

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Monday, 21st March, 2016 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Evans (Chairman)
County Councillor R. Harris (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: J. Higginson, S. Jones, J. Prosser, V. Smith and
F. Taylor

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Tracey Harry	Head of Democracy and Regulatory Services
John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors P. Clarke, D. Edwards, P. Jones and A. Webb

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest made by Members.

2. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on 26th January 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

County Councillor R.J. Higginson had sent his apologies for this meeting.

In doing so, it was noted that:

- The Members Role Description was to be circulated but this had not been done.
- The LSB will be shown in the Council Diary as the Public Service Board Scrutiny.

3. List of Actions from the previous meeting

We received a list of actions arising from the Democratic Services Committee Meeting on 26th January 2016. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The sound settings in the Council Chamber had been checked and issues had been addressed.
- The Communications Team had been asked to make a video regarding good microphone usage within the Council Chamber.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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- The induction information for new Members, outlined in the previous action list, had not been presented to the Committee. Neither has information regarding Members' role description been circulated. Clear timescales were required.
- The training package for new Members was being reviewed by the WLGA. This will be discussed on an all Wales basis before it is tailored for Monmouthshire County Council's new Members in 2017. Members' have been given an opportunity to respond to the document with the consultation period ending in March 2016. The document will be presented to a future meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.

Members considered that this matter had already been discussed at a previous meeting and had therefore not added any further information.

The Local Democracy Manager informed Members that Local Democracy Week was being held in October 2016 and it will be at this event that Members of the public will be encouraged to stand for the local Elections in 2017. All authorities across Wales, with the aid of the WLGA, will be promoting the local elections in 2017.

- There is a dedicated Welsh Government Team looking at the Local Democracy and Diversity issues. The Head of Democracy and Regulatory Services would invite the team to the next Democratic Services Committee meeting to outline what they are doing regarding this matter.
- In response to an issue raised by a Member of the Committee regarding new members of staff not being aware of the political process of the Council, the Head of Democracy and Regulatory Services stated that a seminar could be held during Local Democracy Week for staff to attend or could view via live stream in which Members would be invited to address staff to explain their role as a County Councillor. County Councillor F. Taylor stated that she would be willing to address staff in this way.
- It was noted that Officer training was provided for officers who regularly attend and present reports to Member meetings. It was noted that select committee meetings generally have a good working relationship with officers when presenting reports.

We resolved that the following items be presented to the next Democratic Services Committee Meeting:

- Induction training for new Members.
- The Welsh Government Team that is looking at the Local Democracy and Diversity issues to be invited to attend the next meeting.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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4. Members' online library

We received a verbal update by the Local Democracy Manager regarding the Members' Online library. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- Democratic Services is looking to create a home page on the Hub (currently under construction) for officers and Members, creating easy links for all to use when accessing / inputting information into Democratic Services. Members will be able to upload information to their site on the Hub via the Intranet.
- The home page could be operational in September 2016 and training for Members would be provided.
- Information via Modern.Gov is currently available on the Hub for Members via their laptops but the Hub is not compatible with Members' I Pads.
- In response to a question raised by a Committee Member regarding difficulty searching for information via the Hub, it was noted that the Performance Team could provide a dashboard on the Hub specific to the Member to allow specific information to be received.

We resolved to receive the update and noted its content.

5. Draft protocol for dealing with Council Motions

We received a verbal update from the Head of Democracy and Regulatory Services regarding the draft protocol for dealing with Council Motions. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- When a motion is carried it was considered that a lead officer / responsible officer needed to be identified and added to the paper so that the Member might go back to that person to ascertain progress regarding the matter.
- A Motions tab could be added to the Hub.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

6. Frequency of Democratic Services Meetings

We received a verbal update regarding the frequency of meetings for the Democratic Services Committee. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- One Member considered that the Democratic Services Committee needed to meet more frequently than on a quarterly basis in order to address the Committee's business and it was considered that the Independent Remuneration Panel report should have been presented to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Monday, 21st March, 2016 at 2.00 pm

- It was noted that many Members were not using their allowances and it was considered that it was up to the Democratic Services Committee to address this matter. The Head of Democracy and Regulatory Services stated that Members' allowances had never been considered previously by the Democratic Services Committee. Instead, it had been presented to Full Council for debate.
- Another Member considered that the Democratic Services Committee's remit was to put mechanisms in place to ensure that the democratic process was adhered to. The frequency of meeting should remain quarterly with the Chairman's discretion to call a special meeting if required.

We resolved to receive the update and noted its content.

7. Next Meeting

We noted that the next meeting would be held on 27th June 2016 at 2.00pm.

The meeting ended at 2.55pm.