

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

15 OCTOBER 2019

Present: Councillor Jones-Pritchard(Chairperson)
Councillors Bowden, Kelloway, Lay, McKerlich, Naughton,
Sandrey and Wong

13 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Goddard.

14 : 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.

15 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2019 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

16 : DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - RESOURCES AND CHALLENGES

Members were advised that the purpose of this report was to inform the Democratic Services Committee of the current activities of Democratic Services and the challenges facing the service.

The Head of Democratic Services advised Members of the roles and responsibilities of each of the service areas and the Budget Allocation, savings proposals and reserves were outlined.

Members attention was drawn to current challenges in Democratic Services as outlined in detail in the report and these are summarised as:

- Education Appeal
- Office 365
- Implementation of Microsoft SharePoint
- Personal Safety for Elected Members
- Printing
- Elections
- Staffing

Future challenges detailed in the report were highlighted as:

- New Legislation – Local Government and Elections Bill
- Budget Savings
- Member Development
- New Audio Visual Conferencing System and Webcasting Facilities
- Democratic Engagement
- Democratic Renewal
- Continuing Efficiencies
- Development of Cost Information

Members discussions and questions on the report are summarised as follows:

In relation to Education Appeals, Members asked for clarification as to why these fell into the Democratic Services remit. Members were advised that it was originally an agreement between Governance and Legal Services and the Education department. The Education department were not able to service appeal meetings as these had to be undertaken independently. The Head of Democratic Services advised that funding for a part time grade 2 post was allocated to the team by the Education department but this did not meet the increasing commitment for supporting the appeals. Members considered that Education should fully fund the work undertaken in support of the Education appeals by Democratic Services. It was also considered that there may be a piece of work to be done by Education in relation to communicating effectively with the public in respect of the grounds for an appeal.

Members discussed the migration to Office 365 and asked what savings would be made if all Members migrated before 31 October 2019. The Head of Democratic Services advised that the average saving would be around £40 per Member. Members were advised that migration only takes around 20 minutes, extra sessions would be arranged for Members, issues with Members who already have other managed accounts were being looked into, and that if extra handsets needed to be issued, then handsets that have been handed back in would be recycled. After some discussion Members considered that access to Blackberry Works should be withdrawn by the end of October, Members would be informed of this in plenty of time and alternative options provided to them.

Discussing SharePoint, Members noted that some of them are already using this in other roles such as Governors, and asked if they could have multiple accounts. The Head of Democratic Services agreed to check this and to check that regarding a Councillor email address as a log in for Governors. Members asked who is picking up the costs for implementation of SharePoint and were advised that each individual department was, with support from IT.

In relation to Printing and the review of printers, Members discussed options and agreed to remove the printer from the Members lounge in County Hall as it is very rarely used and Members have access to the other secure print printers around the building. Other printers would also be reviewed. Members were advised that it had been discussed at Whips that there would be no printing of hard copy sets of papers for Members unless Democratic Services had been informed of a specific need. Members discussed this and it was considered that there needed to be a breakdown of what the savings would be, and that it was important not to be discriminatory and that Members couldn't be prevented from doing their job.

Members referred to the Election work and discussed whether people were fine for not registering during the Canvass process. Members were advised that there was no record of anyone being fined previously. Members considered it may be useful to have a breakdown at constituency level. The Head of Democratic Services agreed to find out more about this and get back Committee.

Members were informed of issues in relation to Staffing and were advised that if there was a reduction in staff there would need to be a 20% reduction in Committee and Scrutiny Meetings. Members were advised that it was unlikely that savings requested would be met.

In relation to Member Development, Members discussed attendance at training sessions. It was considered that going forward, there needed to be around 4-6 weeks' notice given for training sessions and sessions should be at work friendly times. Members were advised that Whips had suggested that a question is added to the Members Survey to ask what times suit them best. A discussion took place around the term 'essential' and it was noted that the only real essential training for Members was the Code of Conduct training, and that there was no action taken if Members hadn't attended the sessions previously. Members discussed the consideration that the term 'essential' is removed and sessions could be graded on a low to high importance level; and the number of sessions provided would depend on the level of interest in the session. The Head of Democratic Services stated that the Members Training and Development Strategy was due to be reviewed next year and this could be marked as a planned change. This item would be brought back to the January Committee Meeting.

Members discussed Democratic Renewal and noted that an event was planned. Members discussed various issues including the importance of potential Members knowing the requirements of the role and democracy. The Head of Democratic Services explained that he had put on this event in a previous Authority and it had worked well with a few Members attending to talk about the role, basic criteria for the role, a calendar of meetings was shown to demonstrate the variety and amount of amount of Council Business and signposting/contacts to Parties.

RESOLVED that:

- I. The Committee acknowledged the view of the Director of Governance and Legal Services regarding the need to reduce the number of formal meetings for Democratic Services to meet its savings target. The Committees considered that the scale of the reductions needed to make this target were unacceptable if the good governance arrangements of the Authority were to be maintained.
- II. The Education Department fully fund Democratic Services for the support provided for Education Appeals;
- III. The roll-out of Office 365 be progressed to maximise any savings that could be made. This included the removal of Blackberry Works before the end of October, following an appropriate notice period and the identification of alternative options being provided to Members beforehand;

- IV. The printer in the Members Lounge in County Hall be removed and the other printing facilities held by Democratic Services be downsized accordingly to reflect the reduced levels of printing;
- V. Following the implementation of the new Modern.gov App, provision of additional access to power supplies in the Council's formal meeting rooms and the completion of the review of member's specific needs to printing that the use of digital documents for meeting be prioritised to further reduce the levels of printing.
- VI. the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy be revised to remove the term 'essential' from the categorisation of Member Development activities unless it is Code of Conduct or Planning and Licensing training; and that a suitable grading system be developed for the Democratic Services Committee to allocate the importance of Members to attend learning opportunities;

17 : DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE SUPPORT

Members were advised that the purpose of this report was to inform the Democratic Services Committee on the performance of the Council's Democratic Services since the last meeting 22 July 2019.

The Head of Democratic Services took Members through the report and updated them on the performance of Democratic Services in the following areas:

- Members' Services
- Scrutiny Services
- Electoral Services
- Corporate Apprentices – Democratic Services
- Modern.Gov
- Webcasting
- Councillor Annual Reports
- Office 365 Roll out for Elected Members
- Member Development
- Regional Scrutiny Work
- Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

Members discussions and questions on the report are summarised as follows:

Members were happy to wait until the next meeting to receive the quarter 2 information.

Members discussed the Members Business Office at City Hall, and that Members Services Staff had been working from there a few days a week on a rota basis. Members asked about the effectiveness of this arrangement and considered that this service should be withdrawn from City Hall.

Members asked why the Cabinet meeting is not webcast, and were advised that it was a pilot and they are yet to determine when they start. Members asked if this

could be progressed as Members aren't involved in the Cabinet process and it would be useful to be able to view the meetings. Members also considered that Cabinet shouldn't be selective in the subjects that are webcast. The Head of Democratic Services agreed to progress this request with Cabinet.

Members discussed Councillor Annual Reports and were advised that once received they are translated and published on the website. Members discussed the timescales that these required and considered that there may be a slower response due to the summer recess. It was explained that the deadline was for the end of the year and for admin efficiencies, although they would be accepted at any time, but not chased up.

With regards to E-Learning, Members requested that all Members are asked if they wish to attend a Welsh Language Course. Members noted the Charing Skills and requested that this is timetabled early in the year, pre-April before Members are appointed to Committees. In relation to Planning training for Members, Members considered this would be useful for 2022, however it was considered that the training needed to be reviewed to meet objectives. The Head of Democratic Services asked that Members send their suggestions for including in the training to him.

Members were advised that in relation to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, there was a meeting scheduled for 29 October 2019 and information would be fed back to the next Committee Meeting.

Members wished to express their thanks to staff in Democratic Services.

RESOLVED to recommend that:

- Members Services staff provision in the Members Business Office at City Hall be withdrawn;
- Cabinet be requested progress webcasting of Public Cabinet Meetings;
- All Members are asked if they wish to attend a Welsh Language Course, subject to available provision being sought.

18 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

19 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13 January 2020.

The meeting terminated at 6.50 pm

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