

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

26 JULY 2012

Present: County Councillor Cowan (Chairperson);
County Councillors Ali, Chaundy, Furlong, Goddard,
Holland, Hyde, Keith Jones, Margaret Jones,
Marshall, McKerlich and Benjamin Thomas

1. CHAIRPERSON

The Council on 17 May, 2012 appointed Councillor Jayne Cowan as Chairperson of this Committee.

2. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Council at its meeting on 17 May, 2012 appointed the following Members to this Committee and agreed the Terms of Reference:

Membership

County Councillors Ali, Chaundy, Cowan, Furlong, Goddard, Holland, Hyde, Keith Jones, Margaret Jones, Marshall, McKerlich and Benjamin Thomas

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.

3 : WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Democratic Services Committee and indicated that she was keen that the Committee focussed on strengthening the support provided to Councillors. The Chairperson was pleased that the Committee included a

mix of returning Councillors, newly elected Councillors, Chairperson of Constitution Committee, Group Whips and a Cabinet Member.

4 : LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 – CONSULTATION ON DRAFT STATUTORY GUIDANCE

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 received Royal approval on 10 May, 2012. Following consultation, the final draft Statutory Guidance relating to the Measure was issued in late June 2012.

The Chief Officer, Legal and Democratic Services presented the key elements of the Statutory Guidance that were directly relevant to the role of the Democratic Services Committee.

The Measure contains provisions aimed at strengthening local democracy; ensuring that the needs of those Councillors outside of the Cabinet are provided for; and that consideration be given to the separation of Cabinet and non-Cabinet functions of the Council, including the separation of funding.

The Council at its Annual meeting established the Democratic Services Committee with appropriate Membership; appointed the Chairperson; and agreed the Terms of Reference. Meetings of the Committee would be open to the public and the Committee should meet at least one a year. It was for the Committee to decide the regularity and timings of meetings. The Committee may also appoint Sub-Committees as appropriate.

The key functions of the Democratic Services Committee were set out in the Terms of Reference. One of the functions of the Committee was to designate the Head of Democratic Services (HDS).

(At this point the Democratic Services Manager left the meeting)

The Committee was advised by the Chief Officer, Legal and Democratic Services that the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, would make a recommendation to the Committee on a suitable candidate for the post of Head of Democratic Services. This person fulfilling the role would not be prevented from performing other roles within the authority., however care would be taken that other duties did not conflict with the Head of Democratic Services role.

The Committee raised a number of matters relating to the proposals on the designation of the post of Head of Democratic Services within the context of the proposed new Senior Management model and were keen

that the Chief Executive brought forward his recommendation before the Senior Management Model was finalised. Members were interested in receiving the detail on the roles and responsibilities of the proposed Directors responsible for Members and Scrutiny Services and Cabinet. The Measure detailed the role and responsibilities of the HDS

Other functions specific to the role of the Committee were in relation to the adequacy of staff, accommodation and other resources; and to receive reports from the Head of Democratic Services on matters that affect the Committee.

Chapter 2 of the Measure considered Training and Development of Elected Members and the guidance makes recommendations for the Democratic services Committee to have overall responsibility for deciding what is reasonable training and development; to recommend appropriate funding to be made available for external training; and determine a suitably qualified person to conduct interviews. The general training provision is currently within the remit of Council, Standards & Ethics Committee and the Regulatory committees.

(The Democratic Services Manager rejoined the meeting)

During the discussion a number of matters were raised including:

- accessibility of Council & Committee Agendas for public meetings;
- the limitations of the Measure to enhance the Terms of Reference;
- the need to reflect on the role and interaction of the Democratic Services Committee with the Constitution and Standards & Ethics Committees
- resourcing and budgetary issues.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the contents of the Statutory Guidance as it relates to the Democratic Services Committee be noted;
- (2) the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee write to request that the Head of Paid Service provide a report to the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee making recommendations in relation to the appointment of the Head of Democratic Services;

5 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the Committee agreed by the Annual Council on 17 May, 2012 were detailed. In view of the previous discussions on

the role of the Democratic Services Committee it was proposed that this item be deferred to the next meeting to enable Members to reflect on the information they had received and the future purpose and role of the Committee.

RESOLVED – That this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

6 : WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairperson thanked Members for their feedback on items for the Work Programme, and details of the suggested items had been circulated for discussion. For each of the items proposed a potential scope of the topic had been prepared and an indication of which Committee currently had responsibility for the issues.

The Committee considered each of the topic areas as follows:

- To review the adequacy of resources, support services and accommodation to support Elected Members in the discharge of their functions. This falls within the scope of the Democratic Services Committee, and was seen as a priority item.
- Review of IT facilities provided to Elected Members. This was in the scope of the Democratic Services Committee in consultation with the Whips who had considered and agreed the current specification;
- Wales Charter for Member Support & Development. This was within the remit of Council in consultation with the Whips. Members were keen to know how many Local Authorities in Wales had the Charter, and wished to receive a briefing on the key requirements of the Charter.
- Member Training & Development. This was currently within the remit of Council, Standards & Ethic Committee; and individual Regulatory Committees.
- Familiarisation of the provisions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales report. This falls within the Council's remit, it was felt that Members could be made aware of the key provisions of the Council Scheme.
- Code of Conduct of Members. This is within the remit of the Standards & Ethics Committee; the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales; and the Constitution Committee, although it was noted that within the Local Democracy legislation currently out for consultation, there was a move towards resolving local Code of Conduct issues by the Standards and Ethics Committees.

- Technical matters in relation to the Local Election held on 3 May 2012. There were a number of matters that the Head of Paid Service would be reporting back to Leaders and Whips shortly.

Members prioritised those items that fell directly within the remit of this Committee. The Committee also discussed the importance of working in parallel with the Standards & Ethics Committee and Constitution Committee, and proposed that a joint meeting be arranged of these Committees during the first year.

In discussion, it was proposed that Member Mentoring be added to the work programme and that the Committee consider the scope and content of a Member Mentoring programme to support new Members to the Council;

It was agreed that the work programme be updated to reflect the prioritisation of work that fell within the remit of this Committee.

It was also agreed that a Task and Finish group be established to start work immediately on the review and scope of the adequacy of Members Support Services,

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the revised Work Programme be updated and circulated to the Committee for their information;
- (2) nominations be sought from the Committee to the Review of Members Support Services Task & Finish Group and meetings be arranged during August and September.

7 : FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Members were invited to consider the frequency and timings of future meetings.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the next meeting of this Committee be schedule for Thursday 4 October 2012 to allow for the Chief Executive's to bring forward his recommendation for the designation of the Head of Democratic Services;
- (2) future meetings of this Committee be scheduled quarterly starting at 2.00pm.