

**Minutes of the Meeting of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
held remotely via video conference on Wednesday, 28 February 2024**

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

Officers in attendance: Lowri Edwards, Nia Jones, Elin Prysor

(10.00am - 11.18am)

1 Apologies

None.

2 Disclosure of personal / prejudicial interests

None.

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

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm as true the minutes of the meeting held 20 September 2023.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising

4 To consider a report on a discussion paper for live-streaming of additional committees

The Corporate Lead Officer for Democratic Services presented the report to Committee, noting that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, requires local authorities to live-stream the Council meetings. Ceredigion currently exceeds this requirement, by live-streaming all Council and Cabinet meetings via Facebook. However, during a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 20 September 2023, Members of the Committee requested that consideration be given as to the live-streaming of additional committees, and requested that a discussion papers be presented at a future meeting. The discussion paper recommended extending the broadcasting to include the Development Management Committee meetings from May 2024.

The Corporate Lead Officer noted that live-streaming of Committees is due to be transferred from Facebook, which is currently supported by the ICT Team, to live-streaming via the Modern.gov website. At this stage, ICT support will cease, and Democratic Services Officers will be responsibility for managing the live-streaming, in addition to operating the hybrid system and minute taking. Trials have taken place, and subject to a few minor tweaks, the Democratic Services aims to transfer the broadcasting in May of this year. Despite the additional pressure and demands placed upon on the Democratic Services Officers, it is proposed that this provision is extended to include the Development Management Committee at the same time, due to preference for this committee being identified by numerous Members, and public interest.

The Monitoring Officer noted that she, or a deputising Officer have been attending all Council, Cabinet and Development Management Committees, and that Audit Wales has recommended that the Development Management Committee meetings are live-streamed, despite the fact that this is not a statutory requirement. She noted that there would be an issue regarding capacity within the Legal Services if it was extended to include any additional meetings.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd asked whether consideration might be given to extending the provision to include all Committees of the Council as a future record and as a means of ensuring transparency of democratic processes, and whether there was any means of extending the capacity to support the additional demands.

Lowri Edwards confirmed that in the current financial challenges with shrinking budgets, it would not be possible to increase capacity for the foreseeable future.

Councillor Caryl Roberts noted that she agreed with the proposal in principle, however she reiterated the concerns of Officers in terms of the additional pressures, noting that there was a risk that errors may occur if there isn't sufficient capacity to support the additional demands.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd asked that this matter is reviewed at a future date, to consider extending the provision to include all Overview and Scrutiny Committees when capacity allows for this.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend that Council approve the extending of broadcasting to include the Development Management Committee from May 2024.

5 To consider a report on a draft Protocol for Councillor Representing Multi-Member Wards

The Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to Committee noting that the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales states that Councils may wish to produce guidance and support aimed at ensuring decisions undertaken in wards are co-ordinated and complementary in improving outcomes for local people.

The Monitoring Officer noted that the Council's Constitution stipulates that:

Those who do speak will be allowed a maximum period of 5 minutes each to speak.

This includes:

Applicant / agent,

Objector,

Town and Community Council representatives

Local ward Member

It does not clarify whether Members of Multi-member wards may speak for 5 minutes each, however in her opinion the 5 minutes should be shared between the Members, to ensure consistency with all others allowed to speak, as opposed to receiving double the time allocated to other parties.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd noted that he could be both sides to the argument, and asked whether there was any guidance in terms of one of the Multi-Member Wards Members declaring an interest, or asking for a report to be considered by the Committee where there was no agreement with the other Member of the Multi-Member Ward.

The Monitoring Officer noted that there would be an expectation for the Members to agree all of the above Members in advance and arrive at a consensus.

Councillor Gwyn James noted that two and a half minutes each would not be sufficient if the two Members had opposing view.

It was recommended that the Democratic Services Committee refer the matter to the Development Management Committee Sub-group – response to Audit Wales, to consider in detail followed by discussion at the monthly workshops which are open to all Members. Following this, the matter would be referred to the Constitution Working Group.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To approve the Draft Protocol for Councillors representing Multi-Member Wards for circulation to all Councillors
- b) To recommend that Members of the Development Management Committee sub-group considers the wording of the Development Management Committee – Operational Procedures, Part 4, Document I, followed by discussion at the monthly workshops, and the Constitution Working Group.

6 To consider a report on the findings of a survey upon research facilities

The Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to Committee noting that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 recommends that Councils consider the provision of Research Support and Services for Councillors as part of its considerations as to what constitutes sufficient resources for the Head of Democratic Services to discharge their functions.

It was noted that a report was presented to the Democratic Services Committee during its meeting dates 20 September 2023, which outlined the current baseline support currently available to Members. During the meeting, Members resolved to request that Officers survey Councillors in relation to the baseline support currently available, and any additional support required.

The findings of the survey were presented to the Democratic Services Committee which included a request for a Sign-Language Course; further training on how to interrogate information already available; briefings on e-

learning modules; promotion of community events; information on agencies that provide services to the Council; data on services provided by the public sector providers e.g. Health, Police, Fire and Rescue and the Welsh Ambulance service; reports on any new thing that arises about wards from websites such as ONS on a micro, ward level and data for subjects such as traffic flows through wards relating to parking issues and potential solutions. It was noted that there is already a mechanism for seeking such information via the Overview and Scrutiny processes.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans also noted that information can be requested via the Data Committee.

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

7 To consider a report on the progress of the Member Induction Programme 2022 and ongoing training

The Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to committee noting that the report outlines the extensive training programme that had been presented to Members.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans asked for clarification as the potential overlap between some of the individual training events and e-learning modules, such as the Safeguarding and Social Media courses.

It was noted that most of the e-learning modules are national courses, and that the Social Media course delivered via a training session was focussed upon local needs, practicalities and support available to Members. It was noted that in the run-up to the 2027 elections, the Democratic Services Committee would be asked to review the training programme, to identify priorities and any potential to replace training events with e-learning modules, and a potential requirement for all Members to complete the e-learning modules which are currently voluntary.

It was also noted that a further Data Protection training event would be held soon for Members that have not been able to attend previous sessions.

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

8 To consider a report on Well-being and Personal Safety - a Guide for Councillors

The Corporate Manager, Democratic Services presented the report to Committee noting that the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales states that Councils should take every opportunity to support the well-being and personal safety of councillors and their families. The guidance provides information on the training and support currently available to Members, as well as risk assessments for Running a Safe Surgery and Members' Safety out and about and at home.

The Corporate Lead Officer for Democratic Services emphasised the importance of the document, reminding Members that they should notify her of any concerns, and if deemed necessary to telephone the Police.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans also recommended that Members review the Suzy Lamplugh website via the link provided in the report, as it provides extremely useful information.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to Approve the Draft Guidance and Personal Safety Checklists for circulation to all Councillors.

9 To consider a report on the Grant Guidance for Chairs / Vice-Chairs on adjourning, suspending or terminating a meeting and for consideration of exempt items.

The Corporate Lead Officer for Democratic Services presented the report to Committee, noting that the draft guidance had been prepared in response to a request from a Chair of Overview and Scrutiny for an easy, practical guide that Chairs could follow in responding to unexpected events, or matters that may arise during a meeting. She noted that the guidance includes an explanation of the terminology, confidential and exempt information, a six-step guide, quorum, suspending or adjourning a meeting, examples and practicalities such as allowing sufficient time for broadcasting to be suspended.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve the draft guidance for circulation to all Council Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

10 To consider items for the Forward Work Programme

- a) Annual Report of the Democratic Services Committee;
- b) Guidance on Representation on External Bodies;
- c) Emergency Powers.

11 Any other matter which the Chairperson decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee

Councillor Elizabeth Evans asked that any responses to a Notice of Motion are read out at the next meeting of Council. It was confirmed that this is the current practice, however in a recent case it had taken 9 months for a response to be received.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held
on 6 June 2024**

Chairman: _____

Date: _____