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## **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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### **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – ACTIVITIES & SERVICE SUPPORT MATTERS**

#### **Reason for this Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Democratic Services Committee on the performance of the Council's Democratic Services since the last meeting 14 January 2019.

#### **Background**

##### Role of the Democratic Services Committee

2. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 1, Chapter 2, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/part/1/chapter/2> requires local authorities to appoint a Democratic Services Committee to oversee the Democratic Services functions of the Council, ensure that the work is adequately resourced and report to the full Council accordingly. The Democratic Services functions include Members' Services, Committee Services and Scrutiny Services, but not Cabinet Support Services.

#### **Issues**

##### Members Services

3. The Members Services Support Team assists all 75 Elected Member by:
  - providing face to face contact with Elected Members;
  - allocating a dedicated Members Services Support Officer to support with enquiries concerning Council Services;
  - tracking and monitoring Members Enquiries and chasing responses with agents;
  - providing general administrative and secretarial service to Elected Member including handling correspondence and emails; typing, scanning, mail merges etc.;
  - maintaining an up to date contact list of all 75 Elected Members;
  - maintaining an electronic record of Members Surgeries; preparing data for publication on website; and preparing surgery notices;
  - arranging room bookings for meetings relating to ward matters; with constituents or outside body representatives
  - arranging welsh translation in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Welsh Language Standards;

- providing stationery and office supplies; and
- overseeing Members' business offices including offices for Chairs of Committees and communal members areas;
- the first point of access for Members ICT/Telephone; allocation of IT equipment; and early stage troubleshooting support;
- provide signposting to other information and services relating to the role of Councillor

### Members Enquiries

4. Members Services team have operational responsibility for the Members Enquiry System (MES). Table 1 provides an update on the number and method of reporting Member Enquiries:

**Table 1**

<b>Enquiry Type</b>	<b>Q1 2018/19</b>	<b>Q2 2018/19</b>	<b>Q3 2018/19</b>	<b>Q4 2018/19</b>	<b>Q1 2019/20</b>
<b>Total Enquiries</b>	1533	1620	1428	1854	1847
<b>Member Self-serve</b>	682	754	577	694	744
<b>Logged by Officer</b>	851	866	851	1160	1103
<b>Time taken to close in days.</b>	11.2	9.6	9.4	8.3	7.6

5. The number of Elected Member using the MES remains consistent at is 68 out of 75. This has changed due to the two vacancies that we currently have in the Office of Councillor.
6. The MES is an important tool to effectively deal with the issues raised by residents with their Councillor. Logging enquiries provides Senior Managers with data on the key service issues, logging frequency and trends. The complexity and multi-service nature of some enquiries means that response times can exceed the 10 calendar days.
7. It was agreed with Community Councils, following the adoption by Cabinet of the Community Council Charter on 13 December 2019, that Member Services would continue to provide the MES service to the six Clerks Community Councils and that this would be reviewed annually.
8. The Members Services team is constantly monitoring MES and responses for Councillors and chasing or escalating matters as necessary. The team liaise closely with agents in Directorates and regularly meet with teams to deal with specific issues in particular in relation to Requests for Service.

### Committee Services

9. The Committee Services team provide administrative support to Council and all Committees of Council, which includes preparation of agendas, minutes & reports packs using Modern.Gov; publishing; booking rooms for meetings and pre-meetings; support to Lord Mayor as Chair of Council; Chairs of Committees.

10. Committee & Members Services have also since April 2019 supported the Cardiff Council School Admissions Panels with the provision of minute takers at Panel Appeal and Exclusion Hearings.

11. In addition to Committee administration the team carry out the following functions:

Council Governance: custodians of the:

- Constitution;
- Declaration of Acceptance of Office;
- Cardiff Undertaking;
- Register of Political Groups.

Member Governance: maintain up to date records of:

- Register of Individual Member Interests;
- Conference and Events Register;
- Hospitality Register;
- Outside Bodies Membership administration of Register and notification;
- Attendance & Apologies Register
- Arrange welsh translation in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Welsh Language Standards;
- Provide guidance and support in the preparation, publication & translation of Members Annual Reports and Member Information.

Public Engagement support given to:

- Public questioners at Council;
- Hosting attendees and visitors;
- Petitioners & public at Committee meetings.

Liaison with Members and External Bodies

- Produce & issue the Members Weekly Diary;
- Issuing of Member Electronic Briefs
- Members of Parliament and Assembly Members;
- Welsh Local Government Association Networks & projects;
- Report to & liaise with Independent Remuneration Panel;
- Internal Audit and Wales Audit Office with inspections; providing information & reports; & at meetings;
- Liaise with a range of Outside Bodies.

Corporate Support

- Emergency Management on call on a rota basis;
- Representing Committee & Members Services at corporate meetings
- Supporting the Electoral Services team both at elections and in the use of Modern.Gov
- Support to the Legal and Education School Admission Appeals process and the digitalising of the Panel Members packs on Modern.gov.

Management and development of systems

- Modern.Gov;
- Conference System;
- Webcasting
- Facebook Live

## Scrutiny Services

### Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?

12. The Scrutiny Team are progressing the action plan following the Wales Audit Office review entitled Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future? Activities include:
- National and Regional Scrutiny Networks have been established and this Council are activity participating in collaborative events including the launch of the Joint Scrutiny Handbook and a South East Wales Scrutiny officers Network.
  - Reviewing and updating work processes to ensure an element of standardisation and consistency.
  - The identification of appropriate individual and collective scrutiny learning and development.

### Scrutiny Committee Work Programming

13. The work programmes of the Scrutiny Committees are being finalised in preparation for publication on the Cardiff Council website. It is hoped that this will assist in promoting the activities of the scrutiny committees, identify those meetings that are being webcast and encourage engagement and participation in the scrutiny process.

## Audit of Scrutiny

14. An audit is currently being undertaken by the Internal Audit service. The overall purpose of the audit is to provide assurances to management that there is a sound system of internal control within the area under review. Where it is considered improvements to the internal control environment can be made, these will be highlighted and discussed with you, so that controls can be enhanced. The objective of the audit is that:

*Scrutiny Committees demonstrate effective outcomes from Scrutiny activities that represent good value.*

With a focus on outcomes, the audit will consider Scrutiny planning, delivery and performance, through discussions with Lead Scrutiny Members, Officers and via desktop review.

The audit is progressing well with the majority of Scrutiny Chairs and Officers completing discussions with the Internal Auditor. It is anticipated that the audit will be completed in the autumn.

## Electoral Services

### Electoral Boundary Services

15. The Council approved the report on 20 June 2019 and it was submitted to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales by the deadline of 24 June 2019. They are due to respond by 1 December 2019 but are

behind with other boundary reviews so this date may slip. The reviews should be completed in time for the next local elections in 2022.

#### Polling Districts and Stations Review

16. The Electoral services manager is in the process of reviewing the consultation responses and draft a report to go to Council in September 2019.

#### Annual Canvas

17. The Annual canvas will commence at the end of July through to 1 December 2019.

#### Corporate Apprentice – Democratic Services

18. The two Democratic Services Corporate Apprentices Caitlin Davies and Christina Lazarou have become familiar faces within in the Scrutiny and Committee & Members Services teams. They are progressing well with their Business Administration Level 2 Foundation Apprenticeship that they are undertaking in collaboration with Cardiff & Vale College.

#### Modern.Gov

19. Modern.Gov is the Committee Management System used by the Democratic Services team to co-ordinate the production of agenda, minutes, Forward Plans and programmes and provides a dual language website with an array of information.
20. The Modern.Gov App is available for all Members devices and provides access to those with appropriate permissions to public and exempted meeting information. This enables the authority to provide a paperless solution to the production and circulation of reports, minutes and agenda. The benefits for Members of the Mod.Gov App are that it supports the service in making efficiencies in its printing and postage budgets.
21. The Committee team continue to work on further improvements to Modern.Gov and users guides to support Members with remote access and greater options for self-service.
22. An updated app has been developed and is available for iPad but the windows version is expected later this year. The new app will have improved functionality and performance that will make it easier and more robust to use.

#### Webcasting

23. The Council has a contract for 200 hours of webcasting per year for broadcasting of Council, Planning and Scrutiny Committees. Table 3 below displays the current allocation of the webcasting hours.

	Number of meetings	Estimated Duration	Estimated Webcast Hours
Council	9	4	36
Planning	12	3	36
Scrutiny	50	2	100
Audit (Pilot)	2	2	4
Cabinet	12	2	24
Total Webcasting Hours			200

24. The Directorate Plan has a Performance Indicator to measure public engagement activity and ability to access the decision-making processes of Council. Table 4 below set out the number of hits per quarter for the last municipal year and first quarter of this municipal year.

**Table 4**

<b>Webcasting</b>	<b>Q1 18/19</b>	<b>Q2 18/19</b>	<b>Q3 18/19</b>	<b>Q4 18/19</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Q1 19/20</b>
Full Council	231	453	865	664	2213	509
Planning Committee	245	181	632	490	1548	459
Scrutiny Committees	284	74	259	78	695	380
Total	760	708	1756	1232	4456	1348

### Printing

25. The provision of IT and the Modern.Gov platform to Members and officers has significantly supported the reduction in reliance on hard copy papers at meetings. It is recognised that Members have individual requirements and adjustments are made to accommodate those Members. The Democratic Services team are required to maintain the reduced level of printing and reduce demand further wherever possible.

### Councillor Annual Reports

26. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 20111 requires every Local Authority in Wales to make arrangements for all Councillors to make and publish an Annual report about their activities. The WLGA in consultation with Member Support Officer Group agreed a template that was adopted on an all Wales basis. As these reports are published on the Council Website and as with all Councillor profile related information, they need to meet the Welsh Language Standards and be published bilingually.
27. Elected Members were provided with template and guidance following Annual Council in May 2019 and the deadline for receipt of Annual Report was extended to 31 July 2019.
28. There is no legal requirement for Councillors to complete an Annual Report, only that the Council afford the Councillor the opportunity to publish one. It is one way that Councillors can promote greater understanding of the

wide and varied role of a Councillor and showcase the different work Councillors undertake for local residents and communities in their Ward.

29. Group Whips have supported Democratic Services in encouraging Councillors to provide an Annual Report. Details of the number of Councillors publishing their Annual reports will be provided to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and a previous Welsh Government Minister for Local Government was collecting figures for all Welsh Authorities.
30. Councillors have the opportunity to prepare an annual report on an individual basis or by Ward and to date we have received one Ward and four individual Councillor Annual reports.

### Networks

31. Lead Member and Officers for Member Support Network

The following topics were discussed at the meeting held on 11 July 2019:

- Updates from the Welsh Government on the **Senedd and Elections Bill** and the **Local Government and Elections Bill**.
- Updates from the **Local Government Reform Working group**
- **WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development;**
- **Be a Councillor 2022**
  - Consideration of the Response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee on Diversity in Local Government and update from the WLGA Diversity in Local Government Democracy Working Group.
  - **Demonstration of the new WLGA Be a Councillor Website currently in development for suggestions and developments.** The Beta version of a new website encouraging diverse people to stand for local government office in Wales. This website will replace the WLGA candidates guide and provide opportunities for interactivity. <http://beacouncillor-en.apps.data.cymru/home>
  - **E Learning for members.** Councils have now agreed a list of 22 themes for member e learning modules and many have selected a topic.

### National Scrutiny Network

32. The following are the outcomes from the latest meeting of the National Scrutiny held on 19 April 2019:

a. **WAO Discussion Paper: *Six Themes to Help Make Scrutiny Fit for the Future.***

The Network considered the paper and suggested that:

- This could be used in conjunction with the *Characteristics of Effective Scrutiny* as a measure of local scrutiny effectiveness.
- Public engagement and member training are the most challenging elements.
- Cabinets need similar guidance about working effectively with scrutiny.
- Some authorities are already reporting on their position against the checklist with action plans.

b. **Joint Scrutiny Guidance.** Rebecca David Knight, Director of her consultancy company, Public Governance Wales, has been commissioned to work with Cardiff Business School on an update of an original document *Step by Step to Joint Scrutiny*, produced in 2015 and funded by the Welsh Government. Members of the Network were on the steering group for the original document. New case studies and findings from authorities across Wales have been included in the new document. Rebecca outlined the following messages from her research. Her presentation is attached.

Key messages. Effective joint scrutiny:

- Is essential for democratic accountability.
- Does not have to rely on formal arrangements, conventional structures can be challenged, work can be done virtually and by chairs.
- Is the responsibility of political and managerial leadership as much as the scrutiny function.
- Relies on pre-meetings, forward work programmes, effective time management and capturing outcomes and examples of changes in organisational behaviour because of scrutiny interventions.

Observations from further discussions

- The WG needs to provide more resources for scrutiny.
- Joint scrutiny arrangements should be prescribed by the scrutineers, rather than the executive function, to protect independence.
- It would be useful if the CfPS could provide training for scrutiny officers, a scrutiny officer qualification is required

More information from [RDK@publicgovwales.org.uk](mailto:RDK@publicgovwales.org.uk)

c. **Update from the Centre for Public Scrutiny.** Ian Parry, the Business Development Manager for the CfPS joined the meeting to provide an update on what the CfPS can offer to the scrutiny community in Wales. The full range of services from the CfPS can be seen here <http://www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Training-and-Consultancy-Brochure-.pdf>



It was suggested that there was much that would benefit both officers and members in Wales including scrutiny training and development, health checks, consultancy services and research. Regional seminars could be provided. Ian is also able to offer regional seminars to members in Wales and will give some consideration to topic and cost.

Guidance on scrutiny is being prepared in England following a select committee enquiry. At the time of the meeting, the publication date was uncertain but emerging themes were described as very similar to the WAO guidance in Wales and the Wales Characteristics of Effective Scrutiny. Key messages include:

Scrutiny has not changed over time, it needs a redesign by local rather than central government to be fit for purpose.

The requirements for effective scrutiny can be described in 7 themes

1. Culture – if key players are not engaged and supportive of the function, protocols need to be in place to change the culture.
2. Resources – Parity of esteem is required between cabinet and scrutiny and resourcing should follow this principle and enable scrutiny to undertake the necessary research.
3. Committee members should be selected according to ability and capacity - assuming that all members can build skills to some extent, training or one to one support is important. Scrutiny committees should not look for good practice elsewhere but rather clarify what they want to achieve through scrutiny. Clarity of purpose will yield results. Competent chairs are vital.
4. Sources of information – scrutiny committees are not always provided with information different to that provided to cabinets. They are sometimes kept from embarrassing information. Scrutiny needs to hear the bad news.
5. Work Planning – scrutiny must have clear priorities aligned with the cabinet and council plans, driven by what matters to residents. CfPS have developed a decision tree which may be of use. (copy requested). There should be no more than 2 items per agenda and outcomes should be identified.
6. Evidence sessions, run like UK government select committees are essential.
7. Engaging the public – the public are more likely to be engaged if they are listened to rather than just invited to come to a meeting or complete a survey.

#### **d. Observations from further discussions**

- Members should be skilled in scrutiny not a service area, they cannot develop the in-depth knowledge of an officer or the forensic skills of an accountant when for example scrutinising the budget, rather they should focus on checking that these skills have been employed by others and in developing key lines of enquiry.

- The CfPS advises against directorate based scrutiny structures as this can encourage members to become inappropriately involved in service management.
- The single scrutiny committee model with task and finish groups is becoming more prevalent in England. T&F groups can be recruited from the wider member body according to skills.
- Cabinets need to improve forward work planning to enable scrutiny to plan.

Ian will share the guidance from England with the network when it becomes available. More information from [ian.parry@cfps.org.uk](mailto:ian.parry@cfps.org.uk)

**e. Practice sharing - Pre-decision scrutiny**

A number of approaches to ensuring that scrutiny committees are able to contribute to the decision-making process before a cabinet decision has been taken were shared. For example:

- Review of the Cabinet work programme by scrutiny.
- Dedicated pre-decision scrutiny committee.
- Work programming workshops.
- Sufficient time built in to the process for scrutiny findings to influence the decision.
- Feedback from cabinets about action as a result of scrutiny reports.

**f. Discussion with the Welsh Government.**

Lisa James, Deputy Director, Local Government Democracy Division in the Department for Local Government and David Willis, Local Government Reform Policy Manager joined the network.

Update on the Local Government and Elections Bill (formerly the Local Government Bill)

- The WG is hoping to set up a small discussion group on webcasting and remote attendance. The WLGA was asked to help organise this.
- There are other legal changes not in the Bill but associated with it.
  - From April 2021, the Independent Remuneration Panel will have no powers over the remuneration of chief officers, only chief executives.
  - Early discussions are taking place about a possible duty to consider regional working and the formation of new statutory joint committees, which could be created by regulation or order to enable voluntary joint working.
  - There is a need for the scrutinised to understand the role of scrutiny and national guidance should be provided to this effect. The WG Joint Overview and Scrutiny Guidance needs updating.
  - The WG is aware of the resourcing and promotional challenges for scrutiny and will continue to have conversations with the network about the support required. The launch of the Cardiff Business School guidance should be for regional and executive reps rather than scrutiny

leads who are already aware of the problems and opportunities.

- The WLGA and WG are undertaking a review of strategic partnerships; WLGA has produced a compendium attached. Additions welcome.
- Community Health Councils we be abolished and replaced by a new body to take over advocacy and access to health services.

Lisa observed that partnership council and Solace had not discussed scrutiny for some time, and that might be useful work by CFPS.

### Regional Scrutiny Network

33. The re-establishment of the National Scrutiny Network did not meet all of the requirements necessary to provide scrutiny effective support at a local level. The planned arrangements did not include localised peer support, collective learning activities, support for self-assessments and peer reviews.
34. The Head of Democratic Services has taken the lead to establish a South East Wales Scrutiny Officers Network (SEWSON) based on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Footprint. The intention for the network is to enhance the delivery and awareness of scrutiny across the region and to identify opportunities to deliver the positive outcomes which collaborative working can achieve.
35. An initial meeting has was held on 11 Jan 2019 to agree its terms of reference, administrative arrangements. The first meeting of the network was held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019 with the Head of Democratic Services from Cardiff being elected as the Chairperson for the forthcoming year. It was agreed to hold a training event for all the scrutiny officers in the region to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019.
36. A verbal update will be provided from this training session.

### Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW)

38. The IRPW 2019/2020 was published in February 2019 and Council at its Annual Meeting 23 May 2019 adopted the recommendations in relation to:
  - the Basic Salary payable to Elected Members;
  - the Senior Salary payable to Cabinet Members;
  - the Senior Salary payable to Committee Chairs;
  - the Civic Salary Payable;
  - the cap on the maximum payment of Co-opted Members fees;
  - the allocation of the maximum 19 Senior Salary positions payable by the Council.
39. The schedule of Remuneration was prepared for consideration by Council on 18 July and for publication in accordance with the IRPW requirements by 31 July 2019.

## **Legal Implications**

40. Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 1, the Democratic Services Committee is responsible for overseeing the democratic services functions of the Council and the resources made available for these functions.
41. The Democratic Services functions (which must be discharged by the Head of Democratic Services) are defined as follows:
  - (a) to provide support and advice:
    - to the authority in relation to its meetings;
    - to committees of the authority and the members of those committees;
    - to any joint committee which a local authority is responsible for organising and the members of that committee;
    - in relation to the functions of the authority's scrutiny committees,
    - to members of the authority, members of the executive and officers;
    - to each member of the authority in carrying out the role of member of the authority (but excluding a member's role as an Executive member);
  - (b) to promote the role of the authority's Scrutiny Committees;
  - (c) to make reports and recommendations to Council in respect of the number and grades of staff required to discharge democratic services functions and the appointment, organisation and proper management of those staff; and
  - (d) any other functions prescribed by the Welsh Ministers.
42. In determining how to exercise its functions, the Committee must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers.
43. The information set out in the body of this report enables the Democratic Services Committee to oversee the work of democratic services, ensure the work is adequately resourced and report to full council as appropriate.

## **Financial Implications**

44. This report is for information and there are no direct financial implications, with services provided being met from within the 2019/20 revenue budget for the directorate.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee is requested to consider the detail in the report and provide any feedback on the Support Services provided to Councillors or matters it would wish to add to the Work Programme.

**GARY JONES**  
**HEAD of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**  
16 July 2019

Background Papers

IRPW Annual Report 2019/20:

English: [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/irp-annual-report-2019-2020\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/irp-annual-report-2019-2020_0.pdf)

Cymraeg: <https://llyw.cymru/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/pacgaadroddiad-blynyddol-2019-2020.pdf>