

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

18 JULY 2016

Present: County Councillor Clark (Chairperson)
County Councillors Dilwar Ali, Chaundy, Goddard, Hyde, Lomax,
Murphy, Robson and Wild.

Also: Hollie Edwards- Davies Observer as Independent Member of the
Standards & Ethics Committee.

1 : APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors De'Ath, Graham and Hyde.

2 : WELCOME

The Committee was pleased to be advised of the appointment of Davina Fiore as Director of Governance and Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. She would take up her post on 19 September, 2016.

The Committee thanked the Interim Monitoring Officer, David Marr for undertaking the role and providing support to Members during this period.

3 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with Part III of the Members' Code of Conduct.

4 : CHAIRPERSON, MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was noted that the Annual Council on 26 May 2016 had appointed Councillor Clark as Chairperson of this Committee and that the Membership was as follows:

County Councillors Dilwar Ali, Chaundy, Clark (Chairperson), De'Ath, Goddard, Graham, Hyde, Lomax, Murphy, Robson, Benjamin Thomas and Wild.

The Terms of Reference were agreed as follows:

- i. To carry out the local authority's function of designating the Head of Democratic Services;
- ii. 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;
- iii. To make reports, at least annually, to the full Council in relation to these matters.

5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2016 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

The Committee was updated on the action points identified and the following actions remained outstanding:

<u>Action</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The appointment of a permanent role of Head of Democratic Services to be considered as soon as practicable.	for new Director G&LS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Governor Training – consideration to be given to the delivery of mandatory training.	Governor Services to provide update on programme when available
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Member Induction 2017 – report back to next meeting on scoping of Governance project.	Committee & Member Services Manager

6 : DIRECTORATE SENIOR MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Committee was pleased to be advised of the appointment of Davina Fiore as Director of Governance and Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. She would take up her post on 19 September, 2016.

The Committee thanked the Interim Monitoring Officer, David Marr for undertaking the role and providing support to Members during this period.

7 : MEMBERS SUPPORT SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee received a detailed report on matters relating to support services to Elected Members.

Members Survey

The Chairperson welcomed Paul Keeping Scrutiny Operational Manager, Gladys Hingco, Scrutiny Research Manager and Luke Catterson, Research Officer to the meeting to present the key findings and feedback on the Members Survey May/June 2016.

44 Members had responded to the Survey which sought to

- seek feedback on the various types of support that Members received in particular on Member Induction; Member Learning and Development opportunities; and Support Services;
- identify areas for improvement; and
- identify other resources and services that would be beneficial.

The officers provided graphical detail on the each of the elements tested by the survey and highlighted the key findings as follows: -

- 81% found induction activities and facilities either Useful or Very Useful;

- 60% did not access structured learning opportunities, but of the 40% that did, 79% found the learning opportunities useful, and 89% found learning opportunities relevant to their various roles;
- 61% were either confident or very confident in accessing information and resources on the Committee Management System (Modern.Gov);
- 75% were confident or very confident in using various social media;
- 68% gave positive responses when asked whether their personal development and learning goals had been achieved as a result of the Member Development programme;
- the general support provided to Members was highly rated by respondents;
- the majority of respondents rated the various types of specialist support effective or highly effective and highlighted the need for independent research and information gathering as important

In response to questions raised on work-life balance and membership of Committees - an area highlighted in the Wales Audit Office Follow-on Assessment report - the key challenges for Members in relation were identified as follows:

- restrictions relating to Council roles i.e. Cabinet Members or Assistant Cabinet Members can't sit on Scrutiny Committees;
- family responsibilities which clashed with timing of meetings;
- duration and scheduling of meetings
- uncertainty around the benefits and outcomes of the work of Committees.

It was noted that only 18 Members from 44 responded to the question seeking Members views on work-life balance, and from those 61% felt that they did not have a good work-life balance and identified some improvement areas that would make the role of Councillor more effective: -

- improvements to agenda management and length of meetings;
- provision of dedicated parking on Committee meeting days;
- provision of some refreshments when meetings were anticipated to be lengthy;
- support on casework, in particular following up on responses and Members ongoing queries;
- the provision of learning opportunities on effective management of workloads

The Chairperson thanked the officers for their presentation and invited discussion on the findings from which the Committee made the following comments and observations: -

- the Survey was too lengthy and difficult to fill in on-line and could take up to 35 minutes to complete;
- that Members individual training records should be accessible;
- there were concerns around the take up of essential training. It was noted that this particular matter would be considered by the Member Development Steering Group and as part of the new Member Induction in 2017;
- ongoing issues with responses to Member Enquiries and casework, in particular timeliness of responses; incomplete responses; clarity of responses particular relating to similar issues (e.g. multiple reports on skips in one area or road); and closing of cases without informing the Member when actions have been actually completed;
- need to avoid duplication of information provided in the different forums and committees; Gill

- need for access to information that would support Members various roles such as benchmarking and good practice; research documents; and Welsh Government policy or guidance;
- improvements to communications and electronic links to relevant information including written briefings; frequently asked questions (FAQ's); and training materials;
- need for Members to be advised and have access to up to date Senior Management and directorate management organisational chart and key directorate contacts;
- concerns on the change in location of the Member Business Office in City Hall, poor lighting, poor facilities and access issues through numerous security doors and need for Members access cards to be regularly update;
- Members highlighted some improvements that could be made to the County Hall Members facilities in particular the provisioning of more work spaces and better furniture;
- concerns that Members did not see the benefits of their outputs from Committees, in particular that 33% of Members questioned the value of attending scrutiny and other meetings;
- Members noted the issues raised around work-life balance. It was a felt that maybe the majority of those surveyed felt that being a Councillor meant that you had a very different work-life balance. Officers recognised that further work was necessary to clarify whether this was a significant problem for any particular groups of Members E.g. Cabinet Members or Scrutiny Members;
- Members felt that it was important to publish a calendar of meetings at least 12 months in advance and that as far as possible these dates did not change.
- Members questioned the latest position on the Local Government Bill, and it was noted that the new Local Government Minister had made a statement indicating that he wished to review the current proposals following his appointment before announcing the next steps.

Support to Members

The Committee received an update since its last meeting in March on the recommendations in its report on the Review of Support Services to Members. A formal response to the recommendations in the report was anticipated.

The Committee was advised of the current position with the Cabinet commissioned review of support available to Councillors, facilitated by Claire Richmond a former policy officer of Nottingham City Council. The methodology involved was in 3 stages:

- Stage 1 – establishing existing position and practices;
- Stage 2 – benchmarking with Core Cities;
- Stage 3 – recommendations to better support democracy in Cardiff within the context of external reviews; budget constraints and the changing legislative framework.

Stages 1 and 2 of the exercises had been completed in May and June 2016 and the final report was to be presented to informal Cabinet in July 2016. The Committee was keen to be able to consider the recommendations alongside the outcomes from the Member Survey 2016; the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Follow On Report – Statement of Action and its own Task Group report and prepare an action plan.

Members raised a number of ongoing issues in particular related to:

- knowing where and how to access information;
- better communication and earlier engagement with Members on ward related matters and priorities e.g. Section 106 obligation funding and identification of priority projects;
- need for all Ward Members particularly in politically diverse wards to be involved in decisions.

Member Enquiry System (MES)

Members noted quarterly data on the number of calls logged by Councillors to the Member Enquiry Service (MES). It was noted that the number of calls remained consistent. It was felt that this level of enquiries and request for service were quite low for the number of Members using the system. However the Committee noted feedback from Members that they often logged matters directly with officers and from officers that backbench Members were requesting responses from Cabinet Members on enquiry type matters. The reasons for this needed to be further evaluated.

A Member questioned whether residents could access a similar system to log issues to avoid double handling of some enquiries, and speed up the resolution. Members were advised that Customer Relations Management System (CRM) was due to be launched that would be more interactive for residents and have the facility to log matters directly.

The Committee was advised of the importance of using the MES so that the data was captured in one place as this provides trend analysis; avoids duplication of calls; and follows a process. It was noted that Members were still not content with the timeliness and clarity of responses.

Member IT Project

The transition arrangements to the new devices was complete in June 2016, with 36 Members taking up the new tablet; 3 indicated that they did not want to have a tablet; and 3 calls were still open awaiting either allocation or decision on whether they wish to receive a tablet. The Committee advised that there was scope for Members who do not currently have the tablet device to exchange their current equipment, and 1 Member wished to take up the option to move from the Xtreme device to a tablet. Feedback on the new device would be tested before the next meeting. However anecdotal feedback has been positive about the connectivity, accessibility and usability of the new device with some occasional Wi-Fi connectivity issues which IT had addressed. Protective cases with keyboards have been purchased and to date 18 had been issued. The Committee & Member Services team had met the target reduction in printing for 2015/16 and had a further target for 2016/17, and would therefore be pursuing its 'paper-lite' objectives.

Members in general raised concerns on the reliability of the Council's ICT system as recently there had been more than the usual down time.

Member Annual Reports

The Committee was reminded that all Elected Members are provided with the opportunity to complete an Annual Report in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Act 2011. The annual report details the work of the Councillor over the previous year and is published bilingually on Members' individual webpages. A copy of the template and guidance would be issued to Members for completion, and subject to resources some of the data on attendance and training would be pre-populated.

Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW): Care Allowance

Members received a copy of the current Council guidance on Care Allowance which used wording from the IRPW. Members were concerned that the document needed to be more user friendly and that the use of language be more inviting and informal, to encourage Members to take up the support available to them to undertake the role; that the receipt of such an allowance should not be seen to be out of the norm. It was felt that it is vital that the Council attract a more diverse membership. It was felt that Members receive adverse publicity which prevents them from receiving this important support.

It was suggested that the Chairperson at her annual meeting with the IRPW draw their attention to this committee's concerns.

RESOLVED – That

1. the Committee received and noted the overview of the findings of the Member Survey 2016 and this information be used to inform: -
 - the Member Development Steering Group;
 - Induction for 2017;
 - the action plan to be prepared alongside the Councillor Review Report commissioned by the Cabinet and the Members Support Task and Finish Group report.
2. a request be made to the Cabinet that the Councillor Support Review report initiated by them be shared with the Committee;
3. the template for Member Annual reports be populated with Member data and circulated to Members to support the completion process;
4. a review of the language and content of the Council's own Care Allowance document be undertaken as well as a discussion in the autumn with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales on care allowances and the take up by Members at the meeting of the Panel in the Autumn;
5. the comments made by the Committee on the reliability of the ICT service be raised with the Head of Information Technology.

8 : MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Committee received a report on the Member learning and development opportunities held since the last meeting, and as part of the consideration of this item

Members referred to the outcomes from the Members Survey reported June 2016 received earlier in the meeting.

In addition, it was proposed that the Member Development Steering Group be re-established to meet to finalise the learning programme for this municipal year, and that a separate meeting be arranged to receive Members views on the Member Induction for 2017. This would also meet the actions arising from the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Corporate Assessment 'Follow On' report published in February 2016 and the Statement of Action agreed by Cabinet in March 2016 in relation to strengthening member development and skills and understanding; and preparing for the new administration.

Members also noted the work of the Wales Local Government Association (WLGA) and Members Services Officers on a new Councillor Guide for new candidates and that there was an opportunity to promote the role of a Councillor as part of the Local Democracy Week 10 – 16 October 2016.

The Chairperson invited discussion and the following observations were made:

- the importance to new Councillors of a Mentoring scheme using experienced Councillors, Councillors from other Local Authorities if appropriate and peer mentors from WLGA;
- Members were keen to have greater ownership of their training objectives and consideration of learning opportunities outside of the programme parameters. In this respect there would be a need for a self-assessment and identification of training needs and a review of resources available;
- Members recognised that signposting Members to relevant information; briefing and user guides would be beneficial;
- It was important for the development of any programme that training needs were identified and that there was a consistent approach to Induction training for all Members;
- the proposed scope of the Member Development Steering Group was divided into two work-streams
 - Member learning & development programme September 2016 – March 2017;
 - Member Induction 2017.

Nominations were sought for the Group to meet in August and September and report back to Committee in September.

- Members reiterated the importance of providing a variety of methods for the receipt of information, briefings and learning opportunities;
- the importance of the identification of 'mandatory' learning and how compliance would be monitored and non-compliance addressed;
- consideration of accredited courses;
- the benefits of benchmarking/ good practice from other Local Authorities – although it was recognised that the WLGA Induction 2017 curriculum was to ensure consistency of delivery of information and learning at the induction phase for new Members;
- the importance of Governor training for all Members;
- co-hosting/sharing of learning opportunities across public sector and Local Councils which will aid networking and the sharing of ideas;
- a learning programme booklet be produced on available courses; on-line modules; conference attendance; mentoring opportunities; Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) such as how to present at a licensing or planning committee.

The Chairperson in summing up was keen to emphasize the work undertaken by the Member Development Steering Group last year to develop a programme; the number and types of events / opportunities for learning available since the last meeting of this committee; and the importance of sharing this information with the Wales Audit Office and better engagement with the Standards and Ethics Committee. Hollie Edwards - Davies advised that she would be reporting back to the Committee on 20 July, 2016.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee write to the Wales Audit Office client officer for the Council to arrange a meeting to discuss the background to their recommendations in the Follow-on assessment in relation to Member training and Induction;
- (2) the following Membership be invited to participate in the Member Development Steering Group meetings;
 - Democratic Services Committee Members – Cllrs Clark, Dilwar Ali, Goddard and Murphy;
 - Cabinet Member with responsibility for democracy, Cllr De’Ath;
 - Member/s of the Standards and Ethics Committee;
 - Party Group Whips.

9 : DRAFT DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

The first Draft of the Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2015/16 had been prepared for input from the Committee on style and content.

Members emphasised that recognition should be made of the key outcomes achieved in the last 12 months; that the Members support provided by the team was very good; and that there should be no further cuts to Member support services in the budget next year.

Members felt that there were a number of the headings that could be expanded in particular: -

- Details of all training course topics delivered over the year;
- Inclusion of a Forward plan section for the next year;
- That the Chair’s Foreword picks up issues around Members Support Services review outcomes; and future resources and budget decisions.

10 : DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee discussed items for future meetings which included:

- Report from Member Development Steering Group;
- Member Induction 2017;
- Members Support Services Review Update
- Review of Member Development Strategy;
- Draft Members handbook;
- Review of Mentoring Scheme;
- Revised Care Allowance Scheme;
- Democracy Week – Role & responsibilities of a Councillor;

- Review of Members room facilities including work stations;
- Personal Development framework;
- Work-life Balance further research;
- Update on the Member Online Library Service and independent information and research support.

RESOLVED – That the work plan be prioritised and developed in conjunction with the Chair of the Committee and lead officers of the Council.

11 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled on 21 September 2016 at 10.00am in Committee Room 4 subject to this date not clashing with political annual conferences.

(The meeting terminated at 12.45pm)

Chair: _____

Date: _____