

## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

5 February 2014

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

Apologies: Councillor Hinchey

### 55 : APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Hinchey.

### 56 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2014 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

### 57 : REMOTE ATTENDANCE

The Committee was advised that Welsh Government guidance on the issue of remote attendance at meetings by Members was still awaited. However, the authority had received grant funding from the Welsh Government to increase public engagement and participation in the democratic process.

Members received details of a remote attendance pilot exercise, whereby two members of the public were able to address the Public Protection Committee in relation to a taxi disciplinary matter. Two young females who were not residents of the City had made a complaint against a hackney carriage driver whilst visiting Cardiff. Officers from Democratic Services and ICT facilitated a video conference call using 'Skype' software. The complainants were able to address the Committee in real-time and respond to questions from the Members of the Committee and from the taxi driver and his solicitor.

ICT advised that the 'Skype' solution was provided in response to specific requirements in this instance. Officers emphasised that, whilst the concept had worked well in practice, the solution was not a permanent 'corporate' solution. Furthermore, the Committee was advised that officers anticipated it likely similar requests by complainants from outside the city would be received in the future.

## 58 : PAPERLESS COUNCIL PROPOSAL – MEMBERS ICT PROVISION

The Committee received a report providing an update on the progress made in implementing the resolution of Council on 27 June 2013 to provide Members with tablet devices, in order to increase efficiency by enabling Members to be less reliant on paper and work in a more mobile way.

Members were advised that the project had been suspended following a ruling by the UK Cabinet Office which regulates ICT security across the public sector network (PSN). The UK Cabinet Office has a new 'zero tolerance' policy for PSN connectivity in relation to mobile devices, and, as the Council is accredited to join the national PSN, which joins a number of public sector and national government agencies and enables data to be securely shared, Officers have been re-evaluating the current remote access provided to all users including the proposed model for Members.

As a result of the re-evaluation exercise, Officers have recommended a revised specification for the tablet devices to be provided to Members which should meet UK Cabinet Office requirements. ICT recommend providing a Windows 8.1 tablet and a 3G smartphone. The revised specification also provided improved applications and relation to emails and a further cost saving to the authority as the Windows tablet has a greater storage capacity than the previous option and allows better access to historical emails. Members are also able to annotate documents.

ICT officers provided a demonstration of the Windows tablet device and smartphone. Members were advised that the smartphone would provide mobile access to email, whilst the tablet would be used to access all Members Microsoft Outlook email accounts. A number of accessories were also demonstrated including a docking station for the Windows tablet, which allows for a standard keyboard and monitor to be attached to the device.

In response to questions from the Committee, Officers advised that the revised solution would provide the Microsoft Office suite of software packages via the tablet interface. Members would essentially be able to access all the software they are currently provided with.

A Member questioned whether docking stations and monitors could be installed in the Council Chamber, City Hall, enabling Members to have a larger worksurface (screen) when referring to Council reports and other documents. Officers advised that whilst this may be possible but it was currently outside the scope of the ICT refresh project.

The Monitoring Officer stated that resources existing in the Member Training budget would could be utilised to support Members training needs, and in particular the need for all Members to consider their 'digital footprint' (i.e. the data trail left by the interactions in a digital environment; including the use of mobile phones, the internet and social media). The Monitoring Officer sought the Committee's approval in principle to allocate these funds towards training in this area.

AGREED – That:

- (1) the Committee notes the current position;
- (2) the Committee approved the revised approach to delivery and implementation of the project;
- (3) the Committee agrees that training be provided to Members on their 'digital footprint'.

## 59 : MEMBER DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

The Committee received a report providing results of the recently conducted Members Training Needs Assessment Survey. Member advised that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 placed a requirement on all local authorities in Wales to provide their elected Members with an opportunity to have a personal development review to assess their development needs. A Democratic Services Committee Task and Finish Group were conducting an inquiry with the aim of developing a Member Development Strategy that will enable Cardiff Council to meet the requirements of the Measure.

The Scrutiny Research Team was commissioned to undertake a Training Needs Assessment which was intended to inform the formulation of a Member Development Strategy.

The Chairperson welcomed Emyr Williams, Principal Research Officer, Scrutiny Services, to the meeting and invited him to deliver a

presentation on the results and preliminary findings of the Training Needs Assessment Survey. The key points are summarised as follows:

- 44 of 75 Members responded to the survey
- 33 Members identified themselves
- Most respondents were neither overly positive or overly negative about the training and development received
- Suggested improvement in terms of Member Development include continual assessment of training needs with an ongoing development programme; individual Member Training Programmes and more flexibility in the training offered allowing for time constraints on individual Members time
- Members assessed their knowledge and understanding in the majority of subjects as adequate, good or very good
- Communicating with media tools, effective engaging with the media and the use of ICT to communicate was identified as requiring the most need for further skills development
- Achieving a work life balance was also a skill that Members wished to address
- The main reasons for not participating in training and development were cited as lack of time, needs having not been assessed and the relevance of the training offered.
- The majority of respondents would support Personal Development Reviews conducted by a suitably trained Council officer.

The Committee discussed the findings of the survey, a full copy of this was appended to the report. A Member suggested that negative coverage in the local media may act as a disincentive and a potential barrier to Members seeking training. Other Members expressed the opinion that Councillors had a responsibility to seeking relevant training and develop their skills when carrying out their elected roles.

The Committee noted that lack of time for Members and more flexibility in the training offered were cited as reasons for not participating in training and development. Members suggested therefore that online training resources should be offered, so that Members can access training in areas of particular interest to themselves, at times which are most convenient.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the draft Member Development Strategy was currently being amended in order to take into account the results of the training needs assessment survey. A report on the

Member Development Strategy would be brought forward to the next meeting of the Committee.

AGREED – That the Committee acknowledges the results of the Training Needs Assessment Survey for all elected Members of the Council and use the information provided to inform the development of the Member Development Strategy and on-going Training and Development plan.

#### 60 : MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR CARDIFF

This item was deferred until then next meeting.

#### 61 : WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The Committee received a report providing an update on progress made towards the Council achieving the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. Members noted that the Council on 19 December 2013 unanimously agreed that the Democratic Services Committee recommendation to apply for the Charter and adopt the recommended framework. The Monitoring Officer advised that the Member Development Strategy, which was currently being drafted, was a key component supporting the framework. It was anticipated that the authority would be in a position to apply for the Charter by April 2014.

AGREED – That the report be noted.

#### 62 : DESIGNATION OF INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Committee was advised that following the resignation of the previous Head of Democratic Services, the Head of Paid Service presented a report setting out recommendations that an Interim Head of Democratic Services be appointed. It was noted that the authority was currently considering savings proposals across all service areas, including the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer's Department. A permanent Head of Democratic Services would be appointed when any revised organisational structure was agreed.

The Head of Paid Service recommended that Geoff Shimell, Operational Manager and Senior Solicitor, Legal Services be appointed as the Interim Head of Democratic Services.

AGREED – That:

- (1) the Democratic Services Committee appoint an Interim Head of Democratic Services and that the appointment be reviewed following the determination of the ongoing savings proposals affecting the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer's Department;
- (2) Geoff Shimell be appointed as the Interim Head of Democratic Services.

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Chairperson