



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on Monday, 12 November 2018 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

### **County Borough Councillors - Democratic Services Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor G Davies (Chair)

|                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Councillor M Webber  | Councillor M Adams    |
| Councillor J Bonetto | Councillor J Brencher |
| Councillor G Caple   | Councillor H Fychan   |
| Councillor S Rees    | Councillor E Stephens |
| Councillor G Thomas  | Councillor W Treeby   |
| Councillor L Walker  |                       |

### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Hanagan, Director of Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services

#### **6 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **7 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J James and K Morgan.

#### **8 MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2018 as an accurate reflection of the meeting subject to the following amendments:

- Councillor Adams to be named within apologies
- Councillor Stephens comments to be amended to refer to the question- "Why was only one Candidate put forward?"

#### **9 SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS**

The Interim Head of Democratic Services provided Members with his report which provided an update on the provision of staff, resources and accommodation available to support Members in their role as set out within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (the "Measure").

Members were provided with details of the changes taken forward within the Council Business Unit following the appointment of Mr C Hanagan as the Interim Head of Democratic Services, with the amalgamation of previous teams and the

secured placement of a Graduate Officer within the Council Business Team. Members were advised that the Graduate Officer would provide scrutiny and secretarial support to a specified Scrutiny Committee and would also, for the first time, provide a scrutiny research resource for Non-Executive Members to support their scrutiny responsibilities and wider elected member roles. He added that it would be important to evaluate how this role develops and assess how Members utilise this role to inform and support scrutiny activity.

Members were also advised that a dedicated translation role was also secured in order to provide dedicated support to the unit on behalf of Members.

The interim Head of Democratic services commented upon his position as a member of the Senior Leadership Team adding that this further supported the role of scrutiny and the needs of members, to support the democratic functions of the council.

In concluding his update the Interim Head of Democratic Services reiterated that in his opinion the changes taken forward had improved the sufficiency of resources for the Democratic Services functions, by providing greater staff resilience and expertise with which to support Members. Utilising the Council's successful Graduate scheme would also allow the Unit to expand on the resources available.

Members commented on the report before them and the positive resources referenced in respect of the placement of the Graduate Officer and the translation officer post within the Council Business Unit. Clarification was sought in respect of the arrangements for the translation post and the number of posts within the Council Business Unit to which the Interim Head of Democratic Services responded. Members commented upon the undertaking of further evaluation of the support provided to Members through a questionnaire to Members. The Officer welcomed the proposal and commented on the importance of evaluation and quantifying data, which would assist going forward with the Members Charter. The Interim Head suggested that the evaluation be taken forward towards the end of the Municipal Year to allow the new working arrangements time to embed.

Members **RESOLVED** to

- (i) Note the overall support available to elected Members, as set out in section 4 of the report;
- (ii) Note the view of the Interim Head of Democratic Services, as set out in section 6 of the report; and
- (iii) To agree that the levels of staff, accommodation and other resources are adequate at the present time and that a further report be presented to this Committee by the Interim Head of Democratic Services on the sufficiency of resources for Members' support following the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2019.

## 10 RECORDING OF MEMBER ATTENDANCE

The Interim Head of Democratic Services referred Members to his report which provided a details of the current position in respect of recording attendance and also provided proposals to allow for further accuracy and transparency with future attendance recording.

Members were reminded that attendance data is now publically available on the Council website and can be accessed under each Member's profile, within the '[Councillors webpage](#)'. Currently Information regarding the number of meetings held, the number of meetings attended and whether apologies were provided for non attendance are provided, which is updated on a monthly basis. The data runs from the beginning of the Municipal Year. The Director continued by advising that since publication of the data, concerns have been raised in respect of the data not reflecting if the apology was provided due to attendance at another Council Business engagement; attendance at meetings of outside bodies and the recording of apologies when Members have been invited to a meeting but not on the Membership.

Members were referred to section 5.4 of the report which looked to address the concerns raised through a number of proposals including 4 categories of apologies to reflect greater transparency.

Members welcomed the categorisation of apologies and suggested that a further two categories be included to detail Work Commitments and Bereavement. The Interim Head of Democratic Services confirmed that if a Member did not want to divulge the reason for an apology then a standard apology would be recorded.

A query was raised in respect Members attendance at site visit meetings and the reporting of attendance through percentages, with the Member commenting on the potential unfair picture this way of presenting could reflect for different Members due to the number of Committees they were a Member of. The Interim Head of Democratic Services noted the concern and advised that there was no legal requirement to report in percentages and that the way of reporting and the issue in respect of site visits could be reviewed.

Following discussions the Committee **RESOLVED**:

- i.To note the content of the report and refer the Committees recommendations to Full Council in respect of the below:-
- ii.To the recording of Members attendance as outlined in section 5 of the report and including the further suggestions by Members as outlined below:
  - 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** – ie LEA School Governor Duties /

Community Council duties / Outside Bodies

- c) **Carer Responsibilities** – Including caring for both younger and older generations / Family Members.
- d) **Sickness**
- e) **Work Commitments**
- f) **Bereavement**
- g) **Apology**

iii. 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.

## 11 MEMBERS CHARTER

The Interim Head of Democratic Services provided Members with his report which advised Members of the Council's current position in respect of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.

Members were reminded that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council were awarded the Charter in 2007 and in 2010 were the first Authority in Wales to receive the Advanced Charter. In 2014 the Council received 'The Good Practice and Innovation Award for Member Support and Development.' due to the provision of support made available to Members through the Occupational Health Unit. The Interim Head of Democratic Services explained that the Council were currently out of date in respect of their review of the Charter, although it was proposed that initial discussions are taken forward with WLGA in respect of an appropriate time to take forward the Council's review, whilst in the interim Officers take the opportunity to undertake an internal assessment of the Council's position.

Members spoke of the importance of the Charter, recognising the work of Members and the support needed for Elected Members and future potential candidates. Members commented on the Personal Development Reviews that are undertaken to help support Members in their role and to provide opportunities for learning and training.

Following discussions the Committee **RESOLVED:**

- i. To note the content of the report;
- ii. That the Interim Head of Democratic Services takes forward discussions with Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in respect of a timely review of the Charter.

- iii. That the Interim Head of Democratic Services work with the Head of Organisational Development and the Cabinet Member for Council Business to undertake an assessment of the support provided to Members against the requirements of the Charter.

## 12 DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT - PAPERLESS APPROACH

The Interim Head of Democratic Services provided Members with a timely update in respect of the phased approach to paperless Committee meetings which was agreed at the [Council meeting](#) on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2018, following prior consideration by the Democratic Services Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> February.

The Interim Head of Democratic Services provided Members with details of the devices provided to Members and advised that to date, 46 Members have received a one to one training with officers from the Council Business Unit in respect of the Modern.Gov app, which allows members to access Committee papers electronically, adding that ongoing support is available should they wish to utilise it. He continued by advising that all Members have been advised to use both their electronic copy and paper copy of Committee reports during meetings, until such a time, where they feel comfortable with the system and confident to move forward with only the electronic device.

The 2019 Council AGM was proposed by the Interim Head of Democratic Services as a potential date to take forward the Council as a 'Paperless Committee Council', although acknowledged that if some Members wished to retain paper copies then they could chose to do so. In light of the paperless approach the Interim Head of Democratic Services recognised that work would need to be undertaken within the Council Chamber to afford Members the facilities to take forward a paperless approach.

Members commented on the devices provided to Members and issues with regards to their functionality and in addition the training provided on the devices which Members felt needed to be further strengthened to allow Members to maximise their use of the devices going forward. It was also suggested that the Member ICT support details should be provided to all Members on a regular basis to allow Members to resolve any issues that they encounter. Members suggested that a working group be taking forward to allow such issues to be discussed and rectified with the relevant officers.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

- I. To note the progress made to date and the plans put in place to further enhance the quality of the 'paperless' Committee meetings and;
- II. That the distributing of hard copies of agendas and reports to those Members who wish to utilise the Modern.Gov system to its full potential ceases following the Council's 2019 AGM, subject to the sufficiency of facilities within the Council Chamber and Member devices.

## 13 TELEPHONE PROVISION

With reference to Minute No. 14 of the General Annual Meeting of the Council held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018, Members resolved to refer the report titled "Members' Salaries and Allowances – Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales" (the Panel) Tenth Annual Report" to the Democratic Services Committee for review and to subsequently report any proposals back to full Council.

The Interim Head of Democratic Services set out the proposals outlined within the report advising Members of the suggested arrangements to ensure adequate telephone facilities are made available to support the delivery of their duties. Members were advised of the two options that Members could take forward if agreed by the Committee and the rationale for the options was explained:

- Option 1 - Individual elected Members make their own arrangements for their own mobile phone (including paying the bill) and be remunerated as a contribution towards these costs.
- Option 2 - Council provides elected Members with a mobile phone as part of the corporate contract in place.

Members were advised that a desk-top exercise had been undertaken by Council officers using a smartphone as the basis to estimate the cost of each option, with the figures illustrated within table 1 of the report.

The Committee welcomed the options available for Members to take forward to assist them in undertaking their duties and the positive impact these provisions may have for encouraging future candidates. Following a query the Interim Head of Democratic Services advised that should any material changes to market prices occur it is proposed that these will be reported to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration and where relevant for onward reporting to Council.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

- i. That Elected Members are provided with 2 options with regard to the provision of telephony:
  - Option 1 – elected Members make their own arrangements, pay the associated bill and receive a payment of £19.64 per month as a contribution toward the cost of telephony.
  - Option 2 – a handset is provided and paid for by the Council (no requirement for elected Members to pay a bill / receive payment from the Council).
- ii. That the arrangements become effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 and the estimated annual cost is built into the Council's budget setting arrangements for 2019/20.
- iii. That the proposed way forward be reported to full Council for consideration of all Elected Members

## 14 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

The Interim Head of Democratic Services provided the Committee with details in respect of the proposed arrangements for delivering training to Members with regards to their responsibilities contained within the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Members were advised that as the changes to the GDPR have an effect on everyone, it is important that all Members are provided with training to support them when undertaking their duties. To assist Members, it was proposed that a training session be provided to Members prior to the Council meeting scheduled on the 28<sup>th</sup> November. The Officer also advised that following the delivery of the training session it was proposed that a Members training booklet will be prepared and circulated with the aim of providing a reference point should future queries arise. The Officer concluded by commenting that to support the Council's paperless agenda, it is also proposed that an E-learning toolkit be developed for Members.

Members welcomed the training and the provision of the E-learning Toolkit and following discussions the Committee **RESOLVED**:

- i. To acknowledge the contents of the report, in particular the requirement for all Members to receive training in respect of their individual responsibilities.
- ii. To endorse the approach to an initial training session being delivered prior to Full Council which is scheduled on the 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2018;
- iii. That following the training session, Members are provided with:
  - A Members training pack in respect of GDPR; and
  - The development an E-learning Toolkit for Members.

## 15 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT - FEBRUARY 2019

Both the Interim Head of Democratic Services and the Chair provided Members with details of an event they attended on the 9<sup>th</sup> November with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, allowing Officers and Members the opportunity to discuss any issues regarding remuneration, compliance and member support, whilst also allowing discussing the IRP's draft annual report.

The Chair commented upon the proposed salary increases referenced within the draft report and at the meeting and also spoke in detail about the reporting of care allowances going forward and the potential barriers to claiming through the individual reporting mechanism, to which the Interim Head of Democratic Services responded, adding that this would be looked into when reporting at the Annual General Meeting.

Members were advised that the in order to meet the Measure's requirement to publish the IRP's Annual Report by the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019, any representations that Members wished to make about the draft report should be submitted to the IRP by no later than the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

**This meeting closed at 6.15 pm**

**Cllr G Davies  
Chairman.**