

## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

4 OCTOBER 2012

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

Apologies: County Councillor Keith Jones and Benjamin Thomas

### 8 : DESIGNATION OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER

The Chairperson welcomed the Chief Executive in his capacity as Head of Paid Service and drew attention to the report requested by the Committee at its last meeting (Minute No: 4) setting out the Head of Paid Service's recommendations for the appointment of the Head of Democratic Services to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

The role of the Head of Democratic Services is a statutory post and the person designated would be able to perform other duties within the authority other than those of the Head of Paid Service; Monitoring Officer; or Section 151 Officer. Details of the functions of the Head of Democratic Services were contained within the report.

New senior management structure proposals were under consideration and it was noted that once agreed the new structure may influence a future recommendation on the role of Head of Democratic Services. The Head of Paid Service was therefore recommending as an interim measure, and to avoid prejudicing a nominated post-holder in the future, that the post of Chief Operating Officer be designated as the Head of Democratic Services. This designation also reflected the importance that was being placed on the role and support being given to all Elected Members. The proposed designation at Chief Operating Officer level gave the role stature and influence at the highest level of management.

The Committee discussed the proposal and the proposed level of the designation within the authority, and an alternative nomination put forward. However, in general it was determined that the designation at this level of senior management was appropriate for the role until the

senior management proposals had been agreed and appointment made to the new posts. Following a vote on the proposals it was:

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the interim appointment of a Head of Democratic Services be agreed;
- (2) the appointment be reviewed following the determination of the ongoing proposals to reorganise the senior management structure of the Council;
- (3) the Chief Operating Officer be appointed as the Interim Head of Democratic Services.

#### 9 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility under Article 16 of the Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interest, & to complete Personal Interest forms, at the commencement of the item of business.

#### 10 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson

#### 11 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

At the last meeting (Minute No: 5) it was agreed that the Committee would reflect and discuss further the Terms of Reference as agreed by Annual Council on 17 May 2012.

The Terms of Reference were prescribed within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

RESOLVED – That terms of reference as agreed at Annual Council 17 May 2012 be noted with no change.

#### 12 : MEMBERS SUPPORT SERVICES TASK & FINISH GROUP: UPDATE

The Chairperson provided an update on the work of the Task and Finish Group set up to consider Members Support Services, and included

County Councillors Ali, Goddard, Hyde and Benjamin Thomas and chaired by the Chair of Democratic Services Committee.

The Task and Finish Group had met on two occasions. The first meeting had set the scope and the Members identified what the current support arrangements were; considered areas that could be investigated further; where improvements could be made; and areas where there was no current provision or service that could support Elected Members in their roles. Officers were asked to look at four specific areas and report back to the next meeting. The four areas were:

- IT Options – to ensure that Elected Members had the facilities and service to meet their requirements and roles;
- Current staffing establishment – the current level of staff resources provided to support Elected Members in the Democratic Services;
- Performance Monitoring Data – to assess the current level of demand and use of services;
- Review of the process for dealing with Elected Members incoming hard copy mail to look at improvements to the facilities and service.

At the second meeting the Task and Finish Group had received a presentation from Steve Durbin, Head of Internal Services on a proposal under development for improving IT facilities for Members. A business case needed to be prepared to present to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Business and Local Economy.

In order to test the proposal solution, it was proposed that the Chair write to the Cabinet Member seeking approval for a cross party pilot programme. The pilot would be cost neutral and any future roll out of an agreed solution would need to demonstrate a sound business case with clearly identified cost savings and efficiencies.

Members raised a number of issues in relation to the current IT provision:

- the need for it to be fit for purpose and meet the needs of Members working on the move;
- the use of good messaging provision on personal devices and the re-charging of this facility for those with another Council provision;
- the need for a cross section of users to pilot the proposed new solution.

Members noted the current staffing resource for Members and Committee Support Services and the additional work that was being absorbed by the team. Members commended the team on providing an excellent service.

The Chief Legal and Democratic Services Officer indicated that as part of the budget proposals and required efficiencies going forward that she had been tasked with reviewing functionality; processes; and resource provision; and that proposals would be put forward as part of the budget process to be submitted to Cabinet. The work of the Task and Finish group in reviewing the provision and assessing future need would contribute to this process.

Details of the performance data and the process for dealing with Members incoming mail were circulated, and clarification was sought on levels of resources available to Members. In relation to the process for incoming mail this was to be discussed with the Whips at their next meeting.

RESOLVED – That the ongoing work of the Task and Finish Group be noted.

### 13 : WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received an update on other areas of work identified as part of its future work programme

- Member Training & Development - Members received an update on the mandatory training; the programme going forward; feedback from the tour of key sites; feedback on training sessions; and the need to programme repeat sessions for Members that were not able to attend.
- Member Mentoring Scheme – the Chair indicated that expressions of interests would be sought cross party from mentors and mentees to participate in the initiative in Cardiff and that the process of matching and pairing would be undertaken in consultation with Group Whips. The aim was to facilitate the process and allow Mentors and Mentees to work together on shared support and development.
- Member Role Profiles – the Committee was advised that the Member role profile was part of a suite of job roles that had been developed by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the guidance had now been provided as part of the Measure.

The Chairperson requested information on the service provision in Scrutiny Services in comparison to Democratic Services, in particular on levels of resources available and how the resources are utilised.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the update on items relating to the work programme be noted;
- (2) a briefing report on the comparative information on the scrutiny function be provided to a future meeting.

14 : DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the meeting dates and timings be agreed as follows:

Thursday 6 December 2012 at 1.30pm in Committee Room 4

Thursday 14 February 2013 at 2.00pm in Committee Room 4

Tuesday 30 April 2013 at 2.00pm in Committee Room 4