



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on Wednesday, 17 July 2019 at 5.00 pm, Council Chamber 1, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

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

Councillor M Diamond (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor M Adams
Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor G Caple	Councillor A Davies-Jones
Councillor H Fychan	Councillor S Rees
Councillor E Stephens	Councillor S Powderhill
Councillor L Walker	

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr C Evans, Programme and Support Manager
Pritchard, ICT Service Manager,

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following Officer declaration was made:

"Mr C Hanagan, Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication – Agenda Item 3 – I am mentioned within the report and will leave the meeting when the item is discussed and voted upon."

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors K Morgan and W Treeby.

3 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 19th March 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting subject to the inclusion of County Borough Councillor M Adams and M Webber being named within the apologies.

4 DESIGNATION OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Chief Executive as Head of Paid Services provided Members with his recommendation in respect of the designation of the Head of Democratic Services, following consideration of the Review of the Council's Senior and

Associated Management Post Structure reported to Council on the 6th March, 2019 and the decision taken by the Democratic Services Committee on the 23rd July, 2018. Members were advised that in light of the above mentioned changes to the management structure and the positive working arrangements that have been demonstrated by Mr. Hanagan, the Head of Paid Service advised that he believe it would be timely to formally recommend the permanent designation of the Head of Democratic Services role to Mr. Hanagan.

Members commented on the recommendation and spoke positively of the work undertaken by Mr Hanagan in respect of the interim arrangements in place since July 2018.

One member queried the equalities aspect of the recommendation and queried why no other candidate had been put forward for the role, a comment that had previously been raised when the interim arrangements had been put in place.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member responsible for equalities provided reassurance to the Member that the Council was duty bound to comply with the equalities duties and also reiterated her support for the work conducted by Mr Hanagan. The Deputy Leader commented on the Council ethos of 'growing your own talent' from within the Council and the opportunity to provide internal officers the opportunities when possible and justified through performance before advertising externally.

The Chief Executive provided a further explanation in respect of the designation of the 'title' and 'statutory role' of Head of Democratic Services as opposed to this being a specific position.

Following further discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To designate Mr. Christian Hanagan, Director of Democratic Services & Communications as the Head of Democratic Services in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (the 'Measure').

(N.B County Borough Councillor E Stephens wished to have recorded that she voted against the above motion)

5 COUNCIL BUSINESS UNIT AND RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS

The Head of Democratic Services referred Members to 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") and also provided detail in respect of the Independent research opportunities available to Members through the Council Business Units – Graduate Scrutiny Research Officer.

Members were referred to section 4 of the report, which provided further information in respect of accessing the research opportunities available to Members. The Head of Democratic Services advised that to ensure a timely and manageable workload for the Graduate Research Officer it was proposed that a two week turn around at the minimum is afforded to the Research Officer to undertake the research. If the officer is unable to provide the Member with the research within this timeframe then timely notification would be provided to the Member. Members were also advised that once the Members Portal was fully

developed any submissions for research would be made available through this avenue, although written / email submissions would be taken forward until this is available.

Members spoke positively in respect of the research opportunities available and one member queried whether a criteria could be formulated to assist members with the types of research that could be requested. The Head of Democratic Services agreed that a criteria could be looked into although did not want Members to feel restricted in the first instance with their submissions and confirmed that any submission for research would be reviewed by the Head of Democratic Services to ensure the request was appropriate.

Members **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the arrangements in place in respect of the Council Business Unit, to further support and assist all Elected Members and to receive a further report in respect of how the Council Business Unit will support the enhanced approach to scrutiny recently agreed.
2. To note the provision of independent research for Members, subject to the criteria outlined within the report.
3. To receive an update in respect of the take up of research by Members and review the criteria for such research as and when appropriate.

6 DEMOCRATIC SERVICES -SUPPORT PROVISION FOR MEMBERS WORKING GROUP - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE

Members were provided with the draft implementation plan for approval and adoption, following the adoption of the seven recommendations of the Democratic Services Committee working group set up to look at Support provision for Members.

The Head of Democratic Services provided detail of the proposed implementation plan in relation to each of the recommendations including the proposed monitoring arrangements.

Members discussed the implementation plan and confirmation was given that the review in respect of the Chamber facilities included inclusion of electronic voting. A query was raised in respect of the security within the Council Chamber and the Head of Democratic Services spoke of the balance of ensuring members safety whilst also allowing the Chamber to remain publically accessible.

Members spoke of the importance of taking forward E-learning opportunities for the benefit of all Members and it was queried whether such modules would be available bilingually. The Head of Democratic Services spoke of a partnership approach with other Local Authorities taking forward an all wales approach to such learning modules, although confirmation would need to be sort that the bilingual modules complied with the Welsh Language Standards.

Members also queried the issue of accessing wifi within certain Council business, with specific reference being made to the Council Chamber in the Municipal Building, Pontypridd. The ICT Service Manager confirmed that work was being undertaken to address such issues and the Municipal Building was

listed as a priority.

The Chair spoke of the importance of promoting the paper light approach and supported the provision that correspondence be sent to all Members to encourage the paper light approach.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the draft implementation plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report.
2. To approve and adopt the draft plan with regular monitoring reports being brought forward to Committee as and when appropriate.

7 UPDATE REPORT

Members were referred to the report of the Head of Democratic Services, which provided an update in respect of a number of items under consideration by the Democratic Services Committee or had been referred to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration.

Members were provided with details of the current status and position of the:

- Development of the Members Portal
- Lanyard ID's
- Lone Working Policy
- GDPR requirements
- Members Charter
- Members Information - Policy Consideration

Members discussed the various aspects of the report and discussed in further detail the wearing of Lanyard ID's by staff on Council premises. The Chief Executive commented that in addition to the directive sent to all staff, staff were also actively encouraged to challenge anyone on site that they weren't familiar with. Members also commented on the key fobs that Office staff and Members utilised to access Council buildings, which again acted as a form of security due to restricted access.

The Chair also commented that Members should also be providing a positive example by also wearing lanyard ID's going forward.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the updates provided within the report;
2. To receive further updates in respect of each of the items outlined within the report as and when appropriate.
3. That the Head of Democratic Services ensures all Members are equipped with a Lanyard ID and that a directive is circulated to Members.

8 PETITIONS CRITERIA

Members were reminded of the decision taken at the Council AGM in respect of the publication of petitions on the Council Website and the agreement that the

criteria for publication of petitions be considered by the Democratic Services Committee. Members were referred to section 4 of the report which set out a proposed criteria for Members consideration.

Members were advised that the proposed criteria for publication on the Council's website was as follows:

- Petitions of 60 or more signatories, where the issue could reasonably be expected to:
 - I. affect the Communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions; or
 - II. result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant.

The Head of Democratic Services added that if the criteria was met and that all data protection and GDPR rights had been conformed with the petition and a response would be published on the Council website.

Following a query in respect of the criteria the Head of Democratic Services confirmed that the criteria referred to two electoral divisions and a judgement would be taken forward in respect of 'significant expenditure / savings' similar to the approach taken forward with all Council key decisions.

One Member suggested that the criteria be revised to read '60 individual signatories' in case any duplicate signatures were put forward on a petition and a further query was put forward in respect of E-petitions. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that the provision of E-petitions had not yet been considered by the Council.

Following Discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To agree the proposed Criteria for publication of Petitions on the Council website, as outlined within the report subject to the inclusion of '60 unique signatures'
2. To agree to review its effectiveness following a 12-month period.
3. That the Head of Democratic Services arranges for the development of a Petitions page on the Council website.

9 MEMBER SURVEY - CONSIDERATION OF FEEDBACK

The Head of Democratic Services reminded Members of the Member survey conducted over a two-week period from the beginning of April to allow all Members the opportunity to comment on the timings of Committee meetings and in addition to comment on the provision of support available to them through the Council Business Unit.

Members were provided with an initial overview of the 40 responses received before being referred to section 6 – 10 of the report which provided further details in respect of Member's responses to timings of meetings, paper light Council approach to committee meetings, the Council Business Unit, training provision and Member Facilities. The Head of Democratic Services took the opportunity to thank all Members that took part in the survey for their contributions.

Members spoke of the importance of the feedback and its utilisation to encourage more people in the future to become Councillors and to encourage diversity within the Council. The issue of accessibility of the Council Headquarters and other Council Buildings was also mentioned as a potential barrier for future candidates.

The Head of Democratic Services added that the Council recognised the transport challenges and spoke of the benefits that could be provided through the utilisation of webcasting facilities, when taken forward.

In respect of recruiting future Councillor candidates one Member commented on a potential 'Open night' for candidates to see the role of a Councillor. The Head of Democratic Services advised that this had been trialled previously with very little attendance and success and commented that utilising social media and holding events within local communities may serve as a better engagement tool.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the feedback obtained from the Member Survey 2019 as outlined within the report.
2. That the Council Business Unit take forward any actions identified within the responses, as appropriate.

10 OFFICE 365

Through the aid of a PowerPoint presentation and video the Programme and Support Manager, along with the ICT Service Manager, Infrastructure provided Members with details of the 'Innovate RCT' driving digital transformation programme, with specific reference to the roll out of Office 365.

Members were able to view the opportunities available through the system and were advised that when being rolled out to Members one to one training would be supplied.

Members commented positively on the opportunities the system would bring and suggested that due to the different levels of digital literacy amongst Members, different packages of support be made available, with evening and weekend training slots also being provided.

One Member queried whether the real time messaging accommodated bilingual messaging and whether Office 365 was accessible on both the Ipad and the word devices utilised by Members. Officers advised that work was being undertaken in respect of the availability of a bilingual system, with Welsh Government promoting more work to be conducted in this area, adding that if welsh translation was available then they would look to ensure that it was provided to Members. In respect of the accessibility of the system on the different devices available to Members the Officers confirmed that the main functionality would be the same with potentially some minor variances, which would not have a detrimental impact on a Member's capabilities.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the presentation.

11 MEMBERS REMARKS

Members congratulated the Chair on his first meeting of the Committee.

This meeting closed at 6.35 pm

**CLLR M. DIAMOND
CHAIR.**