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## **Minutes of the Meeting of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE held remotely via video-conferencing on Friday, 21 May 2021**

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

Elizabeth Evans, Rhodri Evans, Gareth Lloyd and Ray Quant were also in attendance.

**Officers in attendance:** Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services; Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer: Legal and Governance, Nia Jones, Corporate Manager: Democratic Services; Hannah Rees, Governance Officer.

(10.00 - 11.50 am)

### **Procedure**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

- 1      **Apologies**  
Councillor Lloyd Edwards apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.
- 2      **Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests**  
There were no disclosures of interest.
- 3      **Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th October 2020**  
It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 as correct.

### **Matters arising**

Item 6: During the meeting of 15 October 2020, it was noted that a Councillor Keith Evans submitted a query in relation to investigating the possibility of providing a group high speed broadband / fibre contract for all Councillors and Senior Officers of the Council, requesting that Officers look into this matter.

It was noted that providing high speed connections is possible with different solutions but all come at a much higher cost of installation and annual revenue costs, therefore this is not a technical issue but a financial and policy issue, who is eligible and how is it financed. The Council currently have over a 1000 staff connecting daily from home over their broadband and able to carry out most of their duties and if the Authority decides that it will provide high speed broadband to certain individuals, then a policy needs to be agreed on who gets this service, why they are entitled and how it is funded.

Councillor Clive Davies noted that he has been in regular communication with Openreach and Welsh Government regarding the advancement of broadband in Ceredigion, and that improvements were happening all the time. He also noted that it had been announced earlier today that additional funding would become available from the UK Government in support of further developments.

**4 Report recommending a review of the size of all committees**

The Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services presented the report to the committee, noting that the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales had completed its boundary review for Ceredigion County Council and that we are currently awaiting a decision from Welsh Government Ministers upon the recommendations. If an Order is made as per the Boundary Commission's recommendations, the number of Councillors representing Ceredigion County Council will reduce from 42 to 38 from May 2022 which will also impact upon the capacity of Members and therefore the number on each committee.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to establish a Cross-Party Task and Finish Group to consider a review in the size of Committees, for implementation from May 2022, following the Order being made; with a view to presenting recommendations to Council in January 2022.

**5 Report on Size of Governance and Audit Committee**

The Corporate Lead Officer, Legal and Governance Services presented the report to the committee, noting that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 stipulates that from 5 May 2022 one third of members of the Governance and Audit Committee must be lay members.

It was noted that this matter had been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee on 24 February 2021 and that the preferred option of that committee is that the number of lay members are increased from 1 to 3, and that the number of County Councillors remain at 6. It was noted that there would be a cost implication resulting from increasing the number of lay members, however this would be an opportunity to bring in different expertise to the committee.

The Council is currently in the process of recruiting additional lay Members to the Governance and Audit Committee. The concern was raised that delaying this process until the Council decision in January 2022 may result in a failure to recruit sufficient members prior to May 2022.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that from 6 May 2022 that the Governance and Audit Committee should comprise of 3 independent / lay members and 6 County Council Members.

**6 Report on the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 - matters relevant to the Democratic Services Committee**

The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services presented a report to the committee, outlining the main aspects of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 relevant to the committee, including publishing a strategy encouraging participation by local people, the creation of an e-petition scheme, a duty to publish official addresses, electronic broadcasting of meetings, enabling job-sharing, family absences, duties of leaders of political groups in relation to standards of conduct and the making of information available to Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Corporate Lead Officer for Legal and Governance also note a requirement relating to qualification and dis-qualification of Members.

Following discussion is was **RESOLVED** to note the aspects of the draft Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act specific to the Democratic Services.

## **7 Report on changes to the Council's Constitution**

The Corporate Lead Officer for Legal and Governance presented a report to the committee, noting that the Council's Cross-Party Constitution Working Group approved the amendments to the Council's Constitution in its meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021, to be presented to the Democratic Services Committee.

The proposed amendments related to the Council's procedure rules relating to Motions on Notice, Call-In procedures and the principles of the voting mechanism relating to simple majority and the Chairperson's casting vote.

The aim of these amendments to appendices 1 and 2 are to simplify and clarify the procedures in relation to the deadline for submitting a Motion, making amendment both prior to the meeting and during the meeting. Also, clarifying what can and cannot be called in, criteria for referral to Council and consent in relation to urgent decisions.

It was also recommended that the over-arching Council rules in relation to voting within the constitution are duplicated to all committees for clarity.

Following discussion is was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council the following amendments to the Constitution:

- 1) to approve the proposed amendments regarding Notice of Motion and the Call-in Procedure
- 2) to approve proposed amendments to regularise Cabinet and the Committees procedural arrangements to reflect the Council Procedure Rules as regards voting majority and Chairperson's casting vote within meetings.

## **8 Forward work programme for 2021/22**

Consideration was given to the forward work programme for 2021, and it was noted that Members are able to propose additions to the Forward Work Programme as matters arise.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the forward work programme as presented.

## **9 Any other matter which the Chairman decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee**

It was noted that the Chairman had asked all Councillors in advance of this meeting if they had any matters to raise. The following items had been presented to the Chairman:

- a) It was noted that the press had recently reported on dispensation applications presented to the Ethics and Standards Committee. It was agreed that the Corporate Lead Officer would discuss this matter with the new Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee with a recommendation to stipulate on the dispensation form that information provided will be made public.
- b) Members queried as to the expected time-frame for returning to Penmorfa. It was noted that it would not be possible to return during the installation of the new Council Chamber equipment.
- c) It was agreed that the Democratic Services Committee would ask the Leader of the Council to provide a substantial update on Covid-19 as an agenda item, focussing on short-term developments as opposed to providing a verbal update in order that Members are able to prepare questions in advance. It was acknowledged that data relating to Covid-19 cases would need to be provided verbally on the day.
- d) Members noted that the 'CLIC' enquiry system in itself was working effectively, however Members do not know who is dealing with any particular enquiry, and often do not receive feedback when a matter has been dealt with. It was also noted that the system provides separate ticket items when you follow up on a query, and that it can be difficult to keep track of queries. It was noted that the Service is currently developing 'your account' which will facilitate this. Officers were asked to clarify the time-frame for this development
- e) Members asked whether they would be eligible to receive eye-care vouchers which are currently available to employees. It was noted that the regulations relating to Display Screen Equipment relate to health and safety legislations for employees and workers. Whilst Members are not technically categorised as employees or workers, the advice from People and Organisation Services suggested that if Democratic Services believe that members fulfil the criteria within the DSE legislation, they may be eligible to claim under the Council's eye-care scheme. The Health and Safety regulations stipulate that: "*The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations apply to workers who use DSE daily, for an hour or more at a time. We describe these workers as 'DSE users'. The regulations don't apply to workers who use DSE infrequently or only use it for a short time*". It was noted that a process would need to be developed for Councillors and they themselves would have to declare that they use DSE daily, for an hour or more at a time.
- f) Members asked about the provision of a secondary piece of IT equipment for Chairs of Committees. It was noted that last year, Cabinet Members and Chairmen of Committees who had previously requested an I-pad had been offered the loan of a lap-top in order to facilitate with the co-ordinating of committees whilst working from home. Those Members that are no longer Chairs of Committees will be asked to return the loan equipment, and new Committee Chairmen will receive the same offer. It was noted that information relating to the cost of providing additional equipment would be reflected in the Statement of Members' Allowances paid during 2020/21 which would be published shortly.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held  
on 12 October 2021**

**Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

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