

City & County of Cardiff Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2013/14



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Chairman's Foreword

This has been an interesting and, at times, challenging year for the Democratic Services Committee in developing a cross party Strategy (Annex 1) to ensure that all Councillors have the information, advice, support and technology they need to be effective in their work and to engage closely with their constituents, bearing in mind the financial situation the Council faces.

This forms part of our vision for the Council and its Committees to be valued as the key democratic institutions for Cardiff. We need to show that we are accountable and make robust and inclusive decisions about public services for the city and city region, paying close regard to representing the diverse views of our electorate.

Our vision has been for Democratic Services to be seen, both in Wales and in the UK, as a model of good practice and innovation, and to cost less money. Working towards the WLGA Charter for Member Development has been a key part of our approach this year. We carried out the first ever survey (Annex 2) of all elected Members' training needs to inform our work. The Survey revealed the area where there appeared to be most need for further development were communicating with media tools, and effectively using I.T. to communicate (e.g. twitter, blogs, press releases, media training etc). The achievement of a work life balance was also felt to be a skill that a number of Members wished to address. In response to the survey we have sponsored a number of development events including an innovative session with Councillors from elsewhere utilising Skype to join the session. We also held a very well attended session on the Constitution and will be sponsoring further events as part of a more ambitious and relevant programme in 2014/15 involving Cardiff Met University and Public-i, based on feedback from Councillors.

We live in a world where digital technology is a ubiquitous, and increasing part of our daily lives. Digital hardware such as tablets, smartphones and computers, and the software applications that run on them, are connecting us to individuals, communities and campaign groups at the touch of a button. Digital technology is helping us to consume products and undertake transactions quickly online; connect with people and share content from far away; work on the move; and be more efficient in the way we do business. The promise of digital technology is that it provides elected Members with huge opportunities to transform the services that they provide and new ways to connect with

the individuals and communities who use those services.

As Members will appreciate, making better use of digital technology was an important aspect of our strategy during 2013/14. In a time when we have to do much more with fewer resources, digital will provide a way to improve outcomes whilst delivering efficiencies. The Democratic Services Committee have worked hard during 2013/14 to understand how digital can aid innovation, harness the knowledge and good practice of the private sector, and make the most of the public's appetite for technology. We think the foundations are now in place to deliver on this for Members with the launch of the Networked Councillor Programme and the introduction of secure mobile Tablet devices during 2014/15

The last municipal year has been an exceptionally busy one for the Democratic Services Committee. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Committee and Sub Committees for their time, dedication and support.

A number of officers have helped considerably with the work of the committee. In particular, I would mention the clerk, Graham Porter, and also the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer, Marie Rosenthal; Gill Nurton; Paula Stevens; Sheila Denner; Huw David; and Phil Bear.

I hope you will enjoy reading the report.

Chairman, Councillor Jayne Cowan

Members of the Democratic Services Committee 2013/14



Councillor Dilwar Ali



Councillor Bridges



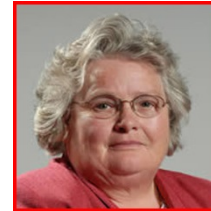
Councillor Chaundy



Councillor Cowan



Councillor Furlong



Councillor Goddard



Councillor Holland



Councillor Hinchey



Councillor Hyde



Councillor McKerlich



Councillor Murphy



Councillor Ben Thomas



Councillor Weaver

Terms of Reference

- To carry out the local authority's function of designating the Head of Democratic Services.
 - 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.
 - To make reports, at least annually, to the full Council in relation to these matters.
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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
Dilwar Ali	5	5
Bridges	5	4
Chaundy	5	2
Cowan	5	5
Furlong	1	1
Goddard	5	4
Hinchey	5	3
Holland	2	0
Hyde	5	5
McKerlich	5	3
Murphy	5	5
Benjamin Thomas	5	5
Weaver	3	3

Informal meetings and liaison with other Committees

The Committee held a number of meetings during the municipal year 2013/14. In addition to the formal meetings, task and finish groups were convened on a member development strategy, application for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development (Welsh Local Government Association) and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

The Chairman attended every Standards and Ethics Committee and was delighted to be invited by the Chairman, Mr Paul Stockton, to deliver a joint presentation to members of that Committee on Social Media. Another joint presentation was delivered by Mr Paul Stockton, with Councillor David Harrington, Finance Cabinet Member for Stockton Council presenting via Skype to Councillors.

The Chairman had meetings every month with numerous officials on the work of the Committee and worked closely on reports which were presented to the full Committee and Sub Committees for their consideration.

Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 - Chapter 2

Local Authority Democratic Services

The Local Government Wales Measure (2011) states that:-

- (1) *A local authority must appoint a committee (“a democratic services committee”) to— .*
 - (a) *exercise the function of the local authority under section 8(1)(a) (designation of head of democratic services),*
 - (b) *review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions, and*
 - (c) *make reports and recommendations to the authority in relation to such provision.*
- (2) *It is for a democratic services committee to determine how to exercise those functions.*

Welsh Government guidance regarding the formation of a Democratic Services Committee was provided to Local Authorities in Wales in June 2012. A membership of 12 was deemed appropriate for Cardiff Council, with each member needing to be a member of the Local Authority. The seats are allocated on a proportional basis, by each group on the Council. The Measure states that “*no more than one of the members of its democratic services committee is a member of the authority’s executive.*”

The Chairman of the Committee was selected from the opposition groups as the Measure states that the Chairman cannot be from the ruling group, unless there are no opposition Councillors on a particular authority. This is not the case for Cardiff Council.

Appointment of a Head of Democratic Services

The Local Government Wales Measure (2011) states that:-

- (1) *A local authority must—*
 - (a) *designate one of its officers to discharge the functions in section 9 (“democratic services functions”);*
 - (b) *provide that officer with such staff, accommodation and other resources as are, in its opinion, sufficient to allow his or her functions to be discharged.*
- (2) *A head of democratic services may arrange for the discharge of democratic services functions by staff provided under this section.*
- (3) *An officer designated by a local authority under this section is to be known as the head of democratic services.*
- (4) *A local authority may not designate any of the following under this section—*
 - (a) *the head of the authority's paid service designated under section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;*
 - (b) *the authority's monitoring officer designated under section 5 of that Act;*
 - (c) *the authority's chief finance officer, within the meaning of that section.*

The Democratic Services Committee has a number of functions, which include to appoint a Head of Democratic Services. The Committee received a report on this matter from the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer following the resignation from the Council of the Chief Operating Officer, Andrew Kerr, to take up a position with another Local Authority. As Cardiff Council was considering savings proposals across all areas of the Council, including the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer's Department, it was proposed that an interim Head of Democratic Services be appointed. The report recommended that the committee appoint Geoff Shimell, the Council's Operational Manager and Senior Solicitor within Legal Services, in an interim capacity.

Mr Shimell is a highly experienced officer who currently supports the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer on governance and constitutional matters. The Committee needs to ensure that there are sufficient resources available for him to undertake the role to the high standards required of the office.

The appointment of Mr Shimell acknowledged the prominence Cardiff Council is placing on this critical role. The Committee's role also

involves monitoring the adequacy of resources available for Mr Shimell to effectively undertake the role.

The permanent appointment will be made following the new senior management structure being put in place. A forthcoming meeting of the Democratic Services Committee will receive a report from the Chief Executive recommending a suitable person. The decision will be taken, ultimately, by the Committee.

Support to Members

A number of meetings and task groups were held on the ICT Project for Members. Following the receipt of advice from the Cabinet Office in Westminster, the project was delayed due to potential security issues which the Council had to carefully consider. Members were kept advised of the issues, and the roll out for the first cohort of Members is imminent. The Committee continued to receive a number of reports on this matter, and the task and finish group worked hard on preparing reports, in consultation with officers.

The initial project to provide iPads was discussed and the option of a Windows tablet was offered as a better solution. The Windows tablet would allow members easy access to their historic mail, allow members to use the tablet as a laptop and also eradicate the need for Good Technology, therefore generating a cost saving.

Work has already started on encouraging Members to rely more on technology, and less on paper copies. The business case is reliant on fewer Members using printed copies with more reliance on efficiency and a change in working practices to embrace technologies.

Annual Reports by Members of a Local Authority

A pro-forma has been circulated to all Members on a suggested way of presenting an annual report, but Members are entitled to present their reports in any format they so choose. However, all reports need to be non-political in content.

The Welsh Government states that it is mandatory for each Welsh Authority to offer support to any member (or ward) to complete an Annual Report in a bilingual capacity. It is not mandatory, however, for Members to produce Annual Reports.

The reports are available online on the Council's Website. Those members of the public that don't have access to the Internet can use facilities in libraries to access the reports with assistance from members of staff.

Wales Charter for Members Support and Development

Members of the Task Group met with Sarah Titcombe from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) regarding the application process for the Wales Charter for Members Support and Development.

A lot of time was spent collating the evidence which is due to be submitted as Cardiff Council's application for the WLGA Charter. Most Local Authorities in Wales, National Parks and other organisations have already achieved Charter status, and we are looking forward to the decision by the WLGA in due course.

The Charter was created in order to give incentive and organisation to the ever growing number of support services for Councillors in Local Government in Wales. The strands consist of:

- Personal, role, skill and knowledge development
- Support Facilities
- Support Services

When the Charter is achieved, it affords a broad framework for planning, self-assessment, action and review. The Charter will seek to support and inspire networking opportunities, the comparisons amongst Councils and the sharing of excellent and ground-breaking practice.

An advanced Charter has been developed by the WLGA in conjunction with Local Authorities and has taken into consideration the changes in Local Government following the Measure.

New Council Website and Opportunities to Improve Democratic Services Online

The Committee were pleased to receive a presentation on the Council's Web refresh programme, which coincided with the soft launch of the new site. Officers explained how the new look site was focused on members of the public being able to access information easily and also improve interaction with the Council.

The Chairman was pleased to have met with officers on a number of previous occasions to see the evolving progress and to provide feedback.

Family Absence

Part 2 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 ("the Measure") introduces an entitlement to a period of family absence for Members of local authorities, during which a Member is entitled to be absent from authority meetings. The entitlement created by the Measure is subject to Members satisfying conditions prescribed by the Welsh Ministers in regulations.

The Constitution Committee recommended that the Democratic Services Committee consider this issue. Arrangements are now in place to support Members who need to request periods of absence.

Remote Attendance

The Welsh Government advised all Councils in Wales of a trial on remote attendance. This was discussed by the Committee and, although it was accepted as a good idea in principle, it was not a scheme which Cardiff would be seeking to currently endorse and adopt. If Cardiff was going to use this approach for Members, a number of resources would need to be deployed - for example, ICT officer support. If Members were not able to attend full Council and wanted to play a part and vote, they would need dedicated officer support to support the technology.

Proposed Training Needs Assessment Survey for Elected Members

Task and Finish Group Members were pleased to receive a presentation from Scrutiny Officers following a survey to Members regarding their training needs. There was much discussion around the findings, and the key themes for development related to social media, public speaking and working with the press. New development courses will be tailored to these and other issues which emerged from the findings.

The Committee also received a presentation and the results will be very useful when those Members who chose to undertake Personal Development Reviews (PDR)'s. Members were keen to explore online training, and this is a strand which will be taken forward.

Networked Members ICT Project

Working with Public-i, Cardiff Council is launching an exciting new opportunity for elected members to learn more about "networked members." The launch took place on the 24 June and to date 40 councillors have signed up to participate in the project. The project aims to support Members to connect to their local communities over the internet and make Cardiff a more paperless Council with the aim of saving money protecting the environment with greater reliance on more electronic methods of communication.

University of South Wales - Presentation on Member Development Professor Catherine Farrell

The Committee were delighted to welcome Professor Catherine Farrell to present to Members on opportunities to develop their skills at the University of South Wales.

The University provides high quality management training at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Courses were delivered flexibly using short course modules, for which credits were awarded which could be used to gain staged qualifications (Certificate, Diploma, Masters). Courses included electronic access to learning resources.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Governance included modules on political awareness; understanding and challenging performance; and governance and scrutiny. Modules are delivered over 3 days at various locations depending on the requirements of the participants.

Each module requires 1 or 2 pieces of assessed work, such as presentations and reports, and a dissertation. Assessments require the reflection of the academic material in the work context.

The Council is exploring funding streams with the WLGA with the view to providing training opportunities for Members, in consultation with the Democratic Services Committee.

Members Enquiries System Update

Members continued to receive briefings from officers of the Member Enquiry System Team. Members were pleased that feedback provided regarding the system was taken on board, and that changes were made to make the system more fit for purpose.

The system enables Councillors to log enquiries online every day of the year, at any time. They can also contact coordinators in service areas who will log the call on their behalf, during office hours. The Committee will continue to receive updates on this issue during the next municipal year.

Training and Development

Since the last Annual Report, Cardiff Council has welcomed three newly elected members, all elected for the first time. A training programme was delivered to each of the new Members. They were also invited to be a part of the mentoring scheme for new members who would be paired, cross party where applicable, with experienced Members who could assist with the familiarisation of the Council.

Performance Development Reviews (PDR's) are being offered to Members, with all members in receipt of a senior salary needing to have a mandatory session. Leaders, Whips and officers are receiving training in order for the sessions to be carried out with their group or opposition groups. Members can also request a review with a senior officer.

A number of training sessions have been offered to Members including WLGA Social Media Training; Public i Networked Councillor Seminars and workshops ; a training session on keeping out of trouble on Social Media led by the Chairman of the Standards and Ethics Committee; and various Social Services Briefings. There was also a very popular session, led by the Monitoring Officer, on the Constitution which a large number of Members attended and contributed.

A Task and Finish Group was set up to discuss training courses and conferences. A wholesale review of the Member Development Strategy was undertaken which looked at support for members individually and collectively.

2014/15 Work Programme

The Committee will be monitoring the emerging issues which arise from the Local Government Measure as further guidance is issued and will continue to progress the work already started on Member Development, annual member reviews; and monitoring the Members' Enquiry System. The Democratic Services Committee is always pleased to hear from Members with ideas for the Committee's work programme.

Public Attendance at Democratic Services Committee Meetings

We are keen to see members of the public attend Democratic Services Committee Meetings. With the exception of confidential items, all business is held in public. All of the public papers are published online on www.cardiff.gov.uk. People who cannot access the internet can request a copy at their local library.

Paperwork will also be available 3 days in advance, and further information can be provided by Democratic Services – democraticservices@cardiff.gov.uk on 029 2087 2020 or the Chairman, Councillor Jayne Cowan, jcowan@cardiff.gov.uk or 029 2062 7757.