
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – ACTIVITIES & SERVICE SUPPORT

Reason for this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Democratic Services Committee on the performance of the Council's Democratic Services since the last meeting on 5 February 2024.

Background

Role of the Democratic Services Committee

2. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 1, Chapter 2, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/part/1/chapter/2> requires local authorities to appoint a Democratic Services Committee to oversee the Democratic Services functions of the Council, ensure that the work is adequately resourced and report to the full Council accordingly. The Democratic Services functions include Members' Services, Committee Services and Scrutiny Services, but not Cabinet Support Services.

Issues

Staffing Arrangements

3. Following approval of the Budget for 2024 – 25, plans are being put in place for the transfer of the Protocol Office and the support for the Lord Mayor to Democratic Services. The committee will be updated on the finalised arrangements for this transfer at its next meeting.

Behaviours Survey 2024

4. At its meeting on 5 February 2024 the Democratic Services Committee was advised of the intention to undertake a Behaviours survey with all Members in March 2024. The survey progressed as intended and 59 (63.3%) responses were received from Elected, Independent and Co-opted Members.
5. The team is now working to provide the analysis and an outcome report for the Standards & Ethics Committee.

Member Development

6. The following are the member development activities undertaken since the last meeting of the committee:

Serial	Date	Topic	Numbers Attended	Total % Attended
1.	01-Feb-24	Major Projects - Finance and Delivery	10	25.32%
2.	21-Feb-24	Introduction to Special Procedures	12	12.66%
3.	22-Feb-24	Schools Admission and Appeals	13	14.46%
4.	29-Feb-24	SE Wales Corporate Joint Committee	1	16.46%
5.	06-Mar-24	Equality for Recruitment	3	100.00%
6.	06-Mar-24	Data 101	4	100.00%

Planned Learning:

7. The following learning and development topics were agreed for delivery at previous Committee meetings and work is ongoing to schedule these activities.

a. Age Friendly Cardiff Awareness Sessions

Cardiff became the first Local Authority to be accepted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as members of the Global Network for Age Friendly Cities and Communities in March 2022. The ambition of a Cardiff is to be a great place to grow older. This session will describe the good work that has been undertaken and to enable Elected Members to share age friendly information with their communities.

b. Biodiversity and Natural Resources

This “beneficial” session was identified from a scrutiny recommendation and initial discussions with the Head of Planning to support the use of external facilitators Natural Resources Wales and Wildlife Trust to support the wider requirements of this topic.

Delivery of this topic has been deferred due to prioritisation of the consultation for the latest phase of the RLDP and will be scheduled as soon as practicably possible.

c. Social Housing and Section 106

This “beneficial” session relating to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority, to enter into a legally binding agreement or planning obligation with a landowner as part of the granting of planning permission. These agreements are used for new developments, and they usually would be the preferred method to secure affordable housing at the site.

Delivery of this topic has been deferred due to prioritisation of the consultation for the latest phase of the RLDP and will be scheduled as soon as practicably possible.

d. Media and Social Media skills

A “beneficial” training package which will provide Elected Members with the opportunity to improve their skills and confidence when engaging with the media and on social media.

Future Training

8. The following topic has been identified as a future training opportunity:

a. One Planet Cardiff, Carbon Literacy for members:

Carbon Literacy is a nationally and internationally recognised standard (recognised as such by the UN at COP21, in Paris, where it was awarded as a TAP100, one of 100 worldwide Transformative Action Programs) that promotes: *“An awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.”*

The structure and format of carbon literacy:

- Provides qualified scientific evidence
- Answers common questions and dispels myths
- Focuses participants on where and how they can support/make change
- Provides the knowledge and skills to support carbon aware decision making at all levels.

Cardiff Council achieved carbon literate status in 2021 (the first local Authority in Wales to do so) and is now part of over 7000 organisations across 26 countries providing quality and quantifiable climate awareness training for staff. The council currently has over 60 staff and 3 members trained.

This was achieved by using the Local Authorities Carbon Literacy Toolkit, which was funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) (Now Department for Energy Security & Net Zero – DESNZ), involving contribution and donation of materials and testing and piloting by 13 different local authorities across England and Wales, including here at Cardiff.

To cover the topics and meet the training standard involves one full day (8 hours/two half days). This are delivered by in-house qualified trainers. During 2024/5 we will be increasing carbon literacy training across the council with the ambition of increasing the number of carbon literate staff to ensure carbon considerations are incorporated more into the council’s decision making at all levels. Further information: [The Carbon Literacy Project](#)

These training opportunities are planned to be extended to elected members and feedback from members is requested regarding the following options:

- The provision of a 90 minute Carbon Literacy introductory session
- The delivery of either 2 x half days sessions or a whole day course format in early summer & again early autumn 2024
- Preferred days of the week for the delivery of these session

Following member feedback an initial program for these Carbon Literacy sessions will be developed.

Developing the Members Intranet Page

9. As outlined in the Member Protocol For Accessing Research Support And Information report, work is being planned for the development of the Members Intranet Page. Currently, the existing page contains minimal information but needs to be updated with information that would benefit Members.
10. A new page has been created providing opportunities to improve the layout and content of this webpage. Once fully developed the page could include:
 - a. A calendar of Member activities.
 - b. Latest corporate news and updates.
 - c. Research information and links to relevant data sources.
 - d. Links to the Member Enquiries Portal.
 - e. Member Development presentations and videos.
 - f. Links to Policy and Guidance documents
 - g. Links to forms i.e. Remuneration claim forms.
11. Some changes to this webpage may alter the circulation of information to Members including the weekly diary email. This webpage could also be set as the “home page” for Members when they access the intranet.
12. The committee is requested to consider the options listed above for inclusion on the improved Members Intranet webpage and identify any other information which would be beneficial to Members and could be included on the intranet site.

Financial Implications

13. Any costs from Democratic Services activities and services support are to be monitored and contained within the respective funding sources and budgets.

Legal Implications

14. Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 1, the Democratic Services Committee is responsible for overseeing the democratic services functions of the Council, ensuring this work is adequately resourced; and reporting to full Council accordingly.
15. The Democratic Services functions (which must be discharged by the Head of Democratic Services) are defined as follows:

- a. to provide support and advice: to the authority in relation to its meetings; to committees of the authority and the members of those committees; to any joint committee which a local authority is responsible for organising and the members of that committee; in relation to the functions of the authority's scrutiny committees, to members of the authority, members of the executive and officers; to each member of the authority in carrying out the role of member of the authority (but excluding a member's role as an Executive member);
 - b. to promote the role of the authority's Scrutiny Committees;
 - c. to make reports and recommendations to Council in respect of the number and grades of staff required to discharge democratic services functions and the appointment, organisation and proper management of those staff; and
 - d. any other functions prescribed by the Welsh Ministers.
16. In determining how to exercise its functions, the Committee must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers: [Statutory and non-statutory guidance on democracy within principal councils: governance and scrutiny \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#), which is incorporated within the consolidated guidance on democracy within principal councils published in July 2023.
17. The information set out in the body of this report enables the Democratic Services Committee to oversee the work of democratic services, ensure the work is adequately resourced and report to full Council, as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

The Democratic Services Committee is requested to:

- a. note the information set out in the report.
- b. provide their views in respect of any requirements for future training and the improvement of the Members Intranet website.

GARY JONES
HEAD of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
09 April 2024

Background Papers:

[Budget Proposals 2024 - 2025](#) report to Council dated 7 March 2024.

[Member Surveys 2024](#) report to Democratic Services Committee dated 5 February 2024.