DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

15 JULY 2015

Present: County Councillor Clark (Chairperson);
              County Councillors Dilwar Ali, Chaundy, Goddard, Hinchey,
              Hyde, Lomax, Murphy and Dianne Rees

1   :   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility under Part III of the
Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interest in general terms and to complete
personal interest forms at the start of the meeting and then, prior to the
commencement of the discussion of the item in question, specify whether it is a
personal or prejudicial interest. If the interest is prejudicial, Members would be asked
to leave the meeting and if the interest is personal, Members would be invited to stay,
speak and vote.

No declarations of interest were received.

2   :   CHAIRPERSON, MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted that Council on 21 May 2015 appointed Councillor Clark as
Chairperson of this Committee.

The Committee noted that Council on 21 May 2015 appointed the following Members
to this Committee:

Councillors Dilwar Ali, Chaundy, Goddard, Graham, Hinchey, Hyde, Lomax, Murphy
and Benjamin Thomas (2 vacancies)

The Committee noted its Terms of Reference:

- 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

3   :   MINUTES

To minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2015 were approved by the Committee
as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

4   :   MODERN.GOV - UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing an update on the implementation of the
Modern.gov committee management system. Members were advised that the
Modern.gov software provided a significant increase in the automation and
functionality supporting democratic and governance processes. The system also

supports the move towards more agile technology and a 'paper lite' Council by providing Members with access to information in a variety of ways.

The Committee was informed that Modern.gov was officially launched on 26 May 2015. However, Committee and Members Services had been developing the system since January 2015. Members will have been receiving the new format agenda and reports for some period. Positive feedback has been received on the improved format from Members. All Committee agenda, minutes and reports dating back to 2004, which were previously published on the former Content Management System, have been imported into the Modern.gov system to ensure continuity.

Officers advised that 3 Member drop-in sessions were arranged in May 2015 prior to the 'go-live' to assist Members in familiarising themselves with the look and feel of Modern.gov, to assist in navigating the system and verifying their profile details and Register of Interest pages. Members were also encouraged to download the Modern.gov app to ensure that they have the latest meeting papers. The app allows Members to specify the Committees of interest and will automatically update itself to provide the latest meeting information. The app also allows for simple annotation of documents and navigation of document packs. Secure access to exempt agenda items can be facilitated by Members logging on to the intranet version of Modern.gov using an individual Member ID and password.

Members received details of a number of further enhancements provided by the software, including enhanced profile information, social media feeds, biographical information and rolling attendance at meetings data. Members are enabled to notify Democratic Services of attendance or otherwise at meetings and update their register of interests independently.

Modern.gov also provided a platform on which to host the Members Online Library and Information Service (MOLIS). The Committee would receive a further update on this project as part of this meeting.

Members were advised that further work was being undertaken in developing the Modern.gov system in areas such as webcasting of meetings, improving accessibility to the Council's Constitution, the publication of local election results, the receipt of e-petitions and the publication of decisions and forward plans.

The Committee welcomed the improvements brought about by Modern.gov and noted their thanks to officers in Committee and Members Services for their efforts in delivering the Modern.gov project.

Concerns were raised that a significant number of Members did not wish to access Committee agendas and reports electronically and would prefer to receive hard copies. Officers advised that all Members will continue to be supported and would receive documentation in their preferred format. In future Members will be made aware of the cost of printing large document packs.

The Committee debated the merits of displaying the agenda and reports on screens during all meetings for the benefit of Members and any members of the public present. It was noted that the Planning Committees already use screens to display presentations and plans for planning applications.

The Committee suggested that all Members receive an email encouraging them to download the Modern.gov app onto their tablet devices and ipads. The email would also include instructions on how to do so. Members also requested that a simple user guide/FAQs be drafted circulated to all members in the email.

Members also discussed the cost of the Modern.gov platform. Officers advised that the system was helping to streamline processes and increase efficiency.

RESOLVED – That the report and the comments from the Committee in support of Modern.gov be noted.

5 : MEMBER ONLINE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE

The Committee received a presentation on the Members Online Library and Information Service (MOLIS) from Paul Keeping. Members were advised that the MOLIS was developed to replace the existing Members Library in County Hall. Feedback from a survey, interviews and focus groups had been used to shape the content of the library and set priorities.

Paul Keeping demonstrated the document search facility and the file indexing system used to store documents in MOLIS. A user guide was available to assist Members when referencing materials. Members were invited to provide comment and provide feedback.

Members requested that the user guide be circulated and made available on the MOLIS webpage. Members questioned whether paper copies of documents were still available. Officers advised that hard copies of all committee papers are available on request from the Glamorgan Archives Records Office.

RESOLVED – That the user guide be distributed to all Members via email and also be made available on the MOLIS webpage.

6 : DRAFT DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Committee was asked to consider the draft Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2014/15 prior to its submission to Council on 23 July 2015.

The Committee agreed to make a minor amendment to the section of the Annual Report on the Chief Executive's Q&A Session.

RESOLVED – That the Democratic Services Annual Report 2014/15 be approved, subject to amendment.

7 : PROCESS FOR ANNUAL REPORTS BY MEMBERS 2014/15

Members received a report setting out the process for the preparation of Annual Reports by Members of the Council for the 2014/15 municipal year. Members were advised that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 provides that local authorities make arrangements enabling elected Members to produce Annual Reports on their Council activities during the year. Local Authorities must also

publicise information about these arrangements to both Members and the wider public.

On 17 December 2014 the Committee was advised that the Minister for Public Services had written to the Leaders of all Welsh Local Authorities highlighting the wide variation in the numbers of annual reports produced by elected Members across all Welsh Local Authorities in 2013/14. The Minister believed that Members should be encouraged to provide Annual Reports in order to assist good public engagement. The Committee noted that in Cardiff only 7% of Members produced Annual Reports in 2013/14.

The Committee discussed the merits of producing Annual Reports. Some Members felt that producing an Annual Report was not a large commitment in terms of their time. Other Members considered that their constituents were more than aware of their activities and therefore for an Annual Report of those activities was unnecessary. The Committee also debated the possibility of producing Ward based annual reports. Members acknowledged that there may be difficulties in achieving Ward based Annual Reports in split wards.

It was suggested that all Members be requested to give their views on Annual Reports for Members via email. The Committee noted that similar emails on this issue had been circulated on a number of occasions in the past.

RESOLVED – That:

1.   the report be noted;

2.   all Members receive an email requesting their views on Annual Reports for Members.

8   :   MEMBERS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2015/16

The Committee was asked to agree a Member Development Strategy for 2015/16 and to establish a Member Development Steering Group to consider that matter in more detail. The Member Development Strategy for 2015/16 was appended to the report as Appendix A. The Committee was requested to consider using this as a framework to inform a Member Development Steering Group. The Steering Group would also review and evaluate feedback received from sessions held during 2014/15. A Steering Group meeting would take place on 22 July 2015. Members were asked indicate whether they were available to attend.

The WLGA Continuing Professional Development for Councillors Competency Framework was attached to the report as Appendix B. This document set out the range of skills and knowledge required by Members and provided a 'curriculum' of areas that local authorities can consider when developing local Member Development Strategies. These form part of the key themes identified in the Member Development Strategy.

Officers advised that 23 Member Development sessions had been held during the year. Attendance at these sessions was reasonable, but Members requested that officer investigate alternative options for briefing Members as most Members have full commitments, meaning that they were often unable to attend Member

Development sessions in person. It was suggested that more use could be made of online training resources, online reference materials and email briefings.

The Committee considered that Members should receive more notice of Members Briefings, as events are often held at short notice and Members have other commitments. Services areas were often unaware of those commitments arranging briefing sessions. Consideration should be given to giving Members a number of options in terms of dates and times of such briefing sessions.

The Committee discussed Joint Council for Wales training for Councillors which was launched recently. Officers confirmed that Rachel Searle of the WLGA was invited to attend the Member Development Steering Group Session and would be attending. It was noted that the Cardiff Managers Programme included a number of modules which could be developed for elected Members. There were also Councillors who are qualified to deliver training who may wish to be involved. A Councillor requested that officers consider holding the Steering Group session in the Cardiff Academy facility in City Hall.

Officers confirmed that it would be possible to film training events / talks / speakers in the future.

RESOLVED – That:

1. the Member Development Strategy at Appendix A be approved as a framework for 2015/16

2. the WLGA Continuing Professional Development for Councillors Competency Framework be used to inform the preparation of the 2015/16 Member Development Programme;

3. agree to explore the benefits of the All Wales Academy for Local Government;

4. Councillors Murphy, De'Ath, Hinchey and Clark join the 2015/16 Member Development Steering Group to design and propose the Member Development Programme for the next 12 months.

9   :   ICT MEMBER PROJECT UPDATE

The Committee received a report and were asked to agree a methodology to be used to evaluate the implementation and provide feedback on the Members ICT project. The report provided the background to the Members ICT Project and summarised a number of the performance issues to date.

Officers advised that in financial terms the project had been successful, producing a £28k saving in printing and postage costs. Following discussions between the ICT Service Manager and the suppliers, officers stated that three upgraded tablet devices were available for Members to pilot.

A Member raised concerns that the project had not produced the savings which were initially forecast, as the costs of repairs were not taking into account in the project business case. The Member supported the pilot exercise. However, it was requested that any upgraded devices should not be provided to Members without

being thoroughly evaluated. The pilot exercise should also not commence until Members have had an opportunity to complete a questionnaire and provide feedback on the performance of the project to date. Officers were requested to provide full analysis of the cost savings achieved to date as part of the evaluation exercise.

Members questioned whether any upgraded or replacement devices would incur any cost. Officers advised that the upgraded or replacement devices would not incur any additional costs. The Committee urged officers to consider providing keypads as part of pilot exercise, as many of the problems experienced by Members previously may be mitigated with the provision of a functioning keyboard to support the device. Furthermore, Members requested that the encryption password be by-passed on all devices, which would make it easier for Members to login.

RESOLVED – That:

1.   the Members ICT Project update be noted;

2.   the recommended methodology for the evaluation of the success of the ICT project be approved;

3.   feedback to the ICT project evaluation exercise be provided to the Chair and the Committee as soon as practicable;

4.   the Committee, in consultation with the Director of Governance and Legal Services and the ICT Service Manager agree that the pilot of the updated device as soon as possible;

5.   a full analysis of the savings achieved to date by the ICT project be undertaken as part of the evaluation exercise.

10   :   MEMBERS SERVICES : SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS

RESOLVED – That this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

11   :   WORK PLAN 2015/16

RESOLVED – That officers prepare a draft work plan 2015/16.

12   :   DATES AND TIMING FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairperson requested that the September 2015 meeting of the Committee be brought forward, prior to the visit of the WAO in October.

RESOLVED – That officers email Members of the Committee to ascertain Members availability to attend a meeting of the Committee in early September.

The meeting terminated at 12.45 pm