

**Minutes of the Meeting of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE  
held at Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely via  
video conference on Friday, 16 December 2022**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Elizabeth Evans (Chair) and Councillors Gwyn James, Gareth Lloyd, Caryl Roberts and Endaf Edwards

**Also in attendance:** Councillors Bryan Davies, Catrin M S Davies, Clive Davies, Keith Evans, Rhodri Evans, Keith Henson and Wyn Thomas

**Officers in attendance:** Lowri Edwards (Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services); Arwyn Morris (Corporate Lead Officer Customer Services) and Nia Jones (Corporate Manager, Democratic Services)

(10.00am - 11.40am)

**1 Apologies**

Councillor Mark Strong.

**2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests**

None.

**3 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

It was RESOLVED to confirm as true the minutes of the meeting held 17 June 2022.

**Matters arising**

None.

**4 Member ICT Provision of iPads**

Arwyn Morris, Corporate Lead Officer for Customer Contact presented a report to the Committee outlining the current provision of equipment and software which includes a laptop and 2 screens which enables Councillors to view the remote meeting and camera and papers simultaneously, whilst the Office 365 software can be used with up to 5 separate pieces of equipment including, phones, ipads and other devices.

He noted that Members had requested a report in relation to the purchasing of iPads as additional equipment, and emphasised that these would need to be patched to the Council's network, with each Member responsible for updating patches which protects the Council's data and the Councillors personal data as updates cannot be remotely pushed through automatically by ICT staff.

The current cost of purchasing laptops is £680. The iPad Generation 9 costs £350, whilst the latest iPad Generation 10 cost between £350 to £400. With the addition of vat, the total cost would be close to £500. The iPad Generation 10 is currently listed on the Apple website at £499. ICT equipment is bought via a purchasing framework, which unlike previous years, restricts forward selling by the authority.

Prior to the commencement of the 5-year municipal term, budget is set aside to cover the cost of purchasing equipment for Members. There is no additional provision, with the exception of maintenance costs.

Members asked for assistance in transferring personal information that they had stored on the iPads received during the previous municipal term and were advised that this is a relatively simple process, however they are welcome to contact ICT if they require advice, however ICT staff would not be able to do this for Members, as it contains personal information.

Members asked whether a survey had been conducted to seek their views. It was confirmed that the previous Chair of the committee conducted his own survey and provided feedback at the following meeting.

Members noted that laptops and 2 screens were great for day to day work and attending meetings from home; however due to the nature of their work, they would also need to have access from other locations not in the office or at home or whilst out and about in their communities when they may wish to share something with others, or view trees, potholes and eroding coastlines, noting that attendance at meetings makes up less than 50% of their time. If other buildings have Wi-Fi, everything is fine, but this is not always the case.

Members noted that there needed to be a discussion as to the needs of Councillors and challenged whether the purchasing rules had changed. They also noted that they are being encouraged not to attend the offices, which makes it difficult for them to use the printers, noting that some Members may prefer to have individual home printers and asked whether additional equipment could be made available at no cost to Councillors or ratepayers.

Members noted that some of them cannot get 4G on their phones, and asked if this could be provided, as other councils give their members a choice including 4G. Others noted that the solution is fine for Officers, however Members were issued with a laptop and 2 screen which many don't know how to turn on and that the solution provided has to be appropriate for Members.

Other Members were of the view that home-printers were a huge step backwards in terms of cost and the environment, and that Apple systems are often incompatible with Android Office systems, reminding Members that the Office 365 licences entitles them to distribute the licence across up to 5 other pieces of equipment.

The Chairman noted that it is possible to take meetings via the phone however it is not ideal and that the general consensus appears to be that it would be good to have a choice. Members agreed, noting that they were not asking for everything, however they would appreciate it if there was an option to change the package.

Arwyn Morris reminded Members that the decision to move to Modern.gov was as a result of moving from the age of paper to a digital solution which

applies across the whole county. Some returning Members have kept their old printers, however they will have to purchase ink and paper themselves if they chose to continue using them. He also noted his concern with regards to attending a meeting via a relatively small 7" screen, whilst accessing document digitally at the same time. He also reminded Members that they need to ensure confidentiality and the security of confidential papers if they are attending meetings remotely from other locations. He also reminded them that they can use their personal 4G as a hotspot for accessing their laptops, and that if Members require advice, that they should contact the ICT helpdesk.

Members noted that they cannot print documents directly from Modern.gov and were reminded that Modern.gov is a secure digital solution, aimed at improving security and also contributes to reducing the Council's carbon footprint and landfill from printing documents. However the ability to print public documents is available on the Council's website.

Members asked that they are consulted regarding their ICT requirements, and it was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair would meet with Officers from Democratic Services to discuss the content of a questionnaire.

It was **RESOLVED** to issue a survey to all Councillors regarding their ICT requirements.

## **5 Diversity in Democracy**

Nia Jones, Corporate Manage Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee noting that Diversity in Democracy Declaration which was endorsed by Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021.

It was noted that the percentage of female Councillors has increased from 12% to 24% following the election in May and Lampeter by-election in October, and that the percentage of newly appointed female Members was significantly higher which demonstrates positive steps towards achieving diversity in democracy. It was also noted that the number of female Councillors elected was representative of the number of candidates that stood for election.

Members noted that the figures for both Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats were positive however there was still considerable work to do. Independent members noted that the figures do not represent the number of women approached to stand as candidates, and that more work would need to be done to encourage them to stand for election.

Members noted the report and the shift towards improving diversity in democracy at Ceredigion County Council.

## **6 Attendance at Hybrid Meetings**

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to the committee noting that it was a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to provide an option to the public and to

Members to attend meetings in person, or remotely via video-conferencing from May 2022.

It was noted that attendance at meetings has been high during the period May to November 2022, with 64.6% attending in person, 21.2% attending remotely and 13.4% unable to attend for several reasons including being on other duties on behalf of the Council and ill-health.

It was noted that attendance may have been significantly lower, if the option to attend remotely was not available, and that it supports the efforts by Ceredigion County Council to improve Diversity in Democracy further by providing opportunities for those that may have other pressures and responsibilities to attend as well as reducing the carbon footprint linked to travelling.

Members noted that it would be good practice to ensure that those attending remotely keep their cameras on during meetings and asked that a workshop is delivered on meeting etiquette.

Members noted the report.

#### **7 Timings of Meetings - Survey**

Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services presented a report to the committee noting that all Local Authorities are required to undertake a survey of Councillors once per term regarding the timing of meetings. It was noted that the present arrangements reflect the outcome of the previous survey, with the exception of some meetings being moved from 9.30am to 10.00am to allow for the additional tasks associated with setting up meetings.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to undertake a survey of Members. in order to assess their preferences for the timing of meetings, as per Appendix A of the report.

#### **8 Members' Induction Programme 2022**

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented a report to the committee outlining the training, workshops and development opportunities presented to Members between May and November 2022. It was noted that several events had to be held on multiple occasions, which has been demanding for Officers involved in the training. Details of attendance, and completion of e-learning courses were included in the report.

Members noted the report.

#### **9 Annual Review of Members' Training and Development Needs**

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented a report to the Committee noting that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 re-enforced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires Local Authorities to make available to each member of the authority an annual review of the member's training and development needs.

It was noted that a template self-assessment form had been developed which reflects the WLGA's Development Framework for Councillors and including details of training provided. It was noted that the purpose of the assessment is to identify areas where further training and support may be required, and that it is not an assessment of the individual Member. On completion of the self-assessment, Members will be offered a one-to-one interview, and a draft report will be presented to the Democratic Services Committee providing a summary of further training requirements.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve

- a) the Learning and Development Plan template;
- b) the arrangements for one-to-one interviews;
- c) that a report is presented identifying further training and support required.

**10 Forward work programme**

Members discussed items for the Forward Work Programme, which included the following:

- a) An update of remote attendance for the period December 2022 – May 2023;
- b) Results of the Member survey on timings of meetings;
- c) Report on the outcomes of Member self-evaluation of training and development needs;
- d) Scrutiny Self-Assessment.

**11 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 24 March 2023**

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

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