

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on Wednesday, 5th November, 2014 at 5 p.m. at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor P.Jarman – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

L.M.Adams	P.Griffiths
S.Bradwick	P.Howe
A.Calvert	M.Norris
(Mrs.)A.Davies	M.Webber (Vice-Chair)

Officers in Attendance

Mr.C.B.Jones – Services Director, Legal & Democratic Services and Head of Democratic Services

Ms.D.Hughes – Head of Organisational Development

Mrs.M.Warburton – HR Advisor

Ms.K.May – Democratic Services Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs.)M.E.Davies, A.S.Fox, (Mrs.)S.Jones, S.Lloyd and K.Morgan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 8th October, 2013 were approved a correct record.

4. PRESENTATION- PROMOTION OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

The Committee received Ms.D.Hughes, Head of Organisational Development and Ms.K.May, Democratic Services Manager who with the aid of PowerPoint slides provided Members with an overview of the following items:-

- Outline of training undertaken by Members during the period 2013/14

- Comparison of attendance at training between 2012-13 and 2013-14.
- RCTSource
 - The RCTSource is the name that has been given to the learning pool product that was developed by the IDeA for local authorities. The product enables the development of e-learning modules by a local authority which can be deployed to staff and elected Members using the learning pool website. The product also allows the sharing of e-learning modules between local authorities who can then contextualise the module to their own needs. Learning Pool also produces learning which can be used at a local level.
 - The benefits of this approach, were reported upon such as:
 - Learning can be accessed by all staff and members irrespective of whether they are on the Council ICT infrastructure (i.e staff and Members can log in at home from mobile devices such as iPads, smartphones and also pcs and laptops).
 - Learning can be undertaken at the learner's own pace at a time that is most convenient to them.
 - Learning modules can be developed quickly and deployed through the RCTSource to meet the needs of the organisation (the Managing my Future area was highlighted as an example of this which was developed to assist staff who may be impacted by service changes).
 - Programmes of learning can be developed and modules made mandatory where necessary.
 - Assessments can be built in to the learning to establish understanding
 - Certificates can be printed for all learning undertaken.
 - Management information on uptake, completion, compliance etc is built into the system.
- Members were provided with a demonstration of the current site and it was reported that certain training events could also be recorded and screened on the site. The Monitoring Officer has presented the `Code of Conduct` e-learning to screen and also Planning training events have also been recorded and are to be used on the RCTSource from monies obtained from the grant funding awarded to the Council from the Welsh Government for remote attendance and webcasting of Council meetings (as outlined later on in the meeting (Minute No.6 below refers).
- Further modules had been developed for Members by Learning Pool but had not yet been contextualised to accommodate differences within Wales.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** – to note the information provided within the presentation and to also note that Members were pleased that the take-up of training by Members had improved year upon year.

5. **PROPOSAL FOR THE DELIVERY OF HATE CRIME TRAINING TO ELECTED MEMBERS**

In his report, the Director of Human Resources informed Members of the initiative which had been launched by the Welsh Government in respect of the Hate Crime Framework for Wales and of the opportunity, whereby Members could undertake a training course in respect of the framework, thus ensuring the Council's commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

It was reported that Hate Crime is an attack on someone's personal identity including being gay, disabled, BME (Black Minority Ethnic), their religious belief and/or because of gender reassignment.

The Hate Crime Framework for Wales as launched by the Welsh Government in May of this year concentrated on three themes:

- Prevention
- Supporting Victims; and
- Improving Operational Response

The Council has a Hate Crime equality objective within its Strategic Equality Plan and Members were advised of the Hate Crime training course, which had been developed and had been successfully piloted, covering areas such as – What is Hate Crime?, Different Forms of Hate Crime and Ways to report Hate Crime.

RESOLVED – To approve the Hate Crime training course for elected Members and that arrangements be made for this to be delivered by the Council's Equality and Diversity Team prior to the Council Meeting on the 25th February, 2015 to commence at 2.30 p.m. and conclude at 4.30 p.m. (2 hour session).

REPORTS OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

6. **REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS – GRANT MONIES**

In his report, the Head of Democratic Services sought the endorsement of Members to the action taken by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee in respect of the use of the remaining grant monies from the Welsh Government, which had been awarded to the Authority in the sum of £40,000 to enable broadcasting of all/some Council meetings on the website and also to enable meetings for remote attendance by Councillors at Council meetings.

Reference was made to the report that was presented to the reconvened meeting of the Annual Council on the 28th May, 2014, where it was resolved by Minute No.18 “.....to refer the matter of webcasting to the Democratic Services Committee”.

Members were reminded that some of the grant funding had been used for the webcasting of some Cabinet meetings, the viewings of which were very low and whilst the Welsh Government had agreed for any remaining monies to be carried over to this financial year, the whole of the grant funding must be spent by the 31st March, 2015. Therefore, following discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, it was agreed that the remaining money would be used to webcast six meetings (five of which would be live) of the Development Control Committee; recording of planning training events to be screened and used on RCTSource and a remote attendance/webcast of a Cabinet meeting.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED –**

1. To note the contents of the report.
2. To endorse the action taken by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee in approving the remaining monies of the grant funding to be used for:
 - Webcasting of meetings of the Development Control Committee.
 - Recording of planning training events to be screened and used on RCTSource.
 - Remote attendance of a Cabinet meeting.
3. That the matter be reported to the next meeting of the Council.

7. 2015/16 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES

In his report, the Head of Democratic Services sought the views of Members in relation to Determination 6 (paragraphs 3.21 – 3.23) of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report for 2015/16 regarding supporting the work of local authority elected Members.

The Head of Democratic Services reported Members had not been furnished with the full report of the Panel due to its volume and given that the response of the Democratic Services Committee could only relate to the section relating to – supporting the work of local authority elected Members, the relevant paragraphs i.e. 3.21 – 3.23 were set out in the report.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED –**

1. That a response by the Democratic Services Committee be not forwarded to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales by the deadline of the 27th November, 2014.
2. That should there be cases of specific needs by individual Members, then the level of support to be provided be considered by the Head of Democratic Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the

Committee and any proposals arising therefrom be reported to Council as to what is considered to be reasonable on an anonymous basis.

8. REVIEW OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011

The Head of Democratic Services informed Members of the review that was being undertaken by the Welsh Government in respect of the provisions introduced by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to support Members to effectively undertake their representational and scrutiny roles.

He reported that on the 19th September, 2015, the Leaders and Chief Executives of Welsh Local Authorities were contacted by Welsh Government indicating that a review was being undertaken on the provisions introduced by the Measure, which would be approached by each Authority nominating four attendees to contribute to one of three workshop events which were being held during the month of October. Officers and Members from this Authority attended the third and final workshop on Friday, 24th October, 2014 and attached to the report were the questions asked at each of the three "Discussion Tables", which were facilitated by officials of the Welsh Government.

The Head of Democratic Services further reported that the findings from the review would be reported to local authorities in the next few months and it was **RESOLVED** – to note the information and that a report be presented to this Committee following the findings of the Welsh Government into the Review of the Local Government (Wales) Measure, 2011.

VERBAL UPDATES FROM THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

9. MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORTS

The Head of Democratic Services reported that Section 5 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure, 2011 requires County and County Borough Council (local authorities) to ensure that all their elected Members are able to make an annual report on their Council activities during the previous year and he expressed concern that whilst the provision of support and advice is available to enable Members to carry out this function, to date the take up had been very low, so much so that not one annual report had been published on the Council's website, which had also been remarked upon by the Minister for Local Government. It was appreciated that within the statutory guidance Local Government (Wales) Measure, 2011, it is not a requirement for a Member to produce an annual report but a duty for the Authority to ensure arrangements are in place to facilitate the publication of such reports, it is a requirement of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development that those Members in receipt of a Senior Salary must publish an annual report and therefore this could be detrimental in the Authority sustaining the Advanced Level of the Charter.

RESOLVED – That Members be further encouraged to produce Annual Reports and that such reports be published on the Council's website within

the next few weeks and the link be emailed to the Welsh Government and the WLGA.

10. MAINTAINING THE ADVANCE LEVEL OF THE WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Democratic Services informed Members that following the award to the Council of the Advanced level of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development in 2010, the period had now elapsed as the first two levels lapses after a period of three years (a one year reprieve had been granted by the WLGA in view of the County Borough elections in 2012) and at this point, the Authority can re-apply for their current level award or for the next level.

The Council's submission of evidence to maintain the Advance level of the Charter had been sent to the WLGA and subject to the publication of Members' Annual reports, especially for those in receipt of a senior salary, the Authority would be successful in maintaining this award.

The Head of Democratic Services reminded Members that this Authority was the only Authority in Wales to have achieved all levels of the Charter as 'The Good Practice and Innovation Award' was presented to the Leader at the meeting of Council held on the 25th June, 2014 by Mr.S.Thomas, Chief Executive of the WLGA.

RESOLVED – to note the information and that the Officers concerned be thanked for their work in achieving the awards of all levels of the Charter.

**P.Jarman
Chair**

The meeting closed at 6.05 p.m.