

Carmarthenshire County Council Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2019-20



Annual Report

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Foreword by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

As the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee during 2019 –20 it is my pleasure to present the Committee’s Annual report for this period.

The Committee has focussed its work on ensuring that the needs and requirements of Members are addressed and that appropriate arrangements are made to support Members in their duties. As members we must also accept our responsibility in contributing towards efficiency savings and working in a mobile and efficient by way using the most appropriate digital technology. This will be particularly important as we prepare to move to virtual meetings as a result of the Covid19 pandemic and the relaxation of Welsh Government regulations. The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 were brought into force on the 23rd April 2020 and passed temporary emergency regulations to relax some of the rules relating to the conduct of council business, so that important decisions could still be made during social distancing. This means that Councils can now hold official meetings virtually, with members dialling in to teleconferences or participating via video conferencing and following training the first virtual meeting of the Authority took place on the 1st June 2020.

Although the meeting schedule of the Committee has been reduced due to the Covid19 pandemic, we have during the year continued to secure and monitor the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Councillors and considered the annual determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Committee members for their invaluable contributions and their support during the past year and also to the officers who support the Committee in its work.

I wish my successor Councillor Rob James well as Chair for 2020-21 and am sure he will continue the good work of the Committee in supporting elected members in their roles.

Cllr Suzy Curry

Chair of the Democratic Services Committee 2019-20

The Committee's Remit

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 required each County and County Borough Council to establish a Democratic Services Committee and the remit of the Committee is set out in Section 11 of this measure namely to:-

- exercise the function of the Local Authority under section 8(1)(a) (designation of Head of Democratic Services),
- review the adequacy of provision by the Authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions, and
- make reports and recommendations to the Authority in relation to such provision.

The Council, at its meeting held on the 17th April 2013, agreed to a recommendation of the Democratic Services Committee to include the following additional responsibilities within Committee's functions/terms of reference:-

- To secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Councillors and prepare reports and recommendations to Council in relation to such provision;
- To appoint the Council's Member Development Champion;
- To be consulted on the implementation of reports issued by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in respect of members allowances etc.
- To promote and support good governance by the Council

The Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013 added section 11A which provides that the Democratic Services Committee may, at the request of the Authority, review any matter relevant to :

- (a) the support and advice available to members of that Authority, and
- (b) the terms and conditions of office of those members.

Membership of the Democratic Services Committee 2019-2020

The membership of the Democratic Services Committee for the period 15th May 2019 – 9th June 2020 comprised of 5 members on a politically balanced basis:-

Councillor Suzy Curry (Chair)



Councillor Tyssul Evans (Vice-Chair).



Councillor Jim Jones



CLlr Dot Jones (up to 11/09/2019)



Cllr Dai Thomas



Cllr Emllyn Schiavone (from 11/09/2019)



Democratic Services Committee Meetings held during 2019-20

30th July 2019

2nd December 2019

Attendance by the Members of the Democratic Services Committee

The attendance figures for each member of the Democratic Services Committee are set out below.

Councillor	Meetings attended
Suzy Curry	1
Tyssul Evans	2
Dot Jones*	1
Jim Jones	0
Emlyn Schiavone*	1
Dai Thomas	1

*Cllr Dot Jones - Cttee member from 15th May 2019 – 11th September 2019 / Cllr Emlyn Schiavone Committee Member from 11th September 2019

Mansel Charles (substitute)	1
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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to convene all the Democratic Services Committee meetings which were scheduled for the municipal year.

Key issues considered during 2019-20

During the year the Democratic Services Committee discussed the following reports, and a brief synopsis is included for each topic:-

Member Development

The Committee considered and endorsed a new Member Development and Engagement programme based on a 21st Century Councillor Model which established a new approach to the formulation and delivery of Member Development.

The proposal offered a new approach to member development based on research with local government and consultation with Councillors. It aimed to maximise engagement for establishing learning and development requirements relevant for the 21st Century public service. The new programme will help to develop emerging roles and offers a model through which Councillor careers and development can be explored.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny Function - Annual Report 2018-19

The Committee received the Council's Scrutiny Committee Function Annual report for 2018-19.

The report provided an outline of the work of the 5 Scrutiny Committees during the year and the discussions held at the Chairs and Vice-Chairs Forum.

The Committee was advised that some of the main areas which had / were being addressed included

- the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee role in scrutinising the Swansea Bay City Deal Pentre Awel project;
- the Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group review on Loneliness;
- the Community Scrutiny Committee continued to monitor the Local Development Plan (LDP proposals and policies for the future use of all local land between 2018-2033);
- the Environmental & Public Protection Scrutiny Committee have analysed how the maintenance of hedges and verges throughout Carmarthenshire were managed;
- the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee's continued to review early years provision and had undertaken a pilot exercise for 6 months to prioritise outcome focused scrutiny using a new gateway prioritisation process.

Democratic Services Function Annual Review

The Committee considered the Democratic Services Function Annual Review which provided an outline on the adequacy of provision by the Authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions.

Independent Remuneration Panel (IRPW) for Wales Annual Report - February 2020

The Committee considered the draft version of the IRPW Annual Report (February 2020) which detailed the Panel's determinations and recommendations in respect of remuneration and member support.

The Committee also noted that the Panel had removed the options for publication of reimbursement of costs of care and decided that relevant Authorities should only publish the total amount reimbursed during the year.

Councillors' Expenses – Self Service

The Committee received an update on the transition to self-service of Councillor expenses, the training provided to members and the effective date of operation namely 31st March, 2020.

Forward Work Programme

The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme for the forthcoming 12 month period.

General Information

The Democratic Services Committee meetings are public meetings and with the exception of confidential items, all business is held in public. All of the public papers are published online at <http://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=152>

The Council is keen to see members of the public attend Democratic Services Committee meetings and all other Council meetings, including Council, Executive Board, Scrutiny and Regulatory meetings.

Further information can be provided by contacting Democratic Services:

DemocraticServices@carmarthenshire.gov.uk or on 01267 224028.