

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

10 OCTOBER 2017

Present: County Councillor Jones-Pritchard (Chairperson)
County Councillors Ford, Goddard, Goodway, Kelloway,
Naughton, Sandrey and Wong

38 : APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Burke-Davies, Ebrahim, McKerlich and Murphy.

39 : CHAIRPERSON, MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was noted that Annual Council 25 May 2017 appointed Councillor Mike Jones - Pritchard as Chairperson of this Committee and that the Membership was as follows:

Councillors Burke- Davies, Ebrahim, Ford, Goddard, Goodway, Jones-Pritchard, Kelloway, McKerlich, Murphy, Naughton, Sandrey, Singh and Wong

The Terms of Reference were agreed as follows: -

- 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.

40 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests for this meeting.

41 : MINUTES

To note the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2017.

42 : MEMBERS SERVICES - STRUCTURE, SERVICES AND SUPPORT

The Committee received an overview report in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference on the current structure and support services provided to Elected Members of the Council.

Member's attention was drawn to the Cabinet proposal from 21 September 2017 for a new post to discharge the statutory role of the Head of Democratic Services. The Committee was advised that the post was to be established within existing resources at OM1 level, and their views were sought on the content of the Job Description and Person Specification attached as Appendix A to the report.

The Committee commented on the person specification and specific requirements for this multi-disciplined role covering Electoral, Scrutiny and Democratic Services. The Committee was pleased to see that the role was part of the new senior management arrangements. Members noted that the proposed senior management structure was to be cost neutral.

The Committee discussed the Member Induction and Learning Programme; those sessions designated as essential training; national and regional opportunities - including the Welsh Local Government Association Regional Induction event for new Councillors and any returning Councillors; and received information from various governance networks.

The Committee had a variety of views on the essential elements of the programme. It was recognised that all Councillors have a statutory obligation to comply with relevant legislation – for example as Data Controllers and Corporate Parents. The Committee was keen to review the designation of the essential sessions agreed by the former Committee in March 2017.

The Committee noted the ongoing programme and topics to be scheduled.

The Committee noted that the draft Member Survey Autumn 2017, Item 6 for consideration at this meeting would have text boxes to allow for feedback on the Induction, the essential training and other sessions. Members felt that feedback forms should be provided at the end of each event as best practice. It was suggested that this could be done electronically. It was noted that some of the essential sessions were aimed at new Councillors only.

The Committee noted that the Wales Audit Office were undertaking a national review of Overview and Scrutiny and the impact of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act on the work of Committee including Public Service Board scrutiny with the aim of facilitating improvements and sharing good practice.

The Committee received and considered the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) draft annual report published on 4 October 2017. In order to meet the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 there was a requirement for the IRPW to publish its report by 28 February 2018. Representations from Local Authorities needed to be submitted by 29 November 2017.

RESOLVED – That

1. the draft Job Description and Person Specification for the post of Head of Democratic Services was approved;
2. noted the ongoing Learning and Development Programme as detailed in Appendix D;
3. agreed to review those topics designated as essential at the next meeting;
4. noted the draft report from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and proposed changes. The Committee did not wish to respond to the consultation.

43 : MEMBERS SURVEY 2017

The Committee considered and commented on the format and questions included in the draft Member Survey 2017 which had been commissioned as a follow up to the Cardiff Council Member Exit Survey undertaken in February 2017, and also included comparator questions from the Member Annual Survey last undertaken in June 2017, relating to support services to Councillors.

The survey would be available electronically and in hard copy to Councillors in November and the outcomes will be reported to the next meeting of this Committee in the new year.

The Committee was keen for the survey to capture feedback on the training offered so far, information on future training needs, and requested that Question 17 relating to support from Party Groups be removed. It was noted that Questions 19 – 26 were questions asked in the Member Exit Survey and the results and comparator information would be reported to Standards & Ethics Committee in March 2018.

RESOLVED – That

1. the Draft Member Survey subject to any typographical changes was agreed subject to the removal of question 17 as set out above.
2. noted that an analysis of the questions relevant to this Committee from the Member Survey 2017 will be reported to the Committee in the new year.

44 : COMMITTEE WORK PLAN & FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The Committee discussed its role and remit and the importance of the democratic process and statutory functions required of Democratic Services, and maintaining good governance and decision making. It was noted that the budgetary pressures on each Directorate remained significant, and that the governance teams had made efficiencies over the last 5 years - balanced with the statutory and legislative requirements that the Council and the Directorate is required to maintain.

The Committee was unanimous in its view that there is a cost to democracy and that the priority for the Committee was to ensure that the good governance and reputation of the Council, its Councillors and decision making and scrutiny functions, was not put at risk by further challenging saving reductions that will impact on the democratic processes, decision making and support to Elected Members.

The Committee agreed that its next meeting would be in the new year and would consider

- the outcomes of the Member Survey autumn 2017;
- Update on the Councillor Learning Programme;
- Members Services update.

RESOLVED – That

1. the Chair on behalf write to the Leader of the Council as the portfolio lead for Governance and Democratic Services detailing the Committees comments on

the cost of democracy and requesting that no further budget saving targets apply to these services during your administration.

2. a date be agreed for a meeting of the Committee in the new year.

(Meeting closed at 18.35pm)

Chair: _____

Date: _____

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