

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Friday, 27 November 2015

PRESENT: Councillor T. Davies (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen (In place of H.B. Shepardson), W.T. Evans, J.D. James and D. Price

Also in attendance in connection with Minute 6:
Councillor D.W.H. Richards

The following Officers were in attendance:

L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law

G. Morgan, Democratic Services Manager

M Edwards, Corporate Learning & Development Advisor

M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen - 10.00 - 11.00 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor H.B. Shepardson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. MINUTES

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 27th April 2015 be signed as a correct record.

4. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015.

The Committee received for consideration a Draft Member Development plan for 2015/16, produced in accordance with Section 7A of the Local Government Measure, which listed the proposed development opportunities to be made available to all members. In response to a question it was stated that the postponed Dementia Awareness session would be scheduled for a later date.

It was commented that not all Group leaders had yet arranged one to one meetings with their members. The Head of Administration and Law agreed to follow the matter up at the next meeting with the Group Leaders and their Deputies. The Chair suggested that priority also needed to be given to the topic of 'Alternative Delivery Models for Local Authorities' particularly in light of the discussions with community councils on asset transfer.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Plan be endorsed and that the Group Leaders be reminded of the need to hold one to one meetings with their members in order to ascertain their training needs.

5. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT - FEBRUARY 2016

The Committee received for consideration the IRPW's Draft Annual Report (February 2016) that made a number of determinations and recommendations that the Council was required to consider incorporating within its Councillors' and Co-opted Member's Allowances Scheme for 2016/17. It was a requirement that the draft annual report was sent to County Councils and comments had to be submitted by no later than 30th November 2015. The IRPW was required to take into account the representations it received on the draft before issuing its final version of the report in February 2016.

For 2016/17, whilst the basic salary remained at £13,300, the IRPW had made a number of new determinations, most notably there were some significant changes to some senior salaries as detailed in the report.

Members expressed concern as to whether, half way through the current electoral terms, it was necessary and desirable to introduce a two tier system of salaries for Executive Board Members that would necessitate differentiating between the portfolios.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to authorise the Chair to submit a response to the IRPW on behalf of the Committee taking on board the concern raised.

6. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY FUNCTION ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15.

Councillor D.W.H. Richards, in his capacity as Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum and the Council's Scrutiny Champion, presented 'Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny Function – Annual Report 2014/15' and thanked all members and officers for their contribution.

The Chair thanked Councillor Richards for the Report and commented that scrutiny within the Council had developed considerably over the last few years and was now more powerful and effective.

The view was expressed that whilst the scrutiny of policy was effective the scrutinising of Executive Board decisions was less so and its Forward Work Programme needed to be more scrutiny friendly. The Chair reminded members of the recent positive changes to the Council's Constitution with regards to Members and Public Questions though it was accepted that take up on the latter had not been significant and needed to be publicised more.

Concern was expressed that at some scrutiny meetings there were too many agenda items which meant that insufficient time was available to debate important issues.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

6.1 that the report be received;

6.2 that the provision for members of the public to ask questions at Council be publicised more;

6.3 the alignment of the Executive Board's Forward Work Programme to the scrutiny function be strengthened;

6.4 the agendas of Scrutiny Committees be arranged to take account of the business to be transacted and the time allocated to those items.

7. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - HALF YEARLY ANNUAL REPORT - 1ST MAY TO 23RD NOVEMBER, 2015.

The Committee considered the above report which detailed the staff resources existing within Democratic Services and summarised the wide range of duties and services provided to elected members over the past 6 months. Particular reference was made to the introduction of Modern.gov with a view to moving towards less paper and faster, easier access to information. Members were invited to notify officers if they were happy not to receive hard copies of agendas.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

CHAIR

DATE