

# DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 9 JUNE 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillor L. Davies (Chair)

**Councillors (In Person):**

H.A.L. Evans                      W.T. Evans

**Councillors (Virtually):**

P.T. Warlow

**Also Present (In Person):**

N. Daniel, Head of ICT and Corporate Policy;  
G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services;  
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;  
R. Morris, Members Support Officer;  
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer;

**Also Present (Virtually):**

L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law;  
H. Daniels, Lead Business Partner (Future Workforce);  
A. Machin, Learning and Development Manager;  
D. Neuman, Lead Business Partner (Learning & Development);  
S. Hendy, Member Support Officer.

**Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen and remotely: 10.00 am - 10.30 am**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor F. Walters.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of personal interest.

**3. MINUTES - 8TH SEPTEMBER 2022**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 be signed as a correct record.

**4. MEMBER ENQUIRY REVIEW**

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of a review of the Members enquiries process, undertaken following feedback from elected Members, which had investigated whether the administration and procedures in place were working effectively and whether any improvements could be made. In light of all the evidence gathered via the extensive engagement carried out as part of the review 8 recommendations were proposed as detailed in the report.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the recommendations detailed in the report to improve the Member Enquiries process be approved.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

## 5. **UPDATE ON MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME & ANNUAL PLAN**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the evaluation of the Member Induction programme and sought views on the proposed Annual Development Plan 2023/2024.

The Induction Programme had contained a total of 40 developmental sessions which had been divided into sessions for all members, sessions specifically for Cabinet members and panel members sitting on relevant committees. In order to establish if the Induction Programme had been effective in providing members with sufficient knowledge and understanding, three focus groups had been held during January & February 2023 and a survey had been sent out to all members in February to seek feedback which was detailed in the report.

Comments made by members at the aforementioned focus groups, as well as on the survey, had been considered and had informed the Annual Development Plan 2023-24. As part of the Plan it had been proposed that the introduction of a Mentoring Programme would be an effective form of development.

Disappointment was expressed over the low attendances at some member induction sessions. It was noted that all sessions were available to view online. The Chair suggested that, looking forward, some sessions could possibly be shorter with support material provided to members beforehand. He thanked all officers involved in organising the sessions.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the evaluation of the Member Induction programme and endorse the proposed Annual Development Plan 2023/2024.**

## 6. **COUNCILLORS' ANNUAL REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report which sought endorsement of a template for Councillors' Annual Reports. Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 local authorities must provide facilities for Councillors to produce and publish an annual report and publicise the fact that Councillors were expected to produce annual reports of their activities. Annual reports were not, however, mandatory and it was a personal matter for Councillors whether they wished to publish an Annual Report.

The report template, if approved, would be circulated to each Elected Member. Those Elected Members who wished to produce an Annual Report could then complete an initial draft of their report for the period 1st May of the previous year until May of the current year.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to confirm the Councillors' Annual reports template with effect from 2023-24.**

## 7. **THE JO COX COMMISSION ON CIVILITY**

The Committee considered a report which summarised the Jo Cox Commission on Civility's progress in raising awareness of the detrimental impact on individuals, democracy and society, of the current levels of abuse and

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intimidation in political life. The Commission had been launched on the 28th February 2023 and sought to drive change in British democracy by working to find implementable solutions to make life safer for political representatives and candidates for office.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted and that a letter be sent by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee to the Commission confirming the Council's support and its willingness to engage in its work.**

**8. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES FUNCTION**

The Committee considered a report which provided information on the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to the Head of Democratic Services in order to ensure that services were adequate to deliver the Democratic Process.

Concerns were expressed over the number of staff from the Democratic Services section required to support multi-location meetings on an on-going basis particularly as no additional resources had been made available. The Head of Democratic Services commented that the Welsh Government, which had sanctioned multi-location meetings, had been made aware of the issue which affected all local authorities in Wales but had not allocated any extra funding.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the concerns raised be conveyed to Welsh Government.**

**9. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN**

The Committee received and considered a suggested Forward Work Programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Democratic Services Committee 2023/24 Forward Work Programme be adopted.**

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.