

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

21 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present: County Councillor Clark(Chairperson)
County Councillors Chaundy, De'Ath, Hyde, Murphy, Robson
and Wild

12 : COUNCILLOR CHRIS LOMAX

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson wanted to record her sincere condolences to Councillor Lomax's family and paid tribute to him for his work on the Committee and Council as a whole.

13 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dilwar Ali, Goddard, Graham and Ben Thomas.

14 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

15 : MINUTES

To minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2016 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

The Committee received an updated on the action points from 18 July 2016 and outstanding actions would be carried forward.

16 : WELCOME TO DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL SERVICES

The Chairperson formally welcomed to the Committee Davina Fiore, Director of Governance and Legal Services who had taken up her post on 19 September 2016.

The Director was pleased to be joining the City of Cardiff Council and looked forward to working with the Committee.

In response to the action on the Head of Democratic Services role, the Director advised that this was a statutory appointment as set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure. At present the regulations did not allow for this appointment to be the Monitoring Officer.

17 : MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Chairperson reminded Members were advised that the Welsh Audit Office had wanted training strengthened; and to this end the Member Development Steering Group had met and the Chairperson thanked colleagues for attending. The Steering Group had drawn up the Member Learning & Development Programme for 2016-17.

The Steering Group had concluded that the Member Development Strategy should be refreshed to include the following principles:

- (i) inclusion of a Learning Charter which identifies the roles and responsibilities required in supporting the delivery of learning opportunities;
- (ii) provision of a Training Needs Analysis proforma for Member self-evaluation and annual review;
- (iii) identification in the Strategy of what are essential training modules; and how this will be implemented and monitored;
- (iv) the inclusion of the principles and processes for mentoring; peer support and shadowing;;
- (v) clearly setting out the structure and expectations for the delivery of briefings; learning opportunities; workshops; in particular notice periods, timing of sessions and links to training materials; on-line training and where possible links to a recording of the training delivered for those unable to attend.

In the discussion Members highlighted the importance for Councillors to have the right tools and learning platforms to support them in their roles. Individuals learn in different ways and it was important to have various types of training available such as e-learning; skills training and alternative delivery methods such a Webinars; and Members should be asked what they prefer. It was suggested that Members Annual Report should list the essential and other training undertaken by the Councillor that year so that a further training needs assessment can be completed as part of a personal development review.

The Committee discussed the principles for setting training and briefings so that Councillors can diarise. This would be supported by an annual published programme and outlook invitations. Arrangements for briefing sessions should be made at least 2 weeks in advance on days when Members are already in the building i.e. before or after committee meetings. This had been done in relation to Full Council meetings and had worked well.

Members were provided with an update on the All Wales On-Line Learning opportunities and the courses available; Rebecca Bradshaw explained the new Learning Pool portal which was due to go live shortly after which all Members would receive their new log in details and link. The officer advised on the range of online modules available which would include also all the staff modules. Work was ongoing on the transferring of course lists as some were owned by the learning pool.

Members were invited to provide feedback on the site once it is available to the officer and any requests for specific course content.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members: -

- Members discussed accessing online courses from tablets and smartphones and were advised that the content was not live as yet; login details would be sent out shortly; courses are compatible with mobile devices however some of the content would appear shrunk.
- Members considered that a hard copy of all courses should be circulated to all Members at the next Full Council meeting.

- Members discussed mandatory and essential training courses how this can be put in place and the need to identify those courses that were important for a Councillor to receive immediately after being elected.
- It was noted that mandatory training was not in place as yet as the new Welsh Government Bill had not come forward. However the Cardiff Undertaking which all Councillors are asked to sign up to clearly need to be supported by essential training to enable a Councillor to undertake their formal role.

The Chairperson recommended that the Member Development Programme 2016/17 should identify objectives and outcomes for all courses.

The Committee discussed the Member Induction for 2017 and the courses identified in the draft Welsh Local Government Association programme. Members were invited to send their comments to the Committee and Member Services Manager, who that the WLGA draft programme would be tailored to address the needs of Cardiff. Skills training elements not yet included needed to be brought forward and the Members Services and Development Officer Project Group would progress and report back to the Member Development Steering Group to get their input into the programme before reporting back to the Committee. The Chairperson was keen to have session included on Planning and Work Life Balance.

RESOLVED - That

1. a refresh of the Member Development Strategy will be undertaken to take into account the key principles identified in this report and would include the requirements for essential training;
2. the All Wales Academy On-line Learning Pool updated be noted and the on-line and other learning opportunities would be woven into the 2016/17 Member Development Programme;
3. the 2016/17 Member Development Programme and agreed that a booklet be provided to all Members at Full Council on 29 September, 2016 be approved;
4. the Member Development Steering Group support the preparation of the Members Induction programme and that the Officer group feed in plans and programmes over the next 6 months.

18 : DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

Members had been provided with the draft Democratic Services Annual Report and were advised that it had now been further populated with just a few elements that still needed to be expanded upon.

Members were happy with the content of the Draft Annual Report and asked that it could include a request that no further cuts are made to the Member Services budget in the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED – That the Committee endorsed the Democratic Services Committee Draft Annual Report 2015/16 for presenting to Full Council.

19 : REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES TO MEMBERS UPDATE

Members were advised that at its meeting 20 January 2016, the Committee endorsed the report and recommendations of the Task Group on the Review of Support Services to Members. The Director Governance and Legal Services shared the report with the Cabinet Member for Skills, Safety & Engagement ahead of the Budget setting process for 2016/17.

The Cabinet Member for Skills, Safety and Engagement, Councillor De'Ath had provided an update on the recommendation in relation to the growth bid for 2016/17 for the Committee on 23 March 2016.

In addition, the Committee at its meeting on 23 March 2016 was advised of a review commissioned by the Cabinet to consider the level of support available to Councillors. This exercise was facilitated by a former policy officer of Nottingham City Council; the outcome of the review was still awaited.

It was noted that most of the recommendations from the Task Group had been accepted however there were still a few items that needed further work such as the details of registers for example Section 106 register. Members noted that in many cases the information and data is available but signposting to the information needed to be improved and this should be progressed.

RESOLVED - That the response from the Cabinet Member to the recommendations of the January 2016 Review of Support Services Task and Finish Group report would be received shortly.

20 : MEMBER PROTOCOL REVIEW

The Chairperson advised that this item was to consider whether and what improvements could be made to Member's access to information, receipt of timely responses, input into decisions and being consulted on matters relevant to them.

Members discussed consultation and considered that a balance was needed; that Members were consulted on what was relevant to them i.e. Planning and Licensing and that Members were aware of the level of consultation that was needed.

In relation to the Members Enquiry System, Members renewed concerns around not receiving replies within the ten day turnaround time; cases being closed before they were fully dealt with; and the need for meaningful responses including having the content of the response in the body of the email rather than as an attachment. The Director stated that she was aware of the issues and had been asked to look at them; Customer Services were also looking at the system and how it could be improved.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

21 : WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

Members were advised that the next meetings were scheduled for December 2016 and March 2017.

Members discussed holding exit interviews for outgoing Members, it was noted that this was already planned; it was also considered that providing welfare and wellbeing information for outgoing Councillors would be beneficial and this would be discussed at Whips.

Members considered the Democratic Services Committee and Constitution Committee and potential overlaps in topics discussed. The Director stated she would look into the possibility of joint committees, or having the same committee membership so meetings could run concurrently on the same day, as this would help with Councillors work life balance and with officer resources; this would be discussed at Whips.

RESOLVED – That the work programme for 2016/2017 was approved.

22 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for 7 December, 2016 at 10.00am in Committee Room 4.

Chair: _____

Date: _____

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