

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

2 OCTOBER 2013

Present: County Councillor Cowan (Chairperson);
County Councillors Dilwar Ali, Bridges, Chaundy, Goddard,
Hyde, McKerlich and Benjamin Thomas

Apology: County Councillor Holland

41 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2013 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

42 : WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION BY THE COUNTY CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER

The Chairperson introduced Marie Rosenthal, County Clerk and Monitoring Officer, to the Committee. Marie Rosenthal stated that the role of the Democratic Services Committee was an important one, focussed on equipping Members to be community leaders. The following areas for improvement were identified:

- Secretarial support including diary management
- Research/Library facilities – online resources and access to external resources
- Training and Development
- A Communications Plan for Members

Marie Rosenthal advised the Committee that these improvements were achievable within existing resources. It was anticipated that reports on each of the areas for improvement identified would be brought forward to the next meeting of the Committee.

Members of the Committee expressed their support and encouraged the use of electronic diary management in particular. However, it was noted that every Councillor had different requirements so any service provision received by Members should be flexible enough to meet those differing requirements in order to be effective and sustainable.

The Committee discussed the annual yearbook. It was noted that many Members value the yearbook and will wish to continue to use them. It was suggested that all Members be surveyed to ascertain how many yearbooks will be required next year.

43 : ICT PROVISION TO MEMBERS - UPDATE

Following approval at Council on 27 June 2013, the Committee received a report regarding the roll out of improved ICT provision to Members. The Chairperson welcomed Phil Bear, ICT Service Manager; Huw David, ICT Infrastructure Manager; and Sheila Denner, Customer Relationship and Support Manager; to the meeting. The officers were invited to provide an update regarding an identified risk for the project which has arisen since the Council approved the project on 27 June 2013 following a recent decision by the United Kingdom Cabinet Office, which regulates ICT security across the public sector.

Phil Bear addressed the Committee. Members were advised that the Council is accredited to connect to the Public Sector Network (PSN). This network joins a wide variety of public sector and national government agencies together and enables data to be shared securely. The UK Cabinet Office have recently stated a 'zero tolerance' policy for PSN connectivity for 'managed' devices (Council owned and supported devices) and 'unmanaged' devices (generally non-Council owned or controlled). As a result ICT are urgently reviewing the specification on the devices which were to be supplied as part of the project.

Due to the change in the UK Cabinet Office position ICT were currently:

- Re-evaluating the current remote access provided to all Members
- Re-evaluating the proposed access model for Members as part of the Members ICT refresh project
- Reviewing whether there is a need to remove ad-hoc remote access from staff, or at a minimum review and update the current control mechanisms and security arrangements
- Reviewing wireless access within Council buildings and potentially tightening controls further
- Assessing whether ICT are required to completely remove external webmail access (Cardiff Webmail)

Officers confirmed that a further update will be provided once the Council received confirmation from the UK Cabinet Office on the acceptable models of access. It was acknowledged that any delay will cause inconvenience to Members.

Huw David stated that unless the Council controlled the 'end device' the use of any other device was unacceptable to the UK Cabinet Office. One of the options popular with Members as part of the ICT refresh project relied on Members accessing their email via the use Good Messaging on an ipad. Councillors would be unable to access historical emails using this solution and will be required to access their historical emails via Cardiff Webmail. Huw David confirmed that Members would now need to access Cardiff Webmail using Council owned equipment only in order to comply with the UK Cabinet Office requirements detailed above. This presented a challenge to the ICT refresh project.

Officers confirmed that a number of options were being considered but all options will need to conform to UK Cabinet Office guidelines. As this stage officers were unable to provide a realistic timescale for any revised solution. Marie Rosenthal stated that in the meantime Members will need to demonstrate a business case, resulting in savings to the authority, in order to progress individual 'case by case' roll out of the new ICT provision.

Responding to questions from the Committee, Phil Bear advised that the Cabinet Office's position was being challenged by a number of local authorities across the UK. Many authorities in Wales are currently prevented from using any webmail facilities. However, Cardiff Webmail was still permissible as it had additional security measures built in. Councillors in Edinburgh were currently using ipads with reduced functions.

Officers expressed concern that in order to meet the revised requirements of the UK Cabinet Office, additional costs were likely to be incurred. Marie Rosenthal confirmed that Cardiff's business case would need to be revisited in due course.

The Chairperson requested that the Committee receive further updates on these matters to be included as a standing item on all forthcoming agendas for the Committee.

RESOLVED – That:

1. the Committee notes the contents of the report;
2. the Committee received further updates on these matters as a standing item on all forthcoming agendas

44 : LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011

The Committee received a report providing a summary of the progress made by the authority in relation to the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. The report contained a summary of the key provisions of the Measure, an indication of those which provisions fall within the remit of the Committee and an indication of the progress made against each.

It was noted that only four of the requirements set out in the Measure need to be addressed by the Committee. The four issues were:

- Remote attendance at meetings
- Training and Development of Members
- Duty to create the position of Head of Democratic Services
- Family absence for Members

The Committee gave recognition to the progress made so far.

Members noted that whilst the issue of remote attendance was still to be addressed, this was not a priority issue in Cardiff. Officers advised that the Welsh Government were revisiting the issue of remote attendance and further guidance was expected.

Cardiff had put in place interim arrangements for the Head of Democratic Services position. Marie Rosenthal advised the Committee that this issue needed to be addressed urgently.

The Committee had resolved to convene a Task and Finish Group to report back to the Committee on issue of Training and Development for Members. The Task and Finish Group would be meeting on 10 October 2013.

With reference to the Members absence from duties due to family reasons, the Committee requested whether the possibility of substitute attendance at meetings could be investigated. The Committee heard from a Member who had asked a colleague to attend a Licensing Sub Committee on their behalf following the birth of their first child. The Licensing Sub Committee Chairperson did permit the substitute to speak on the Member's behalf on that occasion, although there was not an automatic right or the substitute to do so. Marie Rosenthal advised that this would be an issue for the Constitution Committee to consider.

RESOLVED – That:

1. the Committee notes the comments in Appendix A in relation to the progress made against the requirements of the measure;
2. the Committee requests the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer to bring a further report to a future meeting of the Committee on the progress made in relation to the outstanding matters.

45 : TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP –
VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee was informed that the Training and Development Task and Finish Group are due to hold their first meeting on 10 October 2013.

The Committee discussed the funding available for Member Training and Development. Officers advised that, whilst limited funding was available for external courses, whenever possible training provision is directed to WLGA courses, which are provided at no cost to the authority.

Members considered that decisions regarding training requests need to be made fairly and equitably but in a timelier manner, as training request approvals often take far too long. Marie Rosenthal felt that this was an important point should form part of the Task and Finish Group remit.

Officers said that the feasibility of the authority hosting its own training events was being investigated, possibly in partnership with the Cardiff Business School. Members requested that any such events should not be too generic in nature and also consideration be given to those Members who were unable to attend such events due to work commitments.