

**Minutes of the Meeting of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
held remotely via video-conference on Monday, 7 March 2022**

PRESENT; Councillor Ceredig Davies (Chair), Councillors Lloyd Edwards, Gwyn James, Dai Mason and Wyn Thomas

Also in attendance: Councillors Meirion Davies, Elaine Evans, Elizabeth Evans, Gareth Lloyd, Ray Quant

Officers in attendance: Eifion Evans, Chief Executive; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services; Arwyn Morris, Corporate Lead Officer Customer Contact; Alan Morris Corporate Manager, Customer Contact; Nia Jones, Corporate Manager Democratic Services and Dwynwen Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

(10.00am - 12.10pm)

1 Apologies

Councillor Clive Davies apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

None.

3 To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 12 October 2021 and to consider any matters arising

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm as a true record the minutes of the meeting held 15th October 2021.

Matters arising

Item 9 - Members asked if there would be further meetings with the Chief Executive prior to the pre-election period. It was noted that the Welsh Government published its Transition Strategy on 4th March 2022 which would take the COVID-19 response in Wales from pandemic to endemic. It was therefore agreed that unless the Chief Executive felt that there was a requirement for a meeting prior to the pre-election period, that there was no need for a meeting in March.

Item 13 – Members asked if there are any updates relating to the Remuneration Panel. It was noted that the IRPW published its final report was published last week which was too late to bring a report to this Committee; however it was confirmed that there are no changes in relation to the proposed remuneration as outlined in the IRPW's draft report. It was noted that a report would be presented to Council early in the next administration.

Item 14 – Members asked about the roll-out of 'CLIC version 2', noting that they do not always receive notification that action has been carried out, and stating that responses to Councillor should be prioritised. Officers confirmed that we are in the process of transferring to CLIC2, which will give Members

access to information and updates via 'My Account'. The system is currently being tested and expected to go live next month.

4 To consider a report on Member ICT Provision post elections 2022

The Corporate Lead Officer for Customer Contact presented a report to the committee, outlining the proposed ICT equipment to be provided to Members. It was noted that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant shift towards a more digital way of working corporately, in school and with the Council which is a continuation of a journey set out several years ago to work in a digital, as opposed to a paper based approach. Hybrid equipment is currently being installed in the Council Chambers which will facilitate a flexible approach, reducing travelling time and costs for Councillors and Staff, however Members would require a laptop to access the hybrid solution as it cannot be accessed via Android or Apple applications.

It was proposed that Members are offered the same provisions as council staff, namely a *Windows* laptop, and two 24" screens. Office 365 account would be installed providing Word, Excel and access to e-mails. Members would also be able to install Office 365 on up to 5 other devices, for use from their personal mobile devices. Members would be required to sign an acceptable usage agreement for personal use of equipment, within reason. It was noted that this proposal conforms to the necessary security requirements, ensuring improved cyber resilience and ensuring all Members are compliant with GDPR.

Printing facilities would be provided at Canolfan Rheidol and Penmorfa, due to the cost of providing and operating personal printers, and Members would be able to send documents to the post-room for printing and posting. It was noted that appropriate training would be provided on issued devices with support provided via the ICT service desk.

Members noted that *i-pads* are useful for working in the community, in order to be able to show documents to residents that may not otherwise be able to access the internet, and for attending meetings from alternative locations, other than at home. Members also asked whether the Council was offering a secure *i-pad* platform to Officers, which has not been offered to Members. Officers noted that alternative solutions are being considered and tested for cyber security, however there was also a need to ensure that Members are able to access the hybrid system.

Members noted that it can be useful to download and print Council papers, especially when chairing a meeting. Officers confirmed that two large screens would be provided which facilitates the reading of documents on one screen whilst following the meeting on another. Members also noted that it is impracticable to travel in order to print. Officers reminded Members of the Council's commitment to reducing paper many years ago, noting that Officers personal printers have been completely eliminated.

Members asked whether alternative tablets could be used e.g. Microsoft Tablets. It was confirmed that specialist tablets can be extremely costly and

that Members would need to identify funding to meet additional costs. Members noted that the paper was written from the perspective of an Officer which did not recognise the needs of Councillors, which requires more flexibility. Members were also advised that ultimately it is their decision as to whether to accept the advice of Officer in relation to cyber security.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) that following the election, new Members would be issued with the same equipment that was provided by current Members in January when i-pads were de-commissioned;
- (ii) to refer the matter for discussion by Council during the next administration.

5 To consider an update on the report presented to the Democratic Services Committee upon the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services presented a report to the committee, providing an update on the main aspects of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 relevant to the committee. It was noted that various protocols have been drafted including a Public Participation Scheme, a petition Scheme and electronic broadcasting of meetings, however we are still waiting for the Welsh Government to publish the statutory and non-statutory guidance. It is anticipated that consultation on draft guidance will take place during the pre-election period, and implemented by September 2022.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to note the update to the report relating to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act specific to the Democratic Services Committee.

6 To consider a report on a vision for conducting remote meetings from May 2022

The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services presented a report to the committee, giving an overview of the mechanism for supporting hybrid meetings.

Members asked whether all Councillors should attend Council meetings in person, and were advised that the purpose of the legislation is to ensure accessibility to all Members, including persons that may not be able to attend in person for various reasons. Members also asked if there would be a limit on the number of persons able to attend in person and were advised that this would be subject to the legislation at that time.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to note the vision for conducting hybrid meetings from May 2022.

7 To consider an update upon the programme for Members' Induction following the County Council Elections in May 2022

The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services presented a report to the committee, noting that it is anticipated that further guidance will be provided by the Welsh Minister as part of the bundle of Statutory and non-Statutory guidance currently being developed by Welsh Government clarifying the requirement relating to Councillor Induction and training. Members were advised that the training schedule presented to the Committee in October 2021 had been revised to reflect the anticipated changes resulting from the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act, and training needs identified by Members during recent meetings and reminded that training is compulsory prior to sitting on committees such as Development Management and Licensing. Group Leaders were advised to remind their Members of the importance of attending the training sessions.

Members asked whether the time of meetings and training should be revised, and were reminded of the regular survey conducted, which will be issued to all Members early in the next administration.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

8 To consider a report on the Self-Evaluation of Scrutiny

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report to the Committee noting that the Democratic Services Committee had agreed in January 2020 to continue to carry out the survey on an annual basis and to reduce the number of questions with an aim to increase participation. The number of responses had however reduced to 15 compared to 25 for the previous year.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held
on XX.XX.XXXX**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____