

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

23RD MARCH 2021

DEMOCRATIC PROCESS – NEW WAYS OF WORKING

RECOMMENDATIONS / KEY DECISIONS REQUIRED:

To establish a Task and Finish Group to recommend to Council the preferred New Way of Working for the Democratic Services function.

REASONS:

As a result of the Covid19 pandemic the way we convene democratic meetings has changed significantly, as has the way we support our Elected Members in their Councillor role.

Whilst the Authority is currently holding all Democratic Meetings virtually, it is now time to consider how the Democratic Process will operate in the future, be that a return to full physical attendance (once restrictions are lifted), a hybrid approach or a continuance of virtual meetings only.

It is also necessary to identify what how and what support elected members require and how this can be delivered going forward, (to include required office administrative space and locations).

Scrutiny Committee consulted	Not applicable
Exec Board Decision Required	NO
Council Decision Required	Not at this stage.

Relevant portfolio holder:- N/A

Directorate Name of Head of Service: Linda Rees Jones Report Author: Gaynor Morgan	Chief Executive's Designations: Head of Administration & Law Head of Democratic Services	Tel Nos. 01267 224012 LRJ 01267 224026 GM E Mail Addresses: gmorgan@cararthenshire.gov.uk
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
23RD MARCH 2021

DEMOCRATIC PROCESS
– NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Due to the Covid19 pandemic, the Authority has transformed its way of working. Work completed prior to the current pandemic has put the council in a strong position with the technology already in place to support agile and home working. As a result, offices are now largely empty across the estate with only a small number of staff accessing offices on a regular basis. Democratic meetings are held remotely so that normal Council business can continue.

Going forward the Authority is looking at options to collaborate with public sector partners, and acknowledges that it must transform its working practices and consider how we work and the building space we require.

A central part of this change is to look at how the Democratic Process will operate in the future, this includes how and what support elected members require to do their day to day role and how democratic meetings will operate.

The Democratic Services Committee is the Committee deemed with supporting the work of elected members and one of its functions is to review periodically the level of support provided to members to carry out their duties and bring forward proposals to the full council as to what is considered to be reasonable.. The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales makes it clear that it expects each elected member to have ready use of e-mail services, and electronic access to appropriate information via an internet connection, the necessary provision for a member to be in proper contact with council services and to maintain contact with those they represent, this included access to services outside of office hours i.e. contact forms and service information as available on our website.

The Authority is starting a process of consultation on how the Authority will operate in the future and in order to ensure that elected members are driving the new way of working for the democratic services function , it is suggested that the Democratic Services Committee undertake a Task and Finish review of members' requirements. In order to have as full a picture as possible it is further suggested that each Group Leader is asked to contribute to the Task and Finish Review so that the views of each political Group can be fed back into the final report to Council.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

NO.

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Linda Rees Jones, Head of Administration & Law

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	NOT AT THIS STAGE	NOT AT THIS STAGE	NOT AT THIS STAGE	NOT AT THIS STAGE	NOT AT THIS STAGE

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

- The project will look to compliment and support key council priorities and objectives including regeneration, economic development and respond to the council's financial challenges.
- A draft project delivery plan has been developed which sets out key priorities for the project and timelines for implementation. This plan has been aligned with the objectives of the authority's Accommodation Strategy, Digital Transformation Strategy, Ten Towns Initiative, Economic Development Strategy.

Legal

Any decision taken will need to take into account the requirements of relevant legislation including the Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021.

Finance

- There may be additional costs incurred in updating technology going forward depending on the outcome of the T&F review

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Linda Rees Jones, Head of Administration & Law

1.Scrutiny Committee Not applicable

2.Local Member(s) Not applicable

3.Community / Town Council Not applicable

4.Relevant Partners Not applicable

5.Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations Not applicable

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW:

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection