

## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

11 JUNE 2014

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

### 1 : APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Benjamin Thomas.

### 2 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2014 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

### 3 : CHAIRPERSON

The Committee noted that the Council at its meeting of 29 May 2014 appointed Councillor Cowan as Chairperson of this Committee.

### 4 : APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted that the Council at its meeting of 29 May 2014 appointed the following Members to the Committee:

Councillors Dilwar Ali, Bridges, Chaundy, Goddard, Hinchey,  
Hyde, Lomax, McKerlich, Murphy, Benjamin Thomas and Weaver

The following terms of reference for the Committee were also noted:

- 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.

## 5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2014 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

## 6 : MEMBERS ICT UPDATE

The Committee received an update report on the implementation of the resolution made by the Council on 27 June 2014, to provide mobile IT devices to Members, in order to increase efficiency, realise budget savings and ensure Members are provided with improved IT support.

The Monitoring Officer provided an overview of the current position. The Committee was advised that the project had been temporarily suspended, whilst concerns regarding the robustness of the security measures provided with the devices were addressed. Officers were now in a position to begin supplying the first tranche of devices to Members.

It was noted that the package Members were to receive had been revised slightly, insofar as the tablet devices would be provided with a SIM card, which would enable the devices to be used anywhere. Members, therefore, would no longer be provided with a 'smartphone' but would instead be offered a home landline telephone or a basic mobile telephone.

It was further noted that the no accessories would be provided to Members with their devices, as there was no funding available to allow this. The Committee was advised that should Members wish to purchase compatible accessories a list of compatible accessories would be provided to all Members receiving tablets.

In order to maximise anticipate cost savings associated with the project printing costs would need to be dramatically reduced in the future. The Committee was advised that Democratic Services will be introducing a new Performance Indicator which would monitor the level of printing costs, details of which would be periodically reported to the Cabinet.

The Monitoring Officer accepted that the decision to provide a SIM card and a basic mobile telephone, instead of a smartphone, may cause some Members to reconsider their preferred option. It was suggested that, in light of the further amendment to the support package being offered as outlined above, that all Members be written to in order to clarify their preferences.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment or raise questions on position set out by officers. Members sought clarification on a number of issues. These discussions are summarised as follows:

- Officers advised that, although the tablets supplied will have a 4G SIM card, the tablets will constantly scan for wifi access. The 4G SIM will only be used when the tablets are outside wifi accessible areas. In order for Members to use their personal broadband whilst at home Members would be provided with a router which would enable additional functionality, such as a printing facility, whilst also providing a secure connection to Council networks. Members requested that officers provide further clarification of what additional functions the Council router would allow.
- The Networked Councillor launch event on 24 June 2014 would showcase the new technology. However, it was intended that all Members would receive individual appointments with officers from ICT when receiving their tablets.
- Officers confirmed that the tablets would have more than adequate storage capacity and Members would be able to access all their data. The tablets would also deliver improved performance.
- The laptops and other devices which were returned by Members would be reused or recycled.
- Officers advised that it would not be possible for the authority to procure personal devices and accessories on behalf of Members as administering such a scheme would result in additional overheads on the Council. However, if there are any extenuating circumstances then requests for additional peripherals and accessories from Members should be referred to the Monitoring Officer.
- All Members receiving the new devices will need to complete an updated Acceptable Usage Policy. The Committee was also advised that individual Members were expected to take responsibility for the tablets and would therefore be liable for a £100 excess payment in the event the tablet is damaged.

AGREED – That the Committee notes the current position and approves the approach to delivery and implementation set out in the report.

## 7 : MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Committee received an update on the delivery of the Member Development Strategy and Member Development Programme 2014/15. The Strategy aims to provide a framework for ensuring that Members are provided with a full range of development opportunities to enable them to effectively carry out their elected representative roles. The Strategy and an updated programme for 2014/15 were appended to the report.

Members were advised that the Networked Councillor Project formed a key component of the programme. A session on 'social media' had been held and was co-hosted by Councillor David Harrington of Stockton-on-Tees Council, and Paul Stockton, Chair of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

As discussed at the meeting of the Committee on 2 April 2014, the University of South Wales had offered to run three short courses on Political Awareness; Understanding and Challenging Performance; and Governance and Scrutiny. Members also indicated that further training on constitutional matters, making better use of ICT and dealing with the press and media were also areas where further training could be directed.

The Monitoring Officer requested the feedback from the Committee on whether Members wished to proceed with the training courses offered by the University of South Wales. The Committee formed a view that the short course entitled 'Understanding and Challenging Performance' would be most beneficial.

AGREED – That:

- (1) further investigation of flexible online training options for Member be carried out;
- (2) that the Monitoring Officer liaise with the University of South Wales to co-ordinate arrangements for provision of the short training course on 'Understanding and Challenging Performance' to all Members.

## 8 : WLGA CHARTER FOR MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Authority was now in position to apply for the Wales Charter for Member Development. The Committee received an update on recent progress and were asked to give authority to make a formal bid for the Charter.

AGREED – That the Committee authorises the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer to complete, and submit, the application to apply for Charter Status to the Welsh Local Government Association.

## 9 : DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The Democratic Services Committee has agreed to publish an annual report in order to strengthen and promote the role of the Committee. Members received the initial draft of the Committee's Annual Report for 2013/14 prior to its submission to Council.

The Committee was asked to consider and comment the proposed draft Annual Report and delegate authority to the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairperson, to finalise the Annual Report and submit the finalised version to Council.

AGREED – That:

- (1) the Committee consider the format and content of the Annual Report 2013/14;
- (2) the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer be granted delegated authority to finalise the Annual Report 2013/14 for submission to the Council, in consultation with the Chairperson.