

# City & County of Cardiff Democratic Services Committee **DRAFT** Annual Report 2015/16

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## Chair's Foreword

The Democratic Services Committee plays a key role in ensuring that all Councillors have the information, support and resources they need to represent the people of Cardiff.

Following years of successive staffing cuts to Member support I'm pleased that the recommendation of the Committee that no reduction in services to Members be made to the Committee and Member Services budget was met.

The Committee has overseen many other achievements over the past year. This includes implementation of the Modern.gov computer information management system, the roll out of the upgraded computer tablets and a survey on support for Members. A particularly valuable initiative was the introduction of the All Wales On-line Learning Academy which allows Members to learn new skills in the comfort of their own home at a time convenient to them. Examples of the courses include: Charing meetings, public speaking, managing time effectively and change management.

The Committee expressed grave reservations with much of the Welsh Government draft local government bill as they felt it made the operation of local government less democratic. For example, the proposals to make legal obligations on Councillors in certain areas risked them not being able to prioritise the needs of local residents.

Instead it was feedback that there should be improved liaison by the Welsh Government with local councillors in Wales. For example, better consultation on future legislation and new initiatives.

A key future priority is for the Committee to ensure that Members receive the full information they need in an accessible, timely and comprehensive way to perform their role. It is also important that the views of Members are heeded.

I want to thank the previous Committee Chair, Councillor Jayne Cowan for her unstinting work in championing the cause of Members. Many thanks too to the staff in the Committee and Member Services Office for providing such a professional service in a calm and encouraging way. Thanks also to our former Director of Governance and Legal Services, Marie Rosenthal and a warm welcome to our new Director, Davina Fiore who will be starting in September 2016.

Finally we also wish to recognise the valuable contribution of Councillor Chris Lomax to the Committee. His loss is sorely felt and we will miss his good humour and wise counsel.



**Elizabeth Clark**  
**Chair, Democratic Services Committee**

## Members of the Democratic Services Committee 2014/15



**Councillor Clark**



**Councillor Dilwar Ali**



**Councillor Chaundy**



**Councillor Goddard**



**Councillor Graham**



**Councillor Hinchey**



**Councillor Hyde**



**Councillor Lomax**



**Councillor Murphy**



**Councillor Robson**



**Councillor Ben Thomas**

## Terms of Reference

The Committee remit is:

- (a) To carry out the local authority's function of designating the Head of Democratic Services;
- (b) 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; and
- (c) To make reports, at least annually, to the full Council in relation to these matters.

## Committee Membership and Formal Attendance Figures

The Committee have worked together to progress the work of the Democratic Services Committee. The membership of the Committee has changed during the past year, although many existing members have remained from the inception in 2012.

Councillor	Possible	Actual
Councillor Dilwar Ali	4	4
Councillor Paul Chaundy	4	4
Councillor Elizabeth Clark	4	4
Councillor Susan Goddard	4	2
Councillor Andrew Graham	4	1
Councillor Graham Hinchey	4	4
Councillor Keith Hyde	4	4
Councillor Chris Lomax	4	4
Councillor Adrian Robson	3 <i>(Appointed by Council 23 July 2015)</i>	3
Councillor Jim Murphy	4	4
Councillor Ben Thomas	4	0

# **Member Development Strategy**

## **Background**

On 15 July 2015 the Committee reaffirmed the Member Development Strategy.

The Member Development Steering Group established by the Committee in 2014 met in July and August 2015 to review the Member Development Programme for 2014/15 and benchmark the proposed training against the WLGA Continuing Professional Development for Councillors Competency Framework. The framework sets out the range of skills and knowledge required by Members and provides a 'curriculum' of areas that authorities can consider when developing local strategies on Member Development including generic and specific competencies.

The key aim of this Council's Member Development Strategy is to ensure that there is support in place for every Elected Members and independent or co-opted member to enable them to acquire and develop knowledge and a full range of skills to support their many roles as Community Leaders and representatives of the Council.

The Member Development Strategy identified the following key themes:

- Frontline Councillor including Community Leadership and engagement;
- Corporate Governance and legislation including business essentials sessions on Data Protection; Safeguarding and Corporate parenting;
- The Networked Councillor making effective use of ICT and Social Media;
- Scrutiny and challenge;
- Personal Skill Development e.g. Chairing Skills;
- Induction Programme and Mentoring.

## **All Wales On-line Learning Academy (AWA)**

The Committee also heard from Rachel Searle and Rebecca Bradshaw from the All Wales On-line Learning Academy (AWA). All Members have been enrolled on to the AWA and can access on-line training modules aimed at Councillors and also employees. This provides Members who cannot attend formal sessions to undertake learning in their own time. Each of the courses available are modular and can be completed over a couple of sessions and Members receive a certificate at the end of the session.

Courses aimed at just Councillors include:

### *Councillor Induction and Skills*

- Ethics & Standards
- Decisions for Future Generations

### *Personal Development*

- Chairing Meetings
- Public Speaking Skills

Courses aimed at Councillors and staff include:

### *Introduction to Local Government Wales*

#### *Personal Development*

- Presentation Skills
- Effective Minute Writing
- Effective Writing
- Meeting Skills
- Managing Yourself and Your Time
- Using E-Learning for Your Development
- Self Development
- Emotional Intelligence
- Giving and Receiving Feedback

#### *Handling Information*

- Sharing Personal Information
- Freedom of Information - A Guide for Local Authorities
- Introduction to Information Governance
- Direct Marketing
- Data Protection Awareness.

#### *Health, Safety & Wellbeing*

- Managing Health & Safety
- Stress Awareness
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

#### *People Management Skills*

- Optimising Team Performance - Delegation
- Supervising - Achieving Excellence Online Module
- Training and Development for Managers
- Team Leading and Improving Performance

#### *Change Management*

- Personal Resilience
- Change Management - Change & People
- Change Management-Introduction to Change Management
- Alternative Delivery Models

#### *Financial Inclusion and Tackling Poverty*

#### *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*

Further development of the AWA is taking place and Members will receive an update on additional courses and changes in September 2016.

## **Outcomes:**

- 2 Induction programmes for new Members were completed in 2015/16
- 3 Members undertook the Leadership Academy programme;
- 28 Learning and briefing events were held in 2015/16;
- Member drop in sessions on Modern.Gov were well received;

The events included:

## **Budgets**

- Council Financial Resilience and Medium Term Plans (2 sessions)
- Budget Strategy Briefing (2 sessions)
- Budget Briefings (3 sessions)
- Induction Training & Treasury Management for Audit Committee members

## **Governance**

- Code of Conduct and Members' Interests (2 sessions)
- Scrutiny in a Changing Landscape Workshop (1 session)
- Information Governance & Freedom of Information (2 sessions)
- Corporate Parenting: An Introduction for Elected Members

## **Development Control**

- Building Maintenance Framework & Construction Excellence Wales Briefing
- Webcasting for Planning Committee members
- Planning Governance & Protocols (1 session)

## **Other**

- Networked Councillor - Introduction: Social Media for Democratic Engagement (1 session) and Masterclass (1 session)
- Member Development Programme - Marketplace event - Sessions 1, 2, 3
- Member Parking Strategy Briefing (3 sessions)
- Gypsy and Traveller - Elected Member Responsibilities (1 session)
- City Deal Briefing (1 session)
- Liveable City Report & Corporate Plan (1 session)

In addition, written briefings about many topics were provided to Members. These included: Crowd funding, youth innovation grants, Estyn local authority monitoring visit, Member Library facilities and the Cardiff Public Realm Manual.

It is also planned to work with other local authorities in offering shared training to make best use of resources.



## Members Services – Support for Members

### Background

Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Review of Support to Members Inquiry was tasked to review the provision and adequacy of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to discharge the Council's Democratic Services function and support to Elected Members.

The purpose of the inquiry was to:

- receive an outline of current direct resources relating to support for Members including support to over 350 Committees; sub committees; panels and adhoc meetings and additional clerking to Education Admission and Exclusion appeals approximately 3 panels a week.
- consider guidance and protocols on support; and use of resources;
- receive a summary of the range of duties and services currently provided to Members including level of demand and usage;
- review analysis of Member surveys;
- consider and make recommendations on future provision and services for Members within the budgetary framework;
- note that the provision of services outside of the Directorate namely Members Enquiry Service provided by C2C would be the subject of a separate report to the Committee in March 2016.

The remit of the Task Group **did not** include the provision of Members IT as this was managed through the Members IT Project Group and was under separate review.

Members received details of the resources available for Members Support Services; the staffing structure; and the number and variety of meetings and services provided. In 2015/16 Committee & Members Services provided support to over 350 Council, Committee, Panel and Board meetings, and 170 Education Admission and Exclusion; School Transport and Housing Appeals.

### Outcomes

Following the completion of this inquiry the Committee recommended that:

1. The Director Governance and Legal Services submit a growth bid for 2016/17 to fund a permanent Member Support Assistant post and no reduction in services to Members be made to the Committee & Member Services budget.
2. The Constitution Committee undertake a review of the number and frequency of meetings; the effectiveness and purpose of Council meetings; and the remits of the committees to see if there is scope to combine roles or revise terms of reference to avoid duplication.
3. The Elected Members Handbook May 2012 be reviewed and updated to make clearer the services available to Members and delete provisions that have already been removed such as the dictation service. That this provision be

subject to the permanent support arrangement as identified in Recommendation (1) above.

4. The Democratic Services Committee receive a report from the Director Governance and Legal Services on the Welsh Government consultation on the draft second Local Government Wales Bill and provide their comments to input into the consultation process in particular to highlight concerns on the restrictive nature of the requirements and the need for direct consultation with Members by Welsh Government on the future proposals.
5. The Committee and Members Services Manager in preparation for the next Municipal Year considers how the provision of the helpful information formerly in the Members Yearbook can be made available in an economical format to Members if the consensus of Members is that this would be a valuable tool that they wish to re-introduce.
6. The Director Governance and Legal Services submit a bid for 2016/17 to reinstate an appropriate budget for the provision of hot drinks facilities at a minimal cost in the County and City Hall Members rooms, and that the Committee & Members Services Manager negotiate a base cost for this provision with Cardiff Catering.
7. Cardiff Catering is requested to ask the vending service provider to provide more healthy and less sugary food in its facilities.
8. The list of suggestions made by Members for improved support is taken on board as part of the provision of the permanent support arrangement as identified in Recommendation (1) above. These include other areas that could be managed and developed to support Members in the future which would require a level of staff resources: -
  - i. It was welcomed that following requests by Members, Scrutiny Chair's letters issued following meetings now appeared electronically alongside the minutes of the meeting agenda page. The next step was to include all Chair letters and Cabinet responses for the whole municipal year.
  - ii. Improve communication from the Welsh Government on their work programmes and published data;
  - iii. Refresh the Members Handbook and ensure it is kept up to date and details such as organisation charts of senior managers and operational managers including contact details are published alongside the Handbook on the intranet pages;
  - iv. Reference copies of Council papers to be kept in an easily accessible location;
  - v. Continue to develop and improve the data available; and review the indexing on the on Line Information System (MOLIS) so that it is easily accessible to members and include the following data if available:

- Registers of Council licences/permits. For example, Skips, Scaffolding, Alcohol, Food, Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) Licences
- Officer decision register on Cardiff Council website to have same level of detail as that e-mailed to Councillors
- Section 106 register sent to the relevant ward members
- Comparative performance information for school governors.
- Contractor complaints/performance: work scheduling, contract management and how contracts can be reviewed
- Member briefings and training materials after despatch or delivery
- Good Council practice for example Association of Public Service Excellence, National Strategic Indicators (NSI's) and Public. Accountability Measures (PAM's)
- Performance data with other Welsh Councils and core cities in England.

The response from the Cabinet Member is anticipated in the Autumn of 2016.

# **Modern.gov Information System**

## **Background**

A Committee management and decisions system 'Modern.gov' was launched in May 2015. The system is currently used by over 280 Local Authorities in the UK and dovetails into the Cardiff Council internet and intranet webpages. The system cost £20,000 to set up and has running costs of about £10,000.

The system benefits Members by providing enhanced Councillor profile details to include meeting attendance records; Election results; Annual Reports, Twitter feeds, Committee Membership and other information.

Modern.gov is also used to create meeting papers and provides secure electronic access for Members to confidential documents via the Intranet. The system supports the management of Forward Plans and publication of decisions. This supports the governance of the authority and its stated aim to be transparent.

Member awareness sessions and learning opportunities on Modern.gov was offered to all Members during May 2015. The training demonstrated the Modern.gov platform and the improved webpage content. Members upgraded tablet devices have the Modern.Gov App pre-installed. The App improves accessibility to agenda and reports for Members of Committees. Elected Members, citizens and service users are able to subscribe to email notification of significant events occurring and issues being discussed.

In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards Modern.Gov has a Welsh Language version for the publication of bilingual content. This is in accordance with the mandatory Welsh Language Standards which come into force on April 2016, which is currently used to provide bilingual content and Council Agendas. From 1 April 2016 all Agenda fronts and minutes will be required to be published in Welsh and English.

The Democratic Service team implemented the new system alongside their existing duties. Further enhancements to the Modern.gov platform are anticipated in the future, with a greater ability for Members to self-serve and interact with the Democratic Services team.

## **Outcomes:**

- Provision of electronic agenda packs to all Councillors;
- Reduction in annual costs of printing by £7076.00 and Councillor postage by £5172.00;
- Greater accessibility of bilingual information;
- Increased ease for Councillors and staff to update details. For example, updating register of interests.

## Members Information Computer Technology (ICT) Project

### Background

The 27 June 2013 Full Council meeting resolved to provide mobile ICT devices (Tablets and smart phones) to save money and ensure proper up to date support for Members and to enable them to be less reliant on paper and work in a more mobile way.

Rollout of the agreed tablet devices option followed. confirmation from the UK Cabinet Office that the Council met the requirements of the policy for Public Sector Network (PSN) connectivity in relation to mobile devices commenced in May 2014. This was supported by the Networked Councillor Workshops held on 24 & 25 June 2014 and ongoing training support by Democratic Services Officers and ICT officers.

The business case for the revised specification indicated a potential saving of £56,204 to be achieved over a three year period (2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17) (see table below).

<b><u>Projected Costs/Savings</u></b>						
	<b>Cost of Capital £</b>	<b>Revenue Cost £</b>	<b>Total Cost £ of Option 1a</b>		<b>Current Cost £</b>	<b>Projected Saving £</b>
Yr 1 (2014/15)	17,847	50,764	68,611		89,000	-20,389
Yr 2 (2015/16)	17,589	53,632	71,221		89,000	-17,779
Yr 3 (2016/17)	17,331	53,632	70,963		89,000	-18,037
Total	52,767	158,029	210,796		267,000	-56,204

The Committee received an update on the performance of the tablets at its meeting of 25 March 2015. Members were advised that a number of unforeseen hardware and software faults had occurred during the roll out period. The report summarised the nature of the faults which had occurred and the actions taken by ICT to mitigate those faults.

### Developments during 2015/16

On 15 July 2015 the ICT Service Manager advised that, following discussions with the supplier of the devices, three upgraded versions of the device had been made available for Members to pilot. An evaluation of the project to assess the outcomes, lessons learnt and to enable IT officers to consider any feedback was undertaken following the full meeting of the

The Committee received a report in September 2015 on Members ICT Project Feedback, evaluating the implementation of the Member IT Project. The Committee was advised that the administrative savings on printing and postage had exceeded the target at £28k for 2014/15. However, Members had previously requested that a full analysis of the costs of IT support for the project be evaluated as part of the review. The ICT Service Manager undertook a review of the service calls made in relation to the project, as compared to service calls made under the previous arrangements. The additional ICT support costs were estimated at circa £6,500. The

additional costs of training, Democratic Services staff support; smartphone call charges and keyboards had not been quantified and were not part of the project business case.

The results of the IT Member Questionnaire Survey were set out in the report. A total of 49 responses (65.33%) were received.

Members of the Committee commented on the survey and provided anecdotal examples of some of the technical problems which they had experienced. The ICT Service Manager recognised that there were issues with the performance of the devices. However, these issues had been addressed and the devices were fairly stable. Some difficulties still remained around resetting of passwords. Members were advised that the process for resetting passwords on the new devices would be simplified.

The ICT Service Manager advised that the supplier had agreed to accept the return of the original devices and their replacement by the upgraded device at nil extra cost. Pending the results of the pilot exercise, it was recommended that a phased transition to the new equipment be agreed. Officers advised that the software on the new devices would be the same as the software on the original devices.

The Committee discussed the pilot exercise for the new devices. Members considered that, pending the results of the pilot exercise

- all Councillors should be encouraged to upgrade their devices;
- the pilot of the upgraded tablet be approved and devices be provided to Councillors Dilwar Ali, Hinchey and Hyde to trial as soon as possible;
- officers draft a list of success criteria for evaluation of the upgraded tablet trial;
- the evaluation outcomes of the trial be reported for consideration to the Committee on 20 January 2016;
- pending the success of the trial, the Director of Governance and Legal Services be delegated authority to agree with the ICT Service Manager that discussions be finalised with the provider on the replacement of tablets with the upgraded versions, at no cost to the authority;
- a list of costs for ancillary equipment including an appropriate keyboard, for the tablets be provided to the Committee.

## **Outcomes**

- the upgraded tablets were received in February 2016 and commissioned with the rollout commencing in March 2016 to be completed by end of June 2016.
- 39 upgraded tablets have been issued and a report on feedback from the roll-out will be considered by Committee in September.

## Members Online Library Service

### Background

In March 2015 officers from the Scrutiny Services Team were invited to deliver a presentation providing an update to the Committee on the development of a Members Online Library and Information Service (MOLIS).

MOLIS is being developed to replace the existing Members Library in County Hall. Officers provided feedback from a survey of members, from interviews and from focus groups which was used to shape the content of the library and set priorities. The results of the survey were detailed in a presentation received by the Committee.

MOLIS would employ the Modern.gov platform to provide a document search facility and index file system which would allow Members to access both internal documents and external sources of information. A list of priority documents and external sources was to be provided along with an overview of the search facility and index file system.

As a result of the large volume of documents within the scope of the MOLIS project, it was necessary to prioritise corporate, governance, scrutiny, performance management and decisions. It would also be necessary to allocate resources to the administration and maintenance of MOLIS on an ongoing basis.

The Democratic Services team have supported the populating of the MOLIS to provide a library of information including documents and link to information on:

- Managements structure and key contacts;
- Member Development information;
- Link to periodicals etc.,

### Outcomes:

- The library content continues to be reviewed to simplify access to information required by Councillors for research purposes.
- All Member Briefing and learning sessions are published on the Library.
- New items available on the Members page of the intranet include: **(Some examples need to be included here)**

# Draft Local Government Bill Consultation

## Background

Members considered a report regarding the draft Welsh Government Local Government (Wales) Bill. Members were advised that the report would enable the Committee to consider the Welsh Government's proposals on those matters relevant to the Committee. This would allow the Committee to inform the Cabinet of their comments to be included in the corporate response to the Welsh Government's consultation.

Part 4 of the draft Bill proposes the imposition of statutory duties upon the Members relating to the performance of their functions. Members would be placed under a statutory obligation to:

- *attend all relevant meetings;*
- *hold a surgery at least four times in every 12 months;*
- *respond to all correspondence ...within 14 days of receipt;*
- *complete all compulsory training courses;*
- *submit an annual report about his or her activities as a member of the Council during the period of 12 months to which the report relates.*

The procedure for handling complaints about an alleged failure by a Councillor to abide by the duties imposed was also set out in Part 4 of the draft Bill. If the Council's Head of Democratic Services considers that a Member of the Council may have breached a specified duty to make a report then they may notify the monitoring officer who may investigate further. Power would be given to the Standards and Ethics Committee who would be able to impose sanctions on Members following a hearing, such as no action, suspension or censure.

The draft Bill also included a provision which removes the restriction on a Monitoring Officer also being designated as the Council's Head of Democratic Services. Additionally, the Bill makes provision for the post of Head of Democratic Services to be included within the definition of chief officer for the purposes of the pay accountability provisions.

Members were advised that this was part of wholesale reform by the Welsh Government which was underpinned by the proposed merger of Local Authorities.

## Outcomes

Following discussions Members agreed that the Chair submit a response to the Cabinet to forward to the Welsh Government consultation on the bill. The response would take account of the Committees conclusions:

- Members were sceptical about whether the additional obligations in the Bill would ensure a better public service for the electorate. The obligations did not assess how well a Councillor performs in his/her Ward.
- Members considered that the Bill was unnecessary and unwieldly. It was more important to ensure that systems currently in place worked well. For example,



more credit should be given to Councillors who sat on many Council Committees and panels as a way of encourage more to participate. The current system acclaimed those who had 100% attendance at Committee meetings - even if they only attended the minimum requirement of attendance at Full Council which was only 9 meetings a year. If a Councillor sat on many Committees, resulting in 40 meetings a year and missed one or two they seem to be held in lower esteem than those who had less to attend but have a 100% attendance rate. The committee felt this to be unfair. The way attendance data was interpreted should address this discrepancy and be fairer.

- The draft Local Government (Wales) Bill would make the operation of local government less democratic. Councillors often had to balance families, work commitments and their responsibilities to their residents. They knew best how to fulfil their role. If their role was overly legislated it could make it more difficult for people to come forward as Councillors.
- The ultimate determinant of a Councillor's performance was by local people through the democratic process and the ballot box at election time.
- Members disagreed with the Welsh Government making specific legal obligations on Councillors with regard to attendance at relevant meetings; surgery times, correspondence response times and the submission of Annual Reports. The specific challenges with meeting the obligations outlined above during member discussions should be explained in the consultation response.
- Members generally agreed with the obligation to complete all compulsory training courses. However this was with the proviso that the compulsory training courses were clarified and attendance at compulsory training courses would not prove too onerous.
- Requiring the Council's Standards and Ethics Committee, Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services to undertake the additional requirements in the bill to assess Councillor's performance would add major burdens on officers and extra costs at a time when Welsh local government resources are contracting.
- The Welsh Government needed to improve the way they consulted with local Councillors in Wales and provide better support. For example the Welsh Government should make clearer to Councillors their plans for future legislation and initiatives alert Councillors more effectively to relevant consultations and provide direct and un-bureaucratic updates on Assembly and Welsh Government developments.

Following the 2016 Welsh Assembly elections and the appointment of a new Welsh Government Minister for Local Government the outcomes following the bill consultation is still awaited.

## **Forward Work Programme**

**Brief further detail will be provided here once the Committee have determined the Forward Work Plan.**

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