Head of Democratic Services
Ms.K.May – Democratic Services Manager

15 CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chair, County Borough Councillor P.Jarman the Vice-Chair, County Borough Councillor M.Webber took the chair. Mr.C.B.Jones, Service Director, Legal and Democratic Services and Head of Democratic Services referred to the guidance and regulations of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 in relation to the functions associated with the Democratic Services Committee and indicated that whilst the appointment of the Chair of the Committee must be nominated from an Opposition Group it does not preclude the appointment of the Vice-Chair being a Member of the Executive (with the exception of the Leader of the Council) and therefore it was appropriate for Councillor Webber in her role as Vice-Chair of the Committee to conduct the meeting today in the absence of the Chair.

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors P.Jarman (Chair), S.Bradwick, A.S.Fox and S.Lloyd.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

18 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 3rd April, 2013 were approved as a correct record.

REPORTS OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

**19 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 –
CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – REMOTE ATTENDANCE**

The Head of Democratic Services sought Members comments in relation to the Draft Guidance published by the Welsh Government in respect of Remote Attendance as shown at Appendix 1 to the report and advised that at a recent meeting of the Wales Monitoring Officers and Governance Group, it was confirmed that Welsh Government Officials now agreed that the correct interpretation of the Measure is that remote attendance is discretionary and not mandatory.

He also updated Members on the grant funding for remote attendance/webcasting of Council meetings and development/establishment of Community Council websites and indicated that the grant funding of £500 had been bestowed to each of the Town/Community Councils within Rhondda Cynon Taf for improvements in their publication and accessibility on the internet.

At the meeting, Mr.C.B.Jones verbally reported that the Statutory Guidance made under Section 5 (paragraph 1.4) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 in respect of Annual Reports by Members of a Local Authority places a duty on himself in his role as Head of Democratic Services to assist Members in the carrying out of their functions and organisation of the annual report process. However, the Measure prevents the Head of Democratic Services from providing support and advice to a Member of an Executive in relation to the Carrying out of that Member's executive functions, but the production of an annual report, even if it made reference to the Member's executive activities, is not an executive function in itself. In view of this statutory guidance, the views of Members were also sought as to whether the Annual Reports of Members should come within the remit of the Terms of Reference of this Committee.

Following consideration of the consultation document and the comments made by the Head of Democratic Services, it was **RESOLVED –**

1. That at the meeting of Council on the 24th July, 2013, Members be requested to endorse the comments of the Democratic Services Committee that a response be sent to the Welsh Government by the 21st August, 2013 indicating that whilst Members were generally accepting of the contents of the Consultation Document, they considered that it should unequivocally state that it is no longer a mandatory requirement for Council to institute mechanisms for Remote Attendance and the Guidance should be updated to make reference to the changes to Section 4 as made by the Local Government (Democracy) Wales Bill as passed.
2. That a recommendation also be made to Council on the 24th July, 2013 that the grant monies be used to pilot remote attendance and webcasting of meetings of the Cabinet.
3. That a recommendation be made to Council that Members' Annual Reports come within the remit of the Terms of Reference of the Democratic Services Committee and that the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.

20 SOCIAL MEDIA – A GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS (WLGA)

The Head of Democratic Services attached to his report at Appendix 1 a guide prepared by the WLGA for Councillors who would like to use Social Media as a tool to share information, open new dialogue with the people in their community and beyond and engage their electorate in productive two-way conversation. The deadline for responses was the 16th July, 2013.

Following consideration of the document as prepared by the WLGA, it was **RESOLVED –**

1. To note the contents of the guidance on Social Media as prepared by the WLGA and that the comments of Members in relation to the complaints procedure be reported to the Members Support Officers (MSO) Network (facilitated by the WLGA) on the 16th July, 2013 by the Democratic Services Manager
2. That when published the final document be emailed to all Councillors.

21 **ITEMS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE MEETINGS
OF THE COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED – To agree the items for further consideration at future meetings of this Committee as listed on the agenda.

**M.Webber
Chair**

The meeting closed at 5.32 p.m.