

## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

30 SEPTEMBER 2015

Present: County Councillor Clark(Chairperson)  
County Councillors Dilwar Ali, Chaundy, Hinchey, Hyde, Lomax,  
Murphy and Robson

### 13 : 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.

### 14 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2015 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

#### *Matters Arising*

The Chairperson asked that an item on the budget be included on the Committee's work programme.

Members requested that a list of the action points which arise at each meeting be appended to the minutes for ease of reference in the future.

### 15 : MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND ALL WALES ACADEMY PORTAL

The Committee received a report on the Member Development Programme and All Wales Academy Portal and were asked to consider the Member Development Programme for Quarter 1, 2015/16. Members were asked to note that the Programme reflects the Continuing Professional Development for Councillors Competency Framework as part of its objective setting.

In January 2014 the Committee established a Steering Group with a remit to develop and deliver a Member Development Strategy which would provide a framework from which a full range of development opportunities could be delivered. This would allow Members to carry out their roles as Community Leaders and representatives of the Council. The Committee reaffirmed the Members Development Strategy for 2015 at its meeting on 15 July 2015.

The Members Development Steering Group met in July and August. A copy of the scope and content of the meetings was appended to the report. The Steering Group had received information on Members Development opportunities offered by the Cardiff Academy and a briefing from Rachel Searle, Project Officer from the All Wales Academy (AWA). The Committee was advised that the Steering Group had

produced a Member Development Programme for the period September to December 2015. The Group would meet further in November in order to agree a programme to May 2016.

The All Wales Academy (AWA) for Local Government is a collaboration between local authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association, Wales TUC and Skills for Justice. It is a bi-lingual e-learning website which is available to all local authorities in Wales providing access to local government staff and elected members to a range of e-learning modules. Rebecca Bradshaw, Learning and Development Specialist in the Cardiff Academy, was invited to deliver a presentation on the AWA e-learning portal. The Committee also received a live demonstration of the website and the resources available.

Marie Rosenthal, Director of Governance and Legal stated that it was hoped AWA would enable Members to have flexible access Members Development opportunities when their own commitments allow it. Members were encouraged to also look at the employee section of the website as there were a number of useful courses available. Officers advised that, in the case of mandatory training, officers would be able to remotely monitor which Members had completed the training.

Members sought further information on the time commitments for each module. Rebecca Bradshaw advised that, on average, modules would take between 30 minutes and an hour to complete. However, Members are able to break each module down into more manageable 'bite size' sections and monitor their progress using the progress bar provided within each module. It was suggested that it may be useful for some Members to receive a briefing on the basic processes of AMA, such as how to access the webpage and how to log on prior to a meeting of the full Council.

The Chairperson referred to the current Member Development Programme appended to the report. Members were asked to comment on the contents of the programme. The Committee were happy to support the programme. It was anticipated that Member Development session would take place in the Cardiff Academy training suite in City Hall. Responding to a question from the Committee, officers advised that the training suite did not have work stations but the Cardiff Academy Business Office did have workstations which would be made available for one-to-one training and support.

The Committee discussed the feasibility of establishing peer groups to provide Member to Member training. Such training support would incur little additional cost. Members supported the suggestion and asked officers to investigate what Member peer group training was feasible.

The Committee also indicated their approval in principle for the sharing training events with other local authorities. Such training events would provide uniformity across authorities; present opportunities for sharing facilities and experiences; and an opportunity to reclaim the cost associated with hosting the event. Members requested that neighbouring local authorities be invited to invest in and improve the Cardiff Academy facilities also.

Officers advised that in an attempt to raise awareness of the Member Development Programme and hence, improve attendance, the programme was published on the

Members section of the intranet. In future Members will receive invitations to Member Development Programme events via their Outlook calendar. The invitations will include the details of course venues and times and possibly reference materials. Any Members unable to attend the sessions can be referred to relevant AWA modules.

The Chairperson asked the Committee for comments on the 3 Member Briefing sessions on the Organisational Development Programme which were to take place prior to meetings of the full Council. Members considered that any Member Briefings prior to full Council should, ideally, relate to the Council business contained in the summons to be transacted at that meeting.

The Committee also discussed the optimum days and times for Member Development Sessions and Member Briefings. These events tended to take place on Mondays and Thursdays, although there was a need to settle into an identifiable pattern. Members considered that a slot on Monday's prior to group meetings was preferable. Members considered that briefing materials should also be provided electronically, as it was not always possible for Members to attend briefing sessions. Such information should be concise and should highlight the key themes.

AGREED – That

- (1) the work of the Member Development Steering Group and Member Development Programme to December 2015 be endorsed;
- (2) the Committee notes that the Member Development Programme from January 2016 to May 2016 would be finalised for the next Committee meeting.

## 16 : MEMBERS ICT PROJECT FEEDBACK

The Committee received a report on Members ICT Project Feedback, evaluating the implementation of the Member IT Project 2014/15. The project aimed to deliver a new agile way of working for Councillors by utilising technology to reduce reliance on paper copies and generate savings on printing and postage costs.

An evaluation of the project to assess the outcomes, lessons learnt and to enable IT officers to consider any feedback was undertaken following the full meeting of the Council on 23 July 2015.

The Committee had received an update on the performance of the tablets at its meeting of 25 March 2015. Members were advised that a number of unforeseen hardware and software faults had occurred during the roll out period. The report summarised the nature of the faults which had occurred and the actions taken by ICT to mitigate those faults. On 15 July 2015 the ICT Service Manager advised that, following discussions with the supplier of the devices, three upgraded versions of the device had been made available for Members to pilot.

The Committee was advised that the administrative savings on printing and postage currently stood at £28k. Members had previously requested that a full analysis of the costs of IT support for the project be evaluated as part of the review. The ICT Service Manager undertook a review of the service calls made in relation to the

project, as compared to service calls made under the previous arrangements. The additional ICT support costs were estimated at circa £6,500. The additional costs of training, Democratic Services staff support; smartphone call charges and keyboards had not been quantified.

The results of the IT Questionnaire Survey were set out in the report. A total of 49 responses (65.33%) were received. An overview and evaluation of the survey results was appended to the report at Appendix B.

Members of the Committee commented on the survey and provided anecdotal examples of some of the technical problems which they had experienced. The ICT Service Manager recognised that there were issues with the performance of the devices. However, these issues had been addressed and the devices were fairly stable. Some difficulties still remained around resetting of passwords. Members were advised that the process for resetting passwords on the new devices would be simplified.

The ICT Service Manager advised that the supplier had agreed to accept the return of the original devices and their replacement by the upgraded device at nil extra cost. Pending the results of the pilot exercise, it was recommended that a phased transition to the new equipment be agreed. Officers advised that the software on the new devices would be the same as the software on the original devices.

The Committee discussed the pilot exercise for the new devices. Members considered that, pending the results of the pilot exercise, all Councillors should be encouraged to upgrade their devices.

AGREED – That:

- (1) the result of the evaluation of the ICT Member Project be noted;
- (2) the updated analysis of the business case as set out in the financial implications section of the report be noted;
- (3) the pilot of the upgraded tablet be approved and devices be provided to Councillors Dilwar Ali, Hinchey and Hyde to trial as soon as possible;
- (4) officers draft a list of success criteria for evaluation of the upgraded tablet trial;
- (5) the evaluation outcomes of the trial be reported for consideration to the Committee on 20 January 2016;
- (6) pending the success of the trial, the Director of Governance and Legal Services be delegated authority to agree with the ICT Service Manager that discussions be finalised with the provider on the replacement of tablets with the upgraded versions, at no cost to the authority;
- (7) a list of costs for ancillary equipment including an appropriate keyboard, for the tablets be provided to the Committee.

## 17 : MEMBERS SERVICES: SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires that the Democratic Services Committee keep under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to support Members. The Director of Governance and Legal Services presented a report on Members Services: Support for Members, updating the Committee on the current position with regard to the resources available to Members.

The report provided an overview of the services provided to Members by the Democratic Services Team. A summary of the impact of the budget savings for 2014/15 and 2015/16 was also included in the report.

The Committee was advised that in order to mitigate the impact of these savings, a strategy had been agreed to introduce more efficient ways of working, with increased reliance on technology and supporting elected Members to become more independent. Significant investment has also been made in office systems and processes for Democratic Services with the introduction of the modern.gov software. This had led to an improved service to Councillors, officers and members of the public in accessing Committee papers and maintaining accurate records. It is anticipated that more benefits would be realised and these would be reported to the Committee in due course. Details of the Member IT Project and the Members Online Information Service were also set out in the report.

Members were requested to give their views on the continuation of posting and copying services. Usage guidelines on these have been agreed by Group Whips and the services had only been able to continue on a temporary basis. However, there was no permanent funding for these services. It was noted that the majority of Members do not make use of these services. All Members have access to the 'Printsmart' copies in City and County Hall.

Appendix A to the report set out in summary form a list of the support services that continue to be provided to all Members by Democratic Services staff, alongside statutory Committee workloads.

Members are also able to claim for the mailing of moderate amounts of ward related correspondence. Officers recommended that this service cease.

Members are also provided with up to 250 photocopies of a document not to exceed 4 sides of A4 with a maximum per calendar month of 500 sheets for self-distribution. Officers recommended that this service cease and Members make their own photocopies.

Additionally, Members can each claim 50 duplicated documents to be posted 2<sup>nd</sup> Class with each document not exceeding four sides of A4. Any documents over and above this allocation may be processed for Members to deliver themselves up to a maximum of 250. Officers recommended that this service continue, but Members arrange their own photocopying.

Annually, Members are entitled to claim 2<sup>nd</sup> class stamps to use for Council business up to £50 in value per year. Officers recommended that this service continue.

The Committee discussed the content of the report and the recommendations contained within it. The Chairperson proposed establishing a cross-party working group to be tasked with considering what resources Councillors need in order to perform their roles effectively. The Chairperson sought volunteers from the Committee to participate in the working group. Councillors Chaundy, Hyde, Murphy and Robson agreed to join the Chairperson on the working group. The Chairperson requested officers to invite any Members not present at the meeting to join the working group also.

Members voiced concerns regarding the impact the financial reductions to date were having on the remaining members of staff. Members were also made aware of the huge implications school admission appeals were having on resources and questioned whether services to Members were suffering as a result.

AGREED – That the Committee:

- (1) notes the position for 2015/16 in relation to the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available for Democratic Services as set out in the report and Appendix A;
- (2) establishes a cross-party Working Group to consider what resources are required by Members in order for them to perform their roles effectively.

#### 18 : WORK PLAN 2015/16

The Committee discussed potential items for the work plan for the remaining 2 meetings.

AGREED – That the following items be included on the Committee's work plan:

Budget 2016/17  
Member Support  
ICT Pilot  
Members Charter  
Member Development Plan Update  
Independent Remuneration Panel Wales report

#### 19 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee will take place on 20 January 2016.

The meeting terminated at 1.00 pm