

**Minutes of the Meeting of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
held at Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely via video
conference on Friday, 9 June 2023**

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Wyn Thomas

Officers in attendance: Lowri Edwards (Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services), and Nia Jones (Corporate Manager, Democratic Services)

(10.00am - 11.10am)

1 Apologies

None.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

None.

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

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm as true the minutes of the meeting held 24 March 2023.

Matters arising

Members requested training on downloading Office 365 to personal devices, to include security and GDPR.

4 To consider the Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2022 - 2023

Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee, noting that the report is representative of the amount of work carried out by this Committee, and the importance of the work that they do.

Members thanked officers for preparing the report, noting that the revised format makes it much easier to read the report.

The report will now be presented to Council on 13 July 2023 for information.

5 To consider a report on a Draft Protocol for Attendance at Local Authority Multi-location Meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to the Committee, noting that the draft protocol has been created to reflect the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Welsh Government Draft Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance. It was noted that this is an active document which may need to be adapted to reflect any changes to the Welsh Government Guidance and operational developments.

Members noted that the protocol does not require that Chairs are present in the Council Chamber, and it was noted that the regulations allow every Member to choose their mode of attendance.

Members also asked regarding the practicalities of keeping their cameras switched on at all times when they may have limited internet access and asked whether all Councillors, including those that are not Committee Members to remain as 'Panellists' throughout the meeting to avoid the delay of being transferred on raising their hands. Members also noted the importance of promoting public awareness and involvement, which could be further enhanced within the document.

It was noted that the protocol aims to reflect the practice in person, where committee members normally sit around the Cabinet table, and non-Members sit in the outer rows. It was also noted that training would be provided to all Councillors, on the protocol to include training on meeting etiquette previously requested by the Committee.

It was also noted that supporting hybrid meeting, and the live-streaming is extremely resource intensive, and that there are developments underway to amend the current live-streaming processes.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council the approval of the Draft Protocol for Attendance at Local Authority Multi-location Meetings and Electronic Broadcasts of Meetings.

6 To consider a report on a discussion paper for Multi-location Meetings

A report was presented to Committee, noting that this is a discussion paper to seek the views of the Committee Members regarding an 18 month trial period where meetings for the Governance and Audit Committee and the Democratic Services Committee are held on a remote only basis.

Members noted their support to the trial, stating that the current hybrid approach to the Governance and Audit Committee is extremely challenging to Members attending from the Council Chamber, due to the Chair being in remote attendance. They also noted that including the Democratic Services Committee within the trial would provide them with an excellent insight, and direct experience of the remote only method.

Members noted that it should be clear that this is a trial period, and that hybrid meetings will automatically resume after 18 months, subject to this committee recommending to Council that it continues and Council approves the arrangements. Officers noted that a report would be presented to this committee to include feedback from both committees.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend the trial period for remote only meetings for the Democratic Services Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee to Council, at its meeting on 13 July 2023.

7 To consider a report on a Member Development Strategy

A report was presented to the Committee noting that the Welsh Government Draft Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance states that “Councils could put together a member development strategy”. It was noted that this is not a statutory requirement, however a draft strategy has been prepared reflecting the current practice already in place in Ceredigion.

It was noted that the draft guidance provides a list of subjects for an on-going training programme of member development which could be included, and that it is recommended that Ceredigion County Council include the additional subjects within its training programme:

- Training on specific roles members may undertake such as governors or representatives on health boards, fire and rescue authorities or national parks including a short brief on the purpose of the role and the member’s responsibilities in keeping the council apprised of developments on the body that they are representing the council on, the level of decision making that is delegated to them and how they may access assistance to support them in the role;
- Training on the role of the councillor as a local member, the delegation of functions to ward members and councillor calls for action.

Members noted that the training for representatives on various external bodies would need to have a focus on the role of the Councillor as a representative of the Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to

- a) Approve the addition of the 2 additional items to the induction programme as noted above; and
- b) To recommend that Council approve the Member Development Strategy.

8 To consider a report on Councillors' 'Calls for Action'

Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to the committee noting the historical background to the ‘Call for Action’ legislation. It was noted that this is not currently reflected in the Council’s Constitution, and that the aim of this protocol was to highlight this course of action to Members, noting that this does not supersede the current arrangements in relation to scrutiny and that a proforma for presenting ‘Calls for Action’ has been prepared to assist Members through the process.

Members noted that this action should be seen as a last resort, and that it is an important mechanism where all other attempts have failed.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend the protocol for consideration by Council following consideration by the Constitution Working group.

9 To consider a report on Chair Announcements

A report was presented to the committee noting that the recommendation had initially been put forward by the Group Leaders. It was noted that there

are current inconsistencies with regards to items presented during the Council's 'Personal Matters' agenda item and that a survey of all Authorities in Wales had found that the Council's current practice is not reflected elsewhere and that the practice was to have 'Chair's Announcements' rather than 'Personal Matters'.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans, Chair of the Committee noted that during previous meetings of the Council, more time had been allocated to presenting personal matters than that of discussion on important matters such as the Council's budget. Members noted that it is important that the Councillors voice is not lost, however the proposed change would ensure greater fairness, and it was recommended that the Chair's Announcements stipulates the relevant Councillor and Ward.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that Council approve the Chair's Announcements, stipulating the inclusion of the relevant Councillor and Ward.

10 To consider a report on The Jo Cox Commission on Civility

The Committee considered the correspondence received from the Jo Cox Civility Commission, and it was **RESOLVED** to ask that Lowri Edwards writes to the Commission to offer our support and readiness to be involved in the information gathering stage.

11 To consider items for the forward work programme

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

- a) A Protocol on Councillor Wellbeing and Personal Safety;
- b) Guidance for Multi-Member Ward representatives;
- c) A Protocol for research facilities;
- d) A revision to the Committee's Terms of Reference; and
- e) A review of the broadcasting of additional meetings.

It was noted that the above matters are reflective of the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory guidance, and it was agreed to bring forward the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee from 7 December to 20 September 2023 to consider these matters.

12 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 20 September 2023**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____