

# DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 29 January 2019

**PRESENT:** Councillor S.A. Curry (Chair)

**Councillors:**

W.T. Evans and D. Thomas

Also present: Councillor AG. Morgan (Invited to attend in his capacity as Chair of both the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Forum and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee)

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

N. Daniel, Head of I.C.T.

G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services

H. Daniels, Learning & Development Advisor

K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

**Chamber, - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP. - 10.00 - 10.28 am**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor T.J. Jones

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.**

There were no declarations of personal interest.

**3. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 15TH OCTOBER 2018**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 be signed as a correct record.

**4. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY FUNCTION - ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

The Committee considered the Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny Function – Annual Report 2017/18 which provided an overview of the Council's Scrutiny Function incorporating specific reference to the work undertaken by the five scrutiny committees. The report highlighted scrutiny's key role in promoting accountability in the decision making process of local authorities, being a valuable tool in ensuring council policies reflected current priorities, as well as promoting efficiency and encouraging partnership working with external agencies.

The Chair of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committee was welcomed to the meeting and was afforded the opportunity of presenting the report to the Committee. He advised that some of the main areas which had / were being addressed included the need for the presentation of timely budget monitoring reports, member and officer development to ensure effective scrutiny, together

with scrutiny of the Swansea Bay City Deal Programme and the Council's arms-length companies. Additionally, all scrutiny committees were being encouraged to establish a task and finish group to critically examine any area of concern which may arise within their portfolios.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.**

## **5. PAPERLESS WORKING UPDATE**

The Committee was reminded that Council at its meeting held in September 2018 "Resolved that the Authority move towards a paperless system of communication with all councillors with effect from the 2<sup>nd</sup> September to allow for any concerns to be addresses and that an appropriate training programme be arranged prior to this date"

As part of the discussion on paperless working, a commitment had been made to provide a training programme on the modern.gov. app; to survey all members on their I.T. Requirements and current provision of broadband within their homes and to produce a guidance document for Councillors and Officers on making paperless working a success. In accordance with that commitment, the Committee received an update report on the introduction of paperless working incorporating:

- A draft I.T. Questionnaire
- A rationale on preparing and attending paperless meetings
- A list of training and 'drop in' sessions for elected members and officers.

In addition to the above, the County Hall Development Working Group was discussing the options of installing appropriate charging systems within the Chamber at County Hall and the possible upgrade of the conference system to make that fit for future.

The Head of Democratic Services in response to a question on the feasibility of the agenda for a meeting being displayed on a screen advised that could be examined.

The Head of ICT in response to a question on broadband availability within the rural areas of the County confirmed no such difficulties had been brought to his attention. However, if members were experiencing connectivity issues, they should be reported to the ICT division for investigation

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received and the I.C.T. questionnaire be approved for circulation to all members of Council**

## **6. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES FUNCTION ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Committee considered the Democratic Services Committee 2017/18 Annual Report that provided an outline of the staff resources within the Democratic Services Section of the Chief Executive's Department, a summary of the wide range of duties undertaken, ongoing developments together with future proposals to support elected members in their respective roles.

The Head of Democratic Services in response to a question on priorities for 2019/20 advised they included the introduction of paperless working, scrutiny

training for members and officers; an examination on the alignment of the scrutiny committees functions to reflect departmental structures and Executive Board Member portfolios (as far as was practicable); introduction of an on-line member expenses system together with a review of meeting room accommodation in county hall and conference facilities.

The Head of ICT, in response to a question on the provision of ICT equipment for elected members, confirmed there were currently no proposals for any large scale replacement of that equipment, which would require budgetary provision. However, should any member experience difficulties with that equipment it would be replaced with an appropriate alternative.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Report be received.**

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**