

Minutes of the Meeting of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE held at the Council Chamber, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Friday, 17 June 2022

PRESENT: Councillor Gareth Lloyd (Chair), Councillors Endaf Edwards and Gwyn James.

Also in attendance: Councillors Bryan Davies, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Keith Evans, Rhodri Evans, Hugh Hughes, Maldwyn Lewis and Wyn Thomas

Officers in attendance: Eifion Evans, Chief Executive; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services; Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer: Legal and Governance; and Nia Jones, Corporate Manager: Democratic Services.

(10.00am - 11.20 am)

1 Apologies

Councillors Elizabeth Evans, Caryl Roberts and Mark Strong apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

None.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising

It was RESOLVED to confirm as a true record the minutes of the meeting held 7th March 2022.

Matters arising

Item 4 – it was noted that the provision of ICT equipment would be reviewed at a later meeting.

Item 14 – it was noted that ‘CLIC version 2’ has now been rolled out and guidance notes provided to all Members.

4 Democratic Services Committee Terms of Reference

Members noted the Terms of Reference outlining the functions of the Committee.

5 Report on Members' Schedule of Remuneration 2022/23 - matters referred for consideration by the Council

The Corporate Lead Officer for Democratic Services presented a report to the Committee, noting that the Members' Schedule of Remuneration for 2022/23 was approved by Council on 20th May 2022 with the exception of paragraph 8, bullet point 6 and 7 of the covering report which relate to remote attendance by Councillors that are not Members of a Committee and prior authorisation for in person attendance at conferences, seminars, external meetings and training events; and paragraph 15.1 of the Schedule which relates to prior authorisation for overnight stays. The above matters were deferred to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration.

It was noted that the Council has invested in equipment to facilitate remote attendance, implementing phase 1 in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and that phase 2 would incorporate an app

which would make the system more effective, overcoming early technical issues.

During the Council meetings held on 23rd September 2021, the Council committed to being a Diverse Council, facilitated by the flexibility remote attendance offers to a wider range of Members. This was promoted within an Information Booklet for Candidates which several Councillors have benefitted from.

The Council has also committed to reducing its carbon footprint, which will also benefit from reduced travelling, as well as financial savings as a result of reduced travelling.

It was noted that paragraph 15.1 of the Schedule has been in place since 2017, in order to ensure that where there is justification from travelling that value for money is ensured via procurement services.

Members emphasised the importance of leading by example, noting that hybrid meetings are the way forward and that reduced travel should be encouraged; however there were concerns that it would be difficult for new Members to get to know each and build relationships without being sat around a table. It was also noted that there is room for improvement in ensuring that Members do not lose connections to meetings due to insufficient bandwidth and other technical issues. Members also noted that they may wish to attend meetings which they are not Members of in order to get a wider perspective of matters that affected their constituents.

Eifion Evans, Chief Executive confirmed that Members would be able to attend such meetings remotely, however they would not be eligible to claim travel expenses to attend meetings that they are not Members of, due to the alternative solutions now being available to them. Council employees have already been challenged to identify savings in this area in order to be able to protect front-line services.

Several Members noted that they do not claim travelling expenses for personal and ethical reasons as it is a privilege to represent their wards; however it was also acknowledged that that in order to promote a diverse Council some Members may need to claim payment, and that encouraging Members to engage with the hybrid system was important in order to ensure that people are not put-off becoming Councillors.

Members also asked about accessing Office 365 via alternative technical devices such as an i-phone and android, and also asked about protocols when attending meetings remotely. It was noted that revised guidance would be issued to all Members.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council the following amendments, noted in bold below:

- Paragraph 8; bullet point 6 and 7 of the covering report:

“In line with the Local Government and Elections Act 2021, the Council will be holding hybrid meetings which means that not all Councillors will need to be present in the Council Chamber in order to attend meetings. Those that are not members of the respective Committee or are specifically invited to attend, **are encouraged to attend meetings remotely.**

In person attendance at conferences, seminars, external meetings and training events **should liaise with** the Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services **in order to ensure that there is provision in the budget and that there is a need to attend in person.”**

- Paragraph 15.1 of the Schedule – No changes were recommended to this paragraph as it has been included in the Members’ Schedule of Remuneration since 2017.
- Schedule 2, Approved duties, first paragraph to be amended as follows, in line with paragraph 8, bullet point 7 of the covering report:

Councillors should liaise with the Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services if they intend to claim travelling and expenses costs for in person attendance at conferences, seminars, out of county meetings and training events, **to ensure that there is provision in the budget and that there is a need to attend in person.**

6 Report on protocols for remote attendance and broadcasting of meetings

The Corporate Manager for Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee noting that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires councils to make and publish arrangements in relation to hybrid meetings and the broadcasting of proceedings.

It was noted that the Welsh Government are currently consulting on a guidance document relating to the above, and that any amendments resulting from the consultation would be reported via the appropriate channels. In addition, it is expected that the protocols be updated as a result of phase 2 of the installation of the hybrid system.

Members asked the Monitoring Officer if the Standing Orders of the Council would need to be amended, and it was confirmed that this would not be required as the protocols reflect current practices whether attendance is in person or remotely.

Following discussion, it was agreed to recommend that Council approves the protocols, as set out in Appendix A.

7 Forward work programme for 2022/23

Members considered the Forward Work Programme for 2022-23, noting that there will be opportunities for Members to influence the content of the programme during the remainder of the municipal year via the Chairman of the Committee.

- 8 **Any other matter which the Chairman decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee**
None.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held
on 16 December 2022**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____