

**Carmarthenshire County Council
Democratic Services Committee
Annual Report 2020-21**



Annual Report

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

Foreword by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

As the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee during 2020-21 it is my pleasure to present the Committee's Annual report for this period.

The schedule of meetings for 2020-21 was reduced due to the Covid19 pandemic.

The last 12 months have been extremely challenging, due to the Covid19 pandemic, with both Members and Officers continuing to work from home. The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 were brought into force on the 23rd April 2020 and the Authority moved quickly to put in place arrangements for members to attend meetings remotely, this was an extremely challenging time for both members and officers and my specific thanks go to Democratic Services for the support and training they provided and also to their colleagues in IT and Learning & Development who provided supplementary support. The introduction of Zoom software in September 2020 improved the translation arrangements for meetings allowing seamless interpretation from Welsh to English for members and also the public who were viewing proceedings on the meeting webcast. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 now makes it a legal requirement to make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that local authority meetings are able to be held by means of any equipment or other facility, therefore the Authority will be moving to multi-location meetings when safe to do so.

Whilst the schedule of meetings for the Committee has been reduced this year, 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 way using the most appropriate digital technology. We must also make sure that elected members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively, and this is increasingly important as we move towards the local government elections in May 2022.

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.

Cllr Rob James

Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

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 2020-2021

The membership of the Democratic Services Committee for the period 10th June 2020 - 19th May 2021 comprised of 5 members on a politically balanced basis:-

Councillor Rob James (Chair)



Councillor Tyssul Evans (Vice-Chair).



Councillor Irfon Jones



Cllr Emlyn Schiavone



Cllr Dai Thomas



Democratic Services Committee Meetings held during 2020-21

30th November 2020

23rd March 2021

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
Tyssul Evans	2
Rob James	2
Irfon Jones	1
Emlyn Schiavone	2
Dai Thomas	2

Key issues considered during 2020-21

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

Independent Remuneration Panel (IRPW) for Wales Annual Report - February 2021

The Committee considered the draft and final version of the IRPW Annual Report (February 2021) which detailed the Panel's determinations and recommendations in respect of remuneration and member support.

Welsh Government Consultation Document on Changes to Adoption Absence for Local Authority Members

The Committee received information on the Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013 (the regulations) governed adopter's absence (the form of leave taken by an individual adopting a child), and a proposal from Welsh Government to amend the 2013 Regulations so as to extend the period of adopter's absence for members of councils from 2 weeks to 26 weeks and, as far as practicable, to align procedures relating to adopter's absence. The Committee expressed its support for the proposals and fed back to Welsh Government as part of the consultation process.

Democratic Function – Head of Democratic Services Report

The Committee received the report of the Head of Democratic Services which provided an update on staffing, staff, accommodation and other resources made available to the Head of Democratic Services in order to discharge her statutory duty, the key challenges during the year and key challenges and priorities for 2021-22.

Democratic Services – New Ways of Working

The Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group of 10 politically balanced members which would automatically include the members of the Democratic Services Committee to determine the needs of members in driving the new way of working for the Democratic function. The Task and Finish Group have engaged with the Authority's political groups and surveyed all members on their views for the Democratic process moving forward, we look forward to receiving their recommendations which we will then be submitted to full Council for approval.

Update on the Member Development Plan

The Committee received an update from the Learning and Development Advisor on the Member Development Plan for 2021-22 and endorsed a toolkit of learning to support the programme. The toolkit encompassed the initial proposal on the 21st Century Councillor Model that was presented to members back in July 2019 and will continue to be a blended and inclusive approach to learning that reflects different learning styles. The toolkit included the two distinct areas of development already discussed with members:

- Foundational Skills– Practical and knowledge skills (covered by most existing learning and development)
- Relational Skills – Connective, digital & reflective skills (to be effective as a 21st Century Councillor and covered as part of learning conversations).

The Committee was pleased to note that a dedicated page for members giving them a clear understanding of their learning skills, would be developed and . This page will be made available on both the Intranet and Website which may also act as a recruitment platform for possible new members.

Personal Development Reviews

The Committee considered the Personal Development Review template which allowed Group Leaders to lead on conducting Personal Development Reviews (PDR) to understand the needs of members and identify any support that may be required to fulfil their roles effectively.

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, Cabinet, Scrutiny and Regulatory meetings.

Further information can be provided by contacting Democratic Services:

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