

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

11 December 2013

Present: County Councillor Cowan (Chairperson);
County Councillors Dilwar Ali, Bridges, Hinchey, Hyde,
Murphy, Benjamin Thomas and Weaver

46 : APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Chaundy, Goddard and McKerlich.

47 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2013 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

48 : MATTERS ARISING

Members were advised that funding had been made available by the Welsh Government in order for the authority to promote local democracy by trialling projects such as the remote attendance of members at Committee meetings and the webcasting of Committee meetings, other than the webcast of the full Council meetings. Officers sought the Committee's comments on these matters.

The Committee supported the proposals. In terms of webcasting additional meetings, it was considered that due to the nature of business conducted, Cabinet meetings were the preferred choice. However, in terms of remote attendance, whilst the Committee supported the trial, it was considered that this issue was more pertinent for rural Welsh authorities.

Members expressed concern that the final guidance on remote attendance still isn't available from the Welsh Government. Officers advised that discussions with the Welsh Government were on-going. Final guidance was expected in February 2014. Members also requested that consideration be given to holding Committee meetings in community venues.

RESOLVED – That a report on the trial of remote attendance for Members and the webcasting of additional meetings be brought to the February meeting of the Committee.

49 : MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Committee had previously agreed to convene a Task and Finish Group to undertake an inquiry and make recommendations relating to the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. The Committee received a briefing report on the work of the Task and Finish Group.

Members were advised that the Group had met three times and had considered the following:

- Member Development Strategy
- Member Training and Development Programme
- Wales Charter for Members Support and Development
- An All-Member Survey
- Potential collaboration between Cardiff Council and Cardiff University Business School for training purposes

The report provided an overview of the Welsh Charter for Members Support and Development, which had been created by the WLGA to give structure and impetus to the growing body of support services to Elected Members. The Task and Finish Group considered that achieving the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development would provide valuable recognition of the work undertaken in Cardiff to support Elected Members in their roles, and will provide an important assessment of the Council's success in delivering support to Members. It was recommended that the Council works towards satisfying the requirements of the Charter.

The Committee discussed the requirements of the Charter and in particular the issue of role descriptions. The Task and Finish Group proposed that the Council adopt the WLGA's 'Framework Member Role Descriptions and Personal Specification'. Members considered that any role descriptions should highlight the full range of commitments given by Elected Members, particularly roles performed within their communities, such as school governors, attendance at PACT meetings, surgeries, representation on outside bodies, etc. It was noted that, whilst the framework role description highlighted community roles, and whilst there

was also an opportunity for Members to highlight their community roles in an Annual Report, more could be done to capture this information and make such community commitments a matter of public record, in order to raise awareness on the full range of duties performed by Elected Members.

The Committee noted that a software package which supports the Democratic Services function called 'Modern.gov' may assist in highlighting the full range of duties performed by Elected Members. Officers advised that a business case for the procurement of 'Modern.gov' was being drafted. The Committee requested that a presentation on 'Modern.gov' be provided in the near future.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) the Committee notes the information provided in Appendix A to the report on the Wales Charter for Members Support and Development;
- (2) the Committee notes the proposed Member Development Programme for 2013/14;
- (3) the Committee recommends to Council that the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of Democratic Services Committee pursues Charter status for the Council;
- (4) the authority adopts the WLGA's Framework Member Role Descriptions and Personal Specification set out in Appendix B;
- (5) the Monitoring Officer arrange for Member of the Committee to receive a presentation on the Modern.gov software package.

50 : MEMBER ENQUIRY LINE UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report on the continued use of the Member Enquiry System, which had now been operational for a calendar year. Members were advised that the Member Inquiry system continued to be enhanced as a result of feedback received from users regarding their experiences when inputting enquiries and following a short survey completed by Members. The report set out details of the enhancements and provided numerical data regarding the types of enquiries raised on a service area basis.

RESOLVED – That the Committee notes the contents of the report.

51 : MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Committee received a report on a draft Member Development Strategy for Cardiff Council. Members were asked to comment on and inform the new Strategy which had previously been considered by the Committee's Task and Finish Group.

The Committee was advised that the Strategy would provide a framework for ensuring that Members are provided with a full range of development opportunities in order to enable them to effectively carry out their roles as community leaders and representatives of the Council. The Member Development Strategy is also one of the key requirements for achieving the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.

RESOLVED – That the Committee notes the draft Strategy.

52 : ICT UPDATE

The Monitoring Officer and County Clerk provided a verbal update on recent developments on the provision of upgraded IT equipment to Members project.

The Committee was advised that ICT were recommending that a Windows based device replace the preferred option (ipad) as a Windows tablet would meet Cabinet Office security protocol requirements, whilst allowing full access to historical emails, negating use the webmail facility. Windows tablets would also be more cost effective as additional software and the associated licences, such as Good Technology, would no longer be required.

53 : FAMILY ABSENCE

The Committee received a report providing information on new legislation on Family Absence for Members. The Constitution Committee was seeking the views of the Committee on the subject, prior to amendments being made to the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Committee noted the contents of the report

- (2) any comments on the contents of the report be provided to the Chairperson by 20 December 2013.

54 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee would take place on 5 February 2014.

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Chairperson