
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – ACTIVITIES & SERVICE SUPPORT

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 28 November 2022.

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

Easy Conf Conferencing System Upgrade

3. The Democratic Services Team have been working with our contractors, software providers and the ICT department to implement an upgrade to the Council Conferencing system.
4. The conferencing system upgrade includes:
 - a. an updated app for android/iOS devices and Windows/Mac desktop client which enables following additional functionality:
 - A camera on/off facility for the remote attendee.
 - A "hands up" function to enable remote users to indicate to the Chair that they have a point of order or a point of personal explanation to make.
 - A background to be applied to mask the venue of the remote attendee.
 - A chat function to enable remote attendees to chat to each other but not to the in-person attendees or the Chair.
 - A remote screen sharing facility.

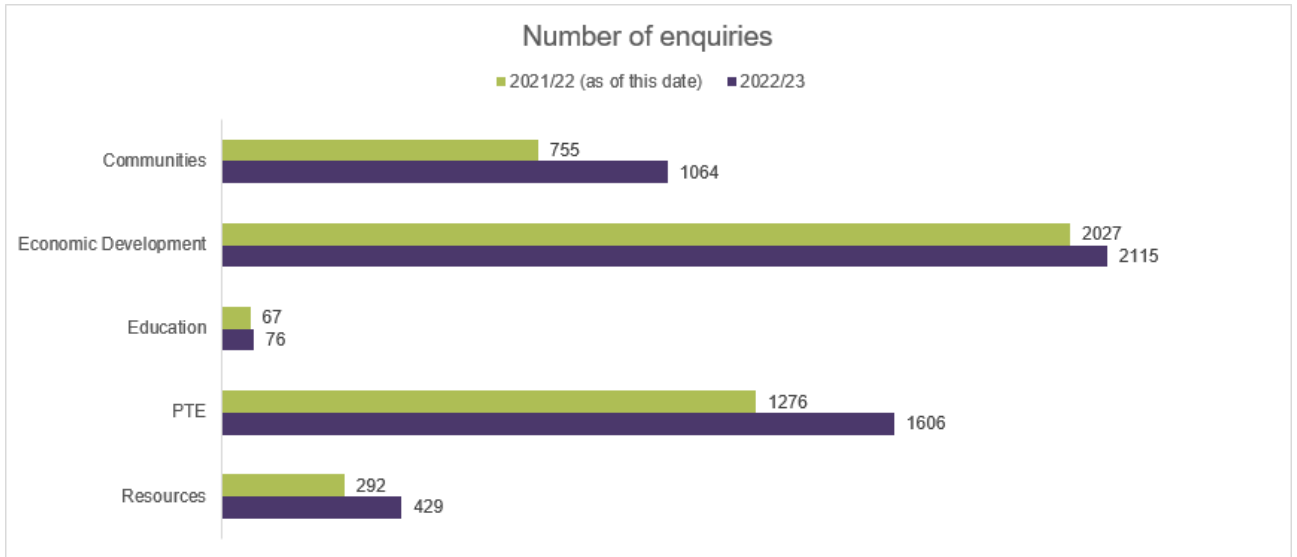
- b. The ability for a remote attendee with an invitation to access the meeting using a supported web browser (Firefox, Edge, Chrome.) without having to download the software app. The functionality is almost identical to the desktop application, but it also has an additional microphone mute button.
5. Twenty-two (22) Elected Members attended an initial test meeting that was held on 23 January 2023 to ensure that they were able to attend meetings remotely using the new software.
6. The browser version of the app has been used for several meetings including CPAC, Planning, Environmental Scrutiny Committee and Council. Remote attendees have been using the browser version of the software which appears to be working well.
7. Further training sessions will be needed to ensure that all Elected Member and Officers are familiar with the use of the new software.
8. Additional work is needed by the Democratic Services Team to:
 - a. Develop the use of the chat and screen sharing functions
 - b. Adapt the conferencing system functionality for ease of use by the operator
 - c. Determine how the Teams functionality that is available will integrate with the conferencing system.
 - d. Implement additional software upgrades which will include the use of a lobby function and an improved upgrading process on the Council's network.

Member Enquiries System (MES)

9. Following delays to the corporate Compliment, Complaints and Enquiries system it has been agreed that the pilots that were held prior to the Election were now able to be implemented.
10. The team has worked with the ICT Department to adapt the original pilot functionality to be compatible with the new corporate system. All Elected Members have now been set up on the new system and are able to access the MES Portal from the intranet. The portal enables; enquiries to be logged using a simple online capture form, access to enquiry progress information and the records of active and recently closed enquiries.
11. Prior to a full roll-out a technical trial is currently being undertaken with a cross party group of Elected Members. Individual access to the portal has proved challenging but any issues have been quickly resolved. To date none of the trial members have reported any adverse operation of the system.
12. Following completion of the trial it is intended to roll-out the new MES to all Elected Members and provide training on its before the end of February. It is hoped that the new MES will encourage Elected Members to make greater use of the easy to use self-service functionality which automatically routes enquiries to the appropriate service area without the need for manual handling by the Member Services Team.

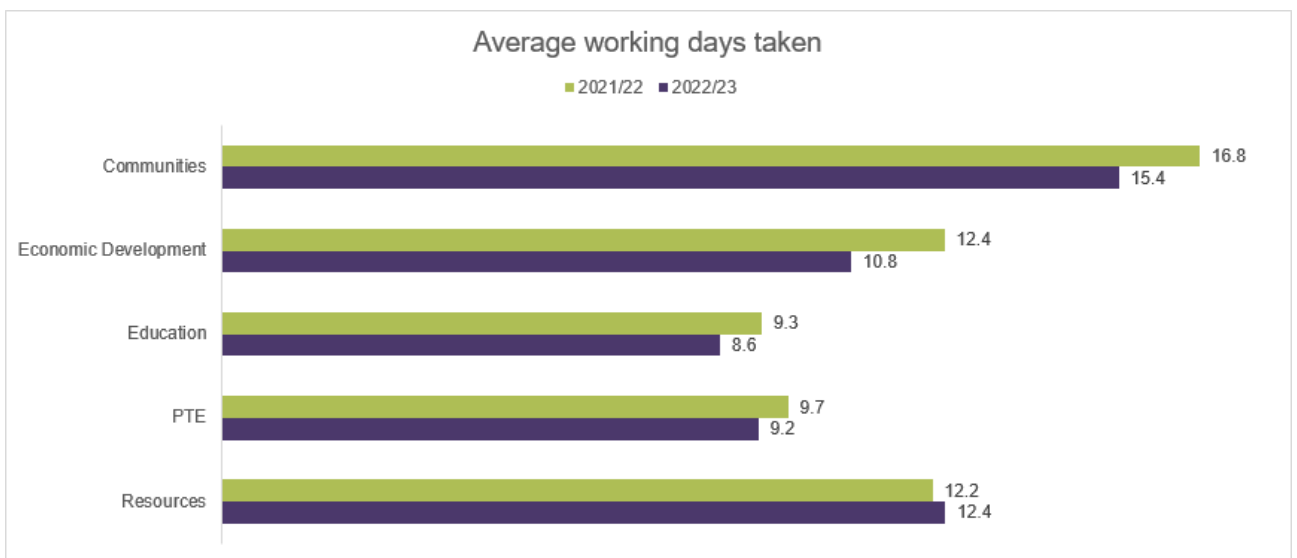
MES Performance

- Between 01 April and 31 December 2022 there were 4840 Member Enquiries logged with the team.
- The following diagram shows the level of enquires which have been received by Directorate since April 2022 compared with enquiries for the same period in the previous year.



Average working Days taken

- The average number of days taken in 2021-22 and 2022-23 to complete enquiries during a comparable period is shown in the diagram below.



- Of the enquiries that have been logged 31% (1491) were self-served with the remaining 69% (3349) being logged by Officers.

Member Development

17. At its last meeting the Committee confirmed that a number of Member Development topics would be progressed.

a. Completed Learning:

The following Member Learning sessions have been held and the attendance details have been included for information:

Serial	Date	Topic	Numbers Attended	Total % Attended
1.	01 Dec 22 07 Dec 22	Mandatory Safeguarding	8 5	69.62% (55)
2	06 Dec 22	New accountability arrangements for schools	20	25.32% (20)
3.	5 Jan 23	Mandatory Corporate Parenting	16	83.54% (66)
4.	E-Learning	Mandatory Information Governance and Data Protection	16	54.43% (43)
5.	23 Jan 23	Conferencing System upgrade	22	27.83% (22)

Note:

The total % Attended column reflects the percentage of all current Elected Members who have completed the topic with the number who have completed the training in brackets

b. Scheduled Learning

i. Member Briefing Civil Parking Enforcement

The Highway network within Cardiff has changed significantly, yet our Parking Enforcement approach has not been evaluated in a number of years. Therefore, we have undertaken a review to develop a consistent city-wide approach to parking enforcement, that uses information from resident reports to identify hot spots and problem areas. This briefing is an opportunity to discuss this with Members, as well as outlining our plans to embrace digital technology to provide an efficient parking enforcement service that brings our options for residents in line with comparator cities. This operational development is crucial for us to successfully deliver the wider transport policy framework across Cardiff.

There will also be an opportunity for Members to ask questions and discuss any parking enforcement queries they have.

Three one-hour repeated sessions have been scheduled to be undertaken on MS Team as follows:

Mon 30-Jan-23 14:00
Fri 03-Feb-23 10:00

Wed 08-Feb-23 17:00

ii. Changes introduced by the Elections Act 2022

Following on from the Elections Act briefing note shared on 12 January 2023, Elected Members are invited to attend this presentation on MS Teams.

The presentation will cover the main changes introduced by the Elections Act 2022, including key areas where the Act will have specific areas of divergence between reserved and devolved elections. Information on the requirements of photo ID for UK Parliamentary and PCC elections will be covered including details of how eligible electors can now apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) if they do not hold a suitable form of photo ID. A summary of future changes including accessibility, postal voting, proxy voting and overseas electors will also be covered.

This one off recorded session has been scheduled to be undertaken on MS Teams on Tue 21 February 2023 at 17:00.

c. Planned Learning:

At the previous meeting of the Democratic Services Committee the following learning and development topics were prioritised for delivery.

- i. Rights of a Child in Practice Part A and Part B
- ii. Age Friendly Cardiff Awareness Sessions
- iii. Fast Track Cities
- iv. Dementia Friendly Cardiff / Dementia Friends

d. Potential Future Learning

The Democratic Services Committee is requested to consider and prioritise the following topics be developed for delivery:

i. South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS)

To receive a one hour briefing on the SWFRS from the Chair of the Fire Authority, Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer of the SWFR Authority.

This topic has been categorised as follows:

Requirement	Newly Elected Members	Experienced Members	Committee Members	Executive Members / Chairpersons/ Group Spokesperson
Regional/National	Beneficial	Useful	Useful	Beneficial

ii. Members Enquiries System (MES) – Familiarisation training

All Members now have access to the Members Enquiry Portal. On completion of the trial in early February it is hoped to deliver training to all Elected members on the new portal before the end of the month.

Requirement	Newly Elected Members	Experienced Members	Committee Members	Executive Members / Chairpersons/ Group Spokesperson
Corporate Policy	Recommended			

iii. Conferencing System Upgrade – Familiarisation training

The EasyConf Connect conferencing system has been upgraded which will have an impact on those intending to join meetings remotely. There are new functions which will benefit remote attendees and the training sessions will familiarise members with its use.

Requirement	Newly Elected Members	Experienced Members	Committee Members	Executive Members / Chairpersons/ Group Spokesperson
Corporate Policy	Recommended			

iv. Biodiversity and Natural Resources

This was identified from a scrutiny recommendation and initial discussions with the Head of Planning to support the use of external facilitators Natural Resources Wales and Wildlife Trust to support the wider requirements, with internal support being provided to provide the Council's perspective and activities. Any costs for the provision of this learning will be met from the Member Development budget.

Requirement	Newly Elected Members	Experienced Members	Committee Members	Executive Members / Chairpersons/ Group Spokesperson
Regional/National	Beneficial	Useful	Useful	Beneficial

v. Social Housing and Section 106

Initial planned dates deferred due to the delivery of LDP being prioritised.

Requirement	Newly Elected Members	Experienced Members	Committee Members	Executive Members / Chairpersons/ Group Spokesperson
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Regional/National	Beneficial	Useful	Useful	Beneficial
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Financial Implications

8. Any costs from Democratic Services activities and services support are to be monitored and contained within the existing Democratic Services funding sources and budgets.

Legal Implications

9. Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 1, the Democratic Services Committee is responsible for overseeing the democratic services functions of the Council, ensuring this work is adequately resourced; and reporting to full Council accordingly.
10. 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.
11. In determining how to exercise its functions, the Committee must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers. The Welsh Government has indicated that it is proposing to revoke the earlier guidance (Statutory Guidance from the Local Government Measure 2011) issued in June 2012 and has issued refreshed draft guidance for consultation (in Chapter 2 of the Consultation Document, Local Government: Guidance for Principal Councils, 17 March 2022): [Guidance for principal councils | GOV.WALES](#). The revised draft guidance on Democratic Services Committees is substantially unchanged but has been updated to reflected legislative changes, including the removal of the legislative prohibition on the monitoring officer also being the head of democratic services (under section 161 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021).
12. 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.
13. Other relevant legal provisions are referred to in the body of the report.

RECOMMENDATION

9. The Democratic Services Committee is requested to:
 - a. Note the information set out in the report.
 - b. Prioritise the future member development topics for scheduling.

GARY JONES
HEAD of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
31 Jan 2023

Background Papers: None