

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 9th September, 2019 at 2.00 pm

Members agreed that where a Cabinet Member has been assigned to a Select Committee they should make themselves available to attend. The Head of Democracy and Governance confirmed this could be clarified as part of the constitution review.

The Chair welcomed the role descriptions and agreed this would have been helpful at the point of election. She also commended the Corporate Parenting responsibility.

The Head of Governance suggested this would ideally be aligned with the constitution review in November.

4. Personal Development Review

We received a report to consider and approve the Personal Development Review process for elected members. This report follows on from discussions at the last meeting of the Committee regarding training and development opportunities. This would be a self-evaluation exercise.

We confirmed that training records are maintained through Modern.Gov.

It was noted that there is a difference between training for efficiency and statutory training. Gaps in statutory training should be highlighted.

We discussed the training opportunities offered through the Talent Lab and how it should be identified where these opportunities are open to Members.

The next step is to take this forward to Group Leaders and Members.

There was discussion regarding who would be the suitable person to conduct the review. Suggestion was made that this could be the role of the new Scrutiny Officer, or the role of HR, but this would be discussed. Members expressed the importance of a single point of contact.

5. Public Open Forum, Family Absence and Proxy Voting Guidance

Information was provided at the request of the Chair on the Public Open Forum process at Council meetings, Family Absence rules for elected members and Proxy Voting for Members.

Public Open Forum Process

This matter had been brought forward by the Chair due to the disconnect on how members of the public can engage if a question to Council must be submitted prior to the agenda being published.

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It was agreed that that the process should be made as easy as possible to allow engagement, and the deadline should be as late as possible.

It was proposed that a new sub-group be established to look at how changes could be made. This could be brought in line with the constitution review.

The Head of Governance and Democracy agreed to discuss further with the Monitoring Officer.

Family Absence

Changes are due to be made in an upcoming local bill so decision was taken to defer until we can review the Local Government Bill (Wales).

Proxy Voting

There are currently no provisions within the constitution that allow for members to appoint another member to vote on their behalf in their absence.

A suggestion was made that as voting can be carried out via remote attendance, we could bring forward options for proxy voting.

Concerns were highlighted that to vote you would be expected to be present for the whole debate, and therefore evidence could produce votes against party lines.

It was agreed that there should be no determination of how to vote prior to debate.

An update would be provided before the next meeting.

6. The Democratic Year

Areas discussed included:

Public Engagement – The post of Scrutiny Officer is being advertised this week. There is still work to do on clarity around forward planners. In terms of the year ahead the Committee would like to see:

- Improvements to the work plan
- Effective engagement
- Monmouthshire Made Open – continue or not?

Members said it would be helpful to see what proposals had been made through the sub-group.

The Chair highlighted the following:

- Increasing engagement through Area Committees
- Reflection on the North Mon Area Committee pilot scheme.

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- How does decision making get through to Council?

The Head of Democracy and Governance explained that following the pilot a decision should be made as to whether the same system be offered to the other Area Committees, taking into consideration cluster arrangements.

7. National Democracy Week

The Committee received information that National Democracy Week would take place week commencing 14th October 2019.

In the past MCC have been involved and held sessions but there are no firm plans this year.

It was agreed that any information arising during the event would be distributed.

8. Review of the Council Constitution

Members were informed that the Head of Legal/Monitoring Officer is undertaking a review of the Council Constitution, and would welcome comments around any areas requiring attention. This would be an agenda item for the next meeting.

9. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th June 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

In doing so we noted that Councillor Davies had been in attendance.

10. To note the next meeting date as Monday 18th November 2019 at 2pm

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm