



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 8 January 2020 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 J Brencher
Councillor G Caple	Councillor H Fychan
Councillor W Treeby	Councillor S Powderhill
Councillor L Walker	

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

21 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors A Davies-Jones, K. Morgan, S. Rees and E. Stephens.

22 Declaration of Interest

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

23 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 18th November 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

24 Webcasting Facilities

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented his report which served to provide Members with an update in respect of the introduction of webcasting and the upgrading of facilities available to Members in the Chamber.

The Service Director advised that previous discussions around the webcasting facilities and the findings of the democratic services working group pointed to the need for the facilities to be upgraded and for a costings exercise to be conducted. The recent desktop exercise carried out identified a number of requirements such as electronic voting, translation system and the provision of upgraded audio equipment, camera and recording hardware.

Members were informed that the initial costs associated with the requirements previously outlined total in the region of £150,000 which, subject to approval, will be funded from existing resources (set aside for the Council's forward digital funds). The ongoing annual costs relating to maintenance and subscription costs are estimated to be in the region of £15-20K per annum and will be built into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan going forward.

Members were advised that the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is currently lobbying Welsh Government to provide financial support to all Local Authorities for their respective webcasting facilities.

In terms of proposals to commence the work, the Service Director explained that subject to Members approval the formal procurement process would progress and work would commence in the summer recess so as not to impact on the business of the Council.

In conclusion, Members were reminded that webcasting would allow for greater public involvement in Council meetings and further develop engagement opportunities.

In response to several queries, the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications stated that the furniture in the Council Chamber dated back to 1996 and the current audio system had been in place since 2008 demonstrating the need to upgrade and modernise the current Chamber layout to accommodate the new provision. There would also be a requirement to upgrade the facilities in the Chamber to allow for disabled access and for the Welsh translation services to also be better accommodated.

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communications advised that consideration would be given to confidential agenda items which would not be webcast and to the provision of support to Members by means of a protocol for the webcasting of Council meetings in advance of the introduction of the facility.

Members welcomed the provision for electronic voting citing the current system, a show of hands, as an inefficient way to record votes. They also acknowledged the commitment to broadcast Council meetings on-line to improve accessibility to and openness of the decision making process.

Members requested that a further breakdown of the specific costs for webcasting provision and for the reconfiguration of the Council chamber is outlined in a future report. This would not only demonstrate that value for money has been sought but that equality and diversity have been key considerations. Lastly, Members also wished the report to evidence that a number of viable options available to this Council have been thoroughly investigated.

RESOLVED to:-

1. Support the development of the provision of webcasting within Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, in line with the potential proposals within the Local Government Elections Bill, which deliver upon 'in principal' support provided by members previously to broadcast Council meetings;
2. Support the development of webcasting to further assist with the promotion of public engagement and transparency of decision making by the Council;
3. To receive timely updates into the development of webcasting provision

- as appropriate;
4. Recommend to Cabinet / Council the development of webcasting and the agreement of funding to support the development (with the proviso that a full breakdown of costs relating to the webcasting provision and to the reconfiguration of the Council Chamber is explained as well as demonstrating that all feasible options for the provision of webcasting facilities have been investigated);

This meeting closed at 6.00 pm

**Cllr M Diamond
Chairman.**