



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on Monday, 18 November 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Committee Room 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 G Caple
Councillor E Stephens	Councillor W Treeby
Councillor S Powderhill	Councillor L Walker

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

12 Apologies

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillors J Brencher, A. Davies-Jones, H Fychan, K Morgan and S Rees.

13 Declaration of Interest

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

14 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 17th July 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

15 DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - 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"). Members were advised that with the increased resources in place, there is now a greater support mechanism in place for Members which addresses the Wales Audit Office recommendations for the Council to 'strengthen the support for scrutiny'.

Members were reminded that, as previously reported (Minute 5, 17.07.19 refers) independent research opportunities are available through the Council Business Unit's Graduate Scrutiny Research Officer for Non-Executive Members which is the first time in the Council's history that this provision has been made available. Furthermore, a second Graduate Officer is now in post to progress the Members Portal and provide support for the webcasting provision.

Members noted the changes to the democratic functions of the Council, which has been supported by the Senior Leadership Team, of which the Head of Democratic Services is a member. This connection has strengthened the processes and enhanced the profile of Scrutiny.

A number of services provided by the Democratic and Scrutiny functions were referred to by the Head of Democratic Services who concluded that in his opinion (and as set out in section 6 of the report), resources are sufficient to support the improvements. It was confirmed that a future review of resources would be undertaken and reported to the Democratic Services Committee following the Council's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May 2020.

In response to a query, the Head of Democratic Services assured committee that the provision of accommodation for the political groups would be resolved. He added that the requirements of the Advance Charter are being adhered to, documented, and will progress following the implementation of the Members' portal.

It was **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Acknowledge the current arrangements in place for the levels of staff, accommodation and other resources and to receive a further report following the Annual General Meeting in May 2020 on the sufficiency of resources for Members' support; and
2. To note the view of the Head of Democratic Services as set out in section 6 of the report.

16 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME: 2019- 2020 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Head of Democratic Services presented his report in relation to the draft Work Programme for the 2019/2020 Municipal Year and asked Members to consider and agree the rolling work programme attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members were advised that the subsequent meeting of the Democratic Services Committee would be convened on the 8th January 2020 when consideration would be given to the webcasting and the upgrading of facilities available to Members in the Chamber. Other items for consideration to future meetings of the Democratic Services Committee would include the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill and consideration of a number of recommendations to promote diversity (within the remit of the Democratic Services).

There followed a discussion on diversity in democracy on how best to engage with new Councillors particularly those from minority backgrounds. The Head of Democratic Services suggested that remote attendance would be one way of engaging with new councillors and providing funding to support them. Members were advised that webcasting would be an item for Committee to consider at the next meeting in January 2020 following a meeting with the appropriate providers. He outlined the preferred option for Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, which will enable Members' profile, Members' attendance and voting options to be considered. In conclusion, Members were advised that recommendations would be made to Cabinet/Council regarding the development

of webcasting and the agreement of funding to support the development.

Following consideration of the draft Work Programme 2019/2020 it was **RESOLVED** to approve the forward Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2019/2020.

17 POLICY UPDATE REPORT

The Head of Democratic Services presented his Policy Update report which incorporated the following items for consideration:-

- Lone working policy
- GDPR requirements – Petitions
- Members Advanced Charter
- Member Information – Policy Consideration
- Co-opted Member –ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Disability Toolkit
- Member 3rd Party Transactions
- Modern. Gov App – Update

The Head of Democratic Services provided an update on the items within the report and asked Members, where appropriate, to agree to the policies highlighted and note the GDPR requirements in respect of the publication of petitions. Committee was advised that following the meeting and subject to Members' agreement, the Lone Working Policy would be published and circulated to all Members. In conclusion, the Head of Democratic Services reported that the Co-opted Members have now formed part of the Modern.Gov system and the Council Business Unit is assisting the Council's accounts department with the prompt return of the Members 3rd Party Transactions.

Members discussed and agreed the lone working policy subject to reference to 'Public Houses' as a setting, which could place a councillor at risk of harm. Members also agreed to taking forward training on lone working for the benefit of all Members during the Municipal Year.

Members discussed the Co-opted Member ICT Acceptable Use Policy and particularly the way forward in instances should any Elected Member not sign up to the policy. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that any breaches to this and any other policy would be referred to the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Head of Democratic Services in the first instance and in accordance with the Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

In conclusion, the Head of Democratic Services referred to the Independent Remuneration Panel draft report, which would be reported later in the meeting, and would address any additional support required by Members in the event of personal safety requirements.

It was **RESOLVED** to :-

1. Agree to the policies highlighted within the report (subject to the inclusion of 'public houses' within the Lone Working Policy as a place where a Councillor may be at risk);
2. Request that the Head of Democratic Services circulates and publishes the policies as appropriate;

3. Agree to the publication and circulation of the petitions template and highlighted on the Council's webpage for public information; and
4. Request that the Head of Democratic Services ensures that the Co-opted Members to sign up to the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

18 MEMBERS TRAINING AND E-LEARNING MODULES

The Head of Democratic Services presented his report, which provided an update in respect of Members training following the Personal Development Reviews (PDR) and further details on the development of E-Learning modules. Members also received information in respect of the Member's portal, which, although in the development phase will be pushed 'live' following a demonstration to the Democratic Services Committee. It was reported that the portal could also be a mechanism for managing Corporate Complaints or for receiving photographs as evidence of fly tipping for example.

Members discussed and agreed that E-Learning is a more efficient way of developing training modules but there needs to be a short questionnaire attached to the session as a way of ensuring completion. The Head of Democratic Services explained that many of the E-Learning modules can be delivered in-house.

It was **RESOLVED:-**

1. To agree to the undertaking of a Members' survey in respect of the developing topics for future E-Learning modules and Committee receives updates as and when appropriate;
2. To attach a short questionnaire to the end of the E-Learning modules to ensure that Members have understood and completed them as appropriate; and
3. Agree that the Democratic Services Committee receives a demonstration of the Members Portal before it is finalised to ensure it meets the needs of Members.

19 Independent Remuneration Panel

The Head of Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee, provided feedback in respect of their meeting with the IRP on a number of specific areas. For the benefit of Members, a link to the draft Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) report was available on the agenda.

Members were advised there was soon to be an increase in the basic salary for Members of principal councils for 2020/2021 of £350 a year in recognition of the duties expected of all Elected Members.

The Head of Democratic Services also referred to the additional costs of care that are available to Members in order to carry out their approved duties, he stressed that there has been a significantly low uptake within this Council for such costs. He added that with the support of the Democratic Services Committee there could be greater promotion of the costs of care and

encouragement for Members to take up the reimbursement of these costs. Members were advised that this Council would publish a global amount for costs of care on its website.

The Head of Democratic of Democratic Services advised that with the support of the Democratic Services Committee some Members, in keeping with their existing responsibilities, may also require the funding of appropriate security measures to protect them from personal risk or threat. Committee acknowledged the value of providing the right support for Members but also recognised the need to carry out the relevant 'checks and balances' particularly relating to costs of care.

RESOLVED to:-

1. Acknowledge the content of the verbal update by the Head of Democratic Services;
2. Support the arrangements for the further promotion of the costs of care available to Elected Members in RCT to encourage a greater take-up of the provision and for a global figure to continue to be published on the Council website; and
3. Provide the necessary support to enable Elected Members to discharge their role safely and securely, which may include funding of relevant security measures.

This meeting closed at 6.00 pm

**CLLR M. DIAMOND
CHAIR.**