

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

24 MAY 2021

Present: Councillor Jones-Pritchard(Chairperson)
Councillors Burke-Davies, Goddard, Goodway, Kelloway,
Naughton, Keith Parry, Mia Rees, Sandrey and Wong

35 : 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.

36 : MINUTES

To minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2020 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

37 : DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2020

The Democratic Services Committee considered the contents of its Annual Report for 2020 and approve the arrangements for the report to be finalised and presented to full Council.

The Committee noted the adaptations the service had taken to deal with COVID-19.

Remote Meetings

Under statutory powers granted in the Coronavirus Act 2020, the Welsh Ministers issued The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ('the Regulations'), which temporarily relaxed the rules governing local authority meetings during the coronavirus response period.

The Regulations came into force on 22nd April 2020 and were to remain in effect until 30th April 2021. The Regulations allowed meetings of a local authority to be held remotely using any equipment or facility which allowed Members to speak to, and be heard by, each other (whether or not Members can also see each other). The new rules on remote attendance applied to any meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees or Joint Committees (or Community Councils) held before 1st May 2021.

Officers produced an Elected Member Protocol for Remote Meetings, covering pre-meeting preparation and effective Elected Member participation in a remote Microsoft Teams meeting.

Webcasting of remote meetings could not be provided with the existing equipment and an alternative solution was procured which enabled "screen capture" of the

remote meetings which could then be published remotely to the webcasting provider. As a result the authority has successfully held 87 remote meetings which have been either recorded and uploaded or streamed live to the Council's webcasting website.

The Committee was advised that Electoral Services had successfully delivered both the Senedd and Police and Crime Commissioner under the current COVID-19 restrictions.

The Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel consisting of the five Scrutiny Chairs, was established following agreement at the May 2020 Council meeting. It met three times in June and July 2020 to carry out measured and proportionate scrutiny of the business critical decisions due to be made by the Cabinet. All Scrutiny Committee Members were afforded the opportunity to contribute lines of enquiry to ensure the Panel benefitted from the knowledge and experience of Scrutiny Members.

RESOLVED:

The Committee was recommended to:

- a) provide comments on the content of the Committee's Annual Report 2020;
- b) delegate authority to the Head of Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to finalise the Annual Report, having regard to comments provided by Members of the Committee; and
- c) agree that the Annual Report be presented to full Council on 24 June 2021 by the Chairperson

38 : DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT

The report informed the Democratic Services Committee on the performance of the Council's Democratic Services since the last meeting 30 November 2020.

The Committee was advised that the Member Services Team has remained unchanged since the last meeting of the committee. At the start of the initial Coronavirus lockdown the Team began agile working and with the exception of a small number of essential tasks has continued to work remotely to provide the service.

The Members Enquiry System (MES) was an important tool to effectively deal with the issues raised by residents with their Councillor. Members Services team had operational responsibility for the Members Enquiry System (MES) which included logging enquiries to provide Senior Managers with data on the key service issues, logging frequency and trends. The complexity and multi-service nature of some enquiries meant that response times can exceed the 10 working day Service Level Agreement (SLA).

The recent improvements in reporting arrangements of the MES identified some of the shortcomings of the system. The Nethelpdesk software was originally implemented as a call handling system with limited functionality. Its recent upgrade to HALO has provided the opportunity to improve the functionality available.

The Scrutiny Services Team currently had 4 Principal Scrutiny Officers (PSOs) due to a resignation in March 2021. A recruitment exercise was being undertaken. It was hoped that the recruitment would be completed in June.

The Committee Services Team had adapted to deliver Remote Meetings Under statutory powers granted in the Coronavirus Act 2020, the Welsh Ministers issued The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ('the Regulations'), which temporarily relaxed the rules governing local authority meetings during the COVID-19 response period

The Regulations came into force on 22nd April 2020 and were in effect until 30th April 2021. 20. These arrangements had now been superseded by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act which enables Local Authorities to develop a policy for "holding meetings in multiple locations". Guidance from the Welsh Government was being developed and would provide an outline of how meetings could be held whether fully remotely, face to face or as hybrid meetings.

The Authority was actively engaged with them and once the guidance has been released a proposed policy would be developed and considered by the Constitution Committee prior to its submission to Council for approval.

The Committee Services Team was developing a range of services and functionality to deliver the various types of meetings that would be needed for the new policy. These included:

- Simultaneous Welsh language Interpretation
- Hybrid Meetings
- Webcasting
- Modern.Gov and E-Petitions
- Education Appeals

The Committee was informed that currently Microsoft Teams did not support the Welsh Language. The use of Zoom, which supported the Welsh Language was currently being investigated.

The Committee discussed Member Development including the following:

- Training for Section 106 applications at Planning Committee.
- Zoom security issues
- Dual language support provided by Zoom
- Hybrid Meetings
- Roles and behaviours of Members at meetings.
- Best practice at Planning Committee

RESOLVED:

The Committee was requested to consider the detail in the report and:

- a) note the content of the report;
- b) provide any feedback on the Support Services provided to Councillors;

- c) receive a report on the updated Member Development programme at the next meeting of committee; and
- d) Identify any matters it would wish to add to the Work Programme

39 : INITIAL PROPOSALS - MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME 2022

The report sought direction from the Democratic Services Committee on the topics and scheduling of the Council's Elected Member Induction Programme following the Local Government Elections in 2022.

The Committee discussed the current Member Development Programme in place and were keen for a refresher Code of Conduct session to be provided to all members.

Committee focus training was also essential to provide specific training on Regulatory functions such as Planning and Licensing and how members could engage in the process if they were not members of these particular committees.

Members were concerned that following By-Elections, very little training was provided, which did not support the member in their role as a community representative. Further, essential equipment such as IT equipment and email addresses should be provided in a timely manner, in order for the member to carry out their role as a councillor.

The Committee was advised that following By-Elections specific training was provided including mandatory training and Committee specific training.

The Committee enquired about Ward related training that involved case work and correspondence.

It was essential that awareness of training programmes was communicated to persons nominated to be future councillors, including training being developed by the Welsh Local Government Association. Elected Members should understand the roles to which they had been appointed and be able to carry their role in their wards and for the City.

RESOLVED:

The Committee was requested to consider the detail in the report and:

- a) provide its views on the WLGA "Framework Induction Curriculum for Candidates and New Members in Wales for the Local Elections 2022" (Appendix B), including:
 - i. the topics that have been identified for inclusion
 - ii. their preferred method of delivery of these topics
 - iii. the requirement to make any of these topics mandatory.
- b) identify any additional Cardiff policies, activities or themes or other topics which should be included in the Induction Programme; and
- c) receive a detailed draft Induction Programme at its meeting in October 2021.

40 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The purpose of the report was to propose topics for inclusion on the Democratic Services Committee Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee considered the proposed Work Programme appended as Appendix A to this report and identifies any additional topics for consideration at future meetings of the committee.

41 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None

42 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 19 JULY 2021