DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

1 OCTOBER 2018

Present: Councillor Jones-Pritchard(Chairperson)
Councillors Goddard, Goodway, Kelloway, Lister, McKerlich, Murphy, Naughton, Keith Parry and Wong

1 : ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chairperson on behalf of the Committee congratulated Councillor Jennifer Burke-Davies on the birth of her twins In September.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Ramesh Patel as the Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Forum who was in attendance for the item on Member Development, and Councillor Fenella Bowden as an Independent Member who had asked to observe the meeting. The Chair invited both Councillors to participate in the meeting.

In addition, the Chairperson welcomed Mr. Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services was welcomed to his first meeting of the Committee.

2 : CHAIRPERSON, MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was noted that Council 24 May 2018: -

1. appointed the following Members to the Committee:
   Councillors Burke-Davies, Goddard, Goodway, Jones-Pritchard, Kelloway, Lister. McKerlich, Murphy, Naughton, Keith Parry, Sandrey, Singh and Wong.

2. Re-elected Councillor Jones-Pritchard as Chair of the Committee.

3. Approved the terms of reference for the committee as follows:

   i To carry out the Local Authority's function of designating the Head of Democratic Services;

   ii To keep under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to the Head of Democratic Services in order to ensure that it is adequate for the responsibilities of the post;

   iii To make reports, at least annually, to the full Council in relation to these matters.

3 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest for this meeting

4 : MINUTES - 24 MAY 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

5 : MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Chairperson advised that this item would be taken first following a request from Councillor Patel.

The report set the legislative context and purpose of the report, and reported on: -

- Learning and Development session held since the last meeting;
- take up of Councillors of On-line Learning modules;
- Essential, Committee specific and skills session previously agreed by Committee 5 February 2018;
- Outcomes from the recent WAO enquiry into Scrutiny "Fit for the Future" and an action plan being developed with Scrutiny Chairs on Scrutiny Members development and learning opportunities.

The Head of Democratic Services (HoDS) identified proposed primary learning activities including Committee specific to be undertaken in the next 5 months. To facilitate Members learning activities he proposed that a timing of Meeting Survey be undertaken.

The HoDS drew the Committee's attention to the need for a fit for purpose framework to support the individual and collective development requirements of Councillors and proposed to develop a Member Development Strategy to ensure that appropriate Member Learning and Development opportunities are identified and prioritised to ensure clarity of purpose going forward.

The Committee, in considering the recommendations of the report made the following observations:

- requirements of newly Elected Councillors differ greatly from those of long serving Members;
- political groups provide valuable support to Elected Members including mentoring, however mentoring/ buddying and learning from others good practice particularly around managing casework and signposting were opportunities that should be made available to all Members;
- Learning and development opportunities can be provided in a variety of ways including via all member briefings; workshops; small group session on specific topics or by Committee, but that all opportunities need to be well presented and meaningful;
- Supported the proposal for regional events including joint learning sessions to share costs and provide consistency in learning;
- Externally provided sessions, in particular around legislative or statutory matters have proved valuable to Members in the past.
- the evaluation of the training so far should be revisited to assess what Elected Members found beneficial from sessions that have been held, and that feedback immediately after sessions was essential

- It was recognised that the work of Elected Members is varied and comes with challenges, in particular for those Members who also work and have families. It was felt that more could be done to inform potential candidates of the commitments and requirements so they are better equipped to deal with the role.
- That Elected Members should be encourage to learn from experiences and opportunities readily available to them such as attending Scrutiny, Regulatory Committees; becoming Members of different Committees; shadowing other Members etc.;
- That signposting to self-learning provides Elected Members with a wider range of opportunities.

The Committee discussed the benefits of offering a range of timings of sessions, and proposed that rather than undertaking a Survey of Timings that Members be asked whether they would be interested in attending and the benefits to them of session by topic so that an assessment is undertaken on the value to Elected Members of the session.

The Committee supported the development of a Member Learning and Development Strategy as the framework document to provide clarity to all Elected Members on expectations for essential learning and other learning opportunities and suggested that this be developed in consultation with Party Group Whips who can provide the feedback from Groups. It was also proposed and agreed that the Independent Member should be invited to participate with the Party Group Whips.

RESOLVED – That

1. Elected Members be surveyed on topics of the Primary Training activities planned for the next 5 Months;

2. The Committee Specific Training subject to the finalisation of topic and session be opened up to participation by all Elected Members as a Learning and awareness opportunity;

3. The Head of Democratic Services be authorised to arrange and or reschedule the events following the outcomes of the survey;

4. The Head of Democratic Services in consultation with the Party Group Whips and Independent Member develop a Member Development Strategy for approval by the Committee at the next meeting in January 2019.

## 6 : DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - ACTIVITIES & SERVICE SUPPORT MATTERS

The report updated the Committee on the performance of the Council's Democratic Services, in particular in relation to performance monitoring on Members Enquiries; take up of Members using Modern.Gov; printing targets; number of viewers of the webcast of Council, Planning and Scrutiny meetings and the submission of Annual Reports by Members.

The Committee discussed the benefits and dis-benefits of the Members Enquiry System, in particular around standard responses; responses that do not answer the enquiry; the escalation policy and the closure of enquiries. Members were advised that the Members Services Support officers allocated to each cluster of Members are able to link enquiries; reopen enquiries; chase agents for specific response and that here is an escalation process supported by the Committee & Members Services Manager to deal with issues raised by Members at a Senior Management level. The Manager advised that the team were proactive in dealing with enquiries and ensuring Members were responded to and received the necessary information for them to respond as fully as possible to constituents.

The Committee reinforced issues highlighted in the report in relation to IT infrastructure and the need for significant improvements in connectivity to enable Members to work effectively. The Committee was advised that these issues had been raised formally with the Chief Officer Digital Services.

RESOLVED – That the report and comments received from Elected Members be noted and an update be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

7 : SUPPORT AND SERVICES COMPARISON AGAINST THE WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (WLGA) CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The report provided the Committee with an analysis undertaken by the Head of Democratic Services against the Wales Local Government Association (WLGA) Member Standard Charter for Member Support and Development. This provide the Committee with a benchmark position of how Cardiff was performing against good practice criteria set by the WLGA.

Cardiff scored as follows:

| Status | |
|---|---|
| Red | Does not meet 3 of the 19 criteria without the introduction of new processes |
| Amber | With some significant change to current process 6 out of 19 criteria would be met |
| Green | 10 of the current criteria are met or can be met with minimal change. |

The Committee discussed the assessment and a number of observations were made:

- the opportunities outside of the political arena such as Democracy Week of raising awareness of the role of a Councillor to prospective candidates and to work with agencies such as Welsh Government to improve the diversity of candidates coming forward for nominations
- concerns that the importance of the representational role of a councillor is being lost in the melee of processes which is diluting the recognition of Elected Members roles by the officers of the Council.

RESOLVED – That

1. the analysis undertaken of Cardiff Council against the WLGA Member Support and Development Charter be noted;
2. the Head of Democratic Services consider how 'the Council' can better recognise and meet the demands of Elected Members more effectively.

8 : MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

The report provide the Committee with the suite of model Elected Member Role Descriptions produced by the WLGA and adopted without amendments by this Council in December 2013, and other role descriptions that exist within the Council. The Committee was requested to assess if these fully met the expectations of roles within Cardiff Council and if there were any other roles that needed to be identified so that a report could be submitted to Full Council to adopt Role Descriptions for Members.

It was considered that the role description for a Group Whip was straying into 'political' territory although it was recognised that an idea of what is expected or a Group Whip from the Council's perspective was valuable to new Whips.

The importance of including from the Cardiff Undertaking the Members responsibility as a Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding was recognised as well as a role description for the Chair and Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

RESOLVED –That

1. the Head of Democratic Services set up a working group of 3 – 4 Elected Members to review the role descriptions;

2. the role and person specification for a Chair and Member of the Corporate Parenting Committee be included for adoption as part of any future report;

3. the Sub Group report back to Committee in January to enable a report to be submitted to Full Council in the new year.

9 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee was asked to consider its future Work Programme and the following items were agreed for the next meeting:-

- Member Learning and Development Strategy and proposals for a 6 month development programme
- Member Role Descriptions
- Service Update
- Forward Work Programme

RESOLVED – That the revised forward work programme be noted.

10 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were no urgent items.

11 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 14 JANUARY 2018 AT 5.00PM

The meeting terminated at 6.20 pm