

Public Document Pack



County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Friday, 28 August 2020

Notice of meeting

Democratic Services Committee

Monday, 7th September, 2020 at 2.00 pm,
Remote Meeting

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	Public Open Forum	
4.	Discussion Item - Remote Meetings	
5.	Hybrid Council Meeting Protocol	1 - 8
6.	Members Sharepoint Site	9 - 10
7.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting	11 - 14
8.	Date of next meeting - Monday 9th November 2020 at 14:00pm	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillors:

P. Clarke
D. Dovey
D. Evans
M.Groucutt
G. Howard
L.Jones
F. Taylor
J.Treharne
J.Watkins
S. Woodhouse

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

Watch this meeting online

This meeting can be viewed online either live or following the meeting by visiting www.monmouthshire.gov.uk or by visiting our Youtube page by searching MonmouthshireCC.

Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

<p>SUBJECT: Hybrid Council Meeting Protocol MEETING: Democratic Services Committee DATE: 7th September 2020 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: N/A</p>

1. **PURPOSE:**

To review and approve a protocol for the holding of hybrid council meetings.

2. **KEY ISSUES:**

The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020 have enabled local authorities to continue to undertake its democratic functions during the Covid-19 period and relaxed the rules on how authorities can conduct their meetings.

Since the introduction of the regulations, the Council has adopted fully remote council meetings held through Microsoft Teams with all participants participating in the meeting virtually. Whilst this system has allowed the authority to continue make democratic decisions during this period and has been welcomed by councillors, many members have expressed concerns about its long term use and that fully virtual meetings can lead to a lack of detailed debate on items.

Additionally, forthcoming legislation contained in the Local Government and Elections Wales Bill will require local authorities to ensure that remote attendance at council meetings is available for all councillors who wish to use it and will likely take effect following the next local elections in May 2022.

During the August recess, a solution has been found that will enable the Council to hold hybrid meetings where remotees can participate in Council meetings alongside councillors in the Council Chamber, whilst ensuring that all participants can be live streamed. This solution will ensure we can support the long term aspirations of enabling remote attendance at meetings for those that wish to continue to do so whilst supporting members who wish to be face to face in a meeting.

Clearly, once the coronavirus legislation expires the rules around remote attendance will fall back in line with the Councils Constitution and/or new legislation regarding remote attendance and will need to be considered in that context when that time comes. In the short term, the application of hybrid council meetings and particularly physical attendance at meetings will need to be considered alongside the Councils own protocols for access to buildings, social distancing rules and any other restrictions imposed on gatherings.

To that end, the attached Hybrid Council Meeting Protocol sets out how the Council can operate its meetings using both physical and remote participants. Much of the technology and processes adopted for fully virtual meetings has

been carried over to the hybrid meeting, particularly in terms of how the chat functionality is used to gather votes and indicate a desire to speak.

As a contingency, should there be any technical issues with the hybrid meeting model then the meeting would be adjourned for a short period and if possible the meeting will continue in a fully virtual environment or if necessary postponed until a future date.

Whilst the adoption of the protocol will allow for the Council to slowly re-introduce physical meeting practices it will need to be done so in a safe and structured way and will need some flexibility in terms of its implementation depending on the needs of the committee. For example, where a planning committee requires a high number of attendees from applicants, agents, objectors and officers, it may be necessary to reduce the number of members physically present in the chamber compared to other meetings to ensure the safety of members, guests and officers.

3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

Do Nothing:

Leaving things as they currently stand will require the Council to continue to hold its meetings fully remotely until such a time is deemed safe for all members and officers to be present in the Council Chamber. The Council will still be required to prepare for the implementation of remote attendance at future council meetings due to the Local Government and Elections Bill.

Adopt a Hybrid Meeting Protocol:

By agreeing and adopting a protocol for hybrid council meetings, preparations can be made to slowly introduce councillors back into the physical meeting environment whilst allowing those members who wish to participate remotely to continue to do so. Adoption of a hybrid meeting will also prepare councillors for the implementation of the future requirements regarding remote attendance.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are currently no budget implications as a result of this protocol. However, the adoption of the protocol relies heavily on the technology that is currently available for the Council to use. Should these change at any point in the future then additional costs may be incurred to continue with this solution and a separate report would be brought forward to the relevant committee at that time.

5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

The hybrid council meetings protocol and adoption of remote attendance at council meetings will seek to encourage participation from individuals who may not be able to physically attend the meeting, be that a councillor, guest or member of the public and the flexibilities it offers could open up the future election process to candidates who would otherwise not normally be able to commit to the duties of being a councillor.

6. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

None

7. CONSULTEES:

None

8. AUTHOR:

John Pearson, Local Democracy Manager
Email: johnpearson@monmouthshire.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Hybrid Committee Meeting Protocol

1. With limited space available in the Council Chamber, any member wishing to participate in the meeting in the Council Chamber must give prior notice to Democratic Services no later than 24 hours before the meeting. A space will be allocated to those members in the Council Chamber which will be their workspace for the day as well as the meeting. 6 seats are available in the Council Chamber, an additional seat reserved for the chair if they wish to be present in the chamber, and another seat set aside as a contingency for another member who may have ICT issues. Four seats at the front are reserved for officers/guests presenting at the committee and may need to be rotated depending on the agenda.

The number of members present in the chamber for a meeting may need to be reviewed and amended due to the needs of the meeting. For example, for a planning committee where they may be additional speakers addressing the committee.

Discussion point

Should seats be allocated on a first come first served basis? Should seats be limited on a politically balanced basis? A seat set aside for each political party plus a couple of extras? Should a seat be automatically available for the vice chair as well?

2. Remotees, be that members or officers are to sign in to meeting 15 minutes before meeting is due to start. This will allow everyone opportunity to ensure their Camera, Microphone and sound settings are working and allows time to make adjustments ahead of the meeting.

If you are using a device other than your dedicated council laptop such as a mobile phone or a tablet, please try joining the meeting a couple of days in advance to check that you can join the meeting as a participant and are not taken to the live stream.

[Guidance on using TEAMS and the functionality within it, including the various settings options and troubleshooting is available on the hub here](#)

If you are a member participating in the Council Chamber, or you will need to do prior to the meeting is ensure the meeting chat is available for you to use within Teams. All voting and indicating to speak will be done through the chat as with fully remote meetings but if you are in the chamber you do not join the video call.

3. If people are addressing the committee from outside organisations, democratic services will need advanced notification of their participation from the organising officer. This is particularly important if the guest is addressing the committee remotely and time should be allowed to test the connection in advance of the meeting.
4. Any guest or officer presentations that are to be shared as part of the committee will need to be circulated by email to all councillors in advance of the meeting, either by democratic services or the officers themselves, as remotees may not be able to view the presentation clearly.

5. Just before the start of the meeting, Democratic Services will inform the chair that we will start the live stream. All remotees, except the chair of the meeting, should mute their microphone AND switch off their camera to ensure there is no disturbance in the meeting. ***Please be aware that your audio will be appear on the live stream at all times even if you are not addressing the committee.***
6. Members and officers will have tested their equipment prior to the start of the meeting so there is no need for individual introductions. This would be difficult in terms of order and delays going back and forth.
7. If a member has a declaration of interest for an agenda item they should make democratic services aware of this in advance of the meeting. Particularly where the member with the interest is attending remotely, prior notification allows the meeting to run smoothly. Further information on declarations of interest is below.
8. The chair will provide an overview of the agenda item and invite the relevant officer(s) to give an introduction to the item. The Chair will then switch off their microphone, and if attending the meeting remotely, switch off their camera whilst the officer does the opposite. The Chair will be provided with an amended agenda front sheet that gives details on who to introduce for each item and whether they are in the chamber or participating remotely.
9. Whilst the officer is giving their overview, if another committee member wishes to speak or ask a question, they should make their intention clear in the 'chat' facility for the meeting by clicking the raise hand button. This will bring it to the attention of the Chair who will invite you in at the relevant point in the meeting.

If you are attending the meeting remotely you can access the chat facility by clicking on the speech bubble icon in the toolbar and if you hover your mouse over the icon, it will say show conversation.

If you are attending the meeting in the Council Chamber, you will need to ensure you have Teams open and are within the Chat area of teams. Whilst you will not join the meeting in Teams, you will still use the chat facility to interact with the meeting.

Remember to unmute your microphone and switch your camera back on before you begin to speak otherwise other participants won't be able to hear or see you.

10. When it is time to vote on an agenda item, voting will also take place in the chat facility whether you attend the meeting remotely or in the council chamber. This will be open to committee members only and voting preferences will remain anonymous to all participants. Democratic Services will create a poll that will appear in the chat down the right hand side of the screen. To cast your vote, simply click your preference followed by submit vote. Votes will be calculated in real time for the chair to see and declare as necessary. Please bear in mind that if you are unsure if your vote has been counted or not, you can submit your vote as many times as you like and it will still only count one vote for you.
 - a. Contingency – if the poll doesn't work or you cannot cast your vote for some reason or the result of the vote is close, it is likely that we will move to an individual verbal vote for clarity of all participants and the public.

[Guidance on how to use the chat facility and vote is available on the hub here](#)

11. Repeat the remaining steps until the meeting is concluded and all agenda items have been discussed and, where necessary, voted on.

Declarations of Interest

Members who have an interest to declare on an agenda item will notify democratic services and the chair of the declaration and the nature of the interest in advance of the meeting.

If your interest is Pecuniary or prejudicial, you will be required to leave the meeting for the duration of the item. You can do this by clicking leave at the top of the screen or clicking the red square with the white telephone in the toolbar in Teams. Leaving a meeting does not prevent you re-joining at it another time. Obviously, if you are participating in the meeting in the Council Chamber then you will be asked to leave the room for the duration of that item.

The chair will need to be content that the member(s) have left the meeting and is not taking part in the debate. The chair can check the participants in the meeting by clicking the 'show participants' button in the toolbar next to the chat icon. This can be used to check they have left the meeting as well as having re-joined the meeting on conclusion of the item.

Democratic Services will contact the members that have left the meeting to inform them when they can re-join. Members can re-join the meeting in the same way they did initially via the link to the meeting in outlook or Teams.

Democratic Services will email the declaration of interest form to members for completion and return following the meeting.

Confidential Items

All participants need to be mindful of adhering to the rules on confidential agenda items and ensure that no other individuals can see or hear the conversation that is taken place. It is your responsibility to ensure that it remains confidential and you need to be aware of your surroundings to ensure that no other person can overhear the discussion. Practical considerations for confidential items include using headphones to hear the conversation rather than listening through speakers and ensuring that you are isolated from other people.

Members are still bound by the code of conduct for remote meetings in the same way as physical meetings and expected behaviours and principals remain in place.

Pause/Adjourn Meeting

As with the current arrangements for streaming meetings, we are unable to pause and restart the live stream. Should a meeting require adjournment or a short break, the Chair will need to be clear on the time for recommencing the meeting and all participants will need to adhere to the restart time. During adjournment, all microphones and cameras should be switched off to prevent any unnecessary discussions being overheard.

Moving and Seconding Items

At the point in the meeting where members are required to move and second an agenda item, members should make their intention clear in the 'chat' by typing 'moved' or 'seconded'. There is no need to speak your preference and the chair will ask you at the relevant point to write your intention there.

Points of Order

If a member wishes to raise a point of order during the meeting they will need to write in the 'chat' 'point of order'. The monitoring officer and democratic services will monitor this chat and pause proceedings to ask the member raising the point of order for details of what the point of order are.

The Monitoring Officer will then make a decision as to the validity of the point of order and continue the meeting on the basis of that outcome.

Contingency

Should the technology between the Council Chamber and remotees fail, the meeting will be adjourned for a short period to try and rectify the issue. If this is not possible the meeting will either move to be held fully remotely through Microsoft Teams or will need to be postponed until another time.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

<p>SUBJECT: Members Intranet Area MEETING: Democratic Services Committee DATE: 7th September 2020 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: N/A</p>

1. PURPOSE:

To consider and suggest key components of the new members sharepoint site.

2. KEY ISSUES:

As technology within Council progresses and transfers to cloud based solutions, the ability for members to access information digitally becomes easier and more reliable.

Just prior to the Covid-19 period, Microsoft outlook and Microsoft Teams moved over to be cloud based which meant councillors could access these applications much easier and significantly reduced the number of ICT log on complaints coming through.

As part of the transition, a new sharepoint will be created for members to access information and saved files without the need to save directly to the network and without the need to access via VPN. The sharepoint app will also let councillors access information in the same way that the outlook and teams app do without being restricted to the council issued ICT equipment.

Currently, there is a members area on the Hub which has a wide range of information for Councillors which includes;

- Guidance documents
- GDPR information
- Training and Development
- Annual reports
- Calendars of meetings
- DSB Guidance
- Motions and Petitions
- Health and Safety
- ICT/Digital Help
- Information on specific projects such as Brexit, Alternative Delivery Model and LDP

[The existing site is available to members here.](#)

There has also recently been a Covid-19 area which includes Welsh Government newsletters, guidance on remote council meetings, and a Coronavirus Q&A. It is also anticipated that e-learning modules could

be embedded into the site ahead of the next set of local elections and induction period for new councillors due in 2022.

A sharepoint site will allow councillors to save documents to designated work folders, again accessible without the need for VPN, but will offer the comfort of automatically backing up those documents for future use and is a move away from members currently saving documents to the local ICT device.

A new sharepoint site offers the ability to reconsider what is required for members of their own workspace and what content they wish to move over from the existing site to the new and what additional areas they would like to see included.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None. There is a need for all data to be transferred from network drives to cloud based solutions and this programme of work falls within that.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

Ensures all councillors have easy access to the relevant information needed to undertake their duties.

5. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting training for councillors will be included in the new site along with various guidance documents to help particularly newly elected members understand the requirements and how it impacts on their role.

6. AUTHOR:

John Pearson, Local Democracy Manager
Email: johnpearson@monmouthshire.gov.uk

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 10th February, 2020 at 2.00 pm

4. Draft IRPW Report 2020/21

The Head of Policy and Governance presented the draft determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the civic year 2020/2021.

A summary of the updated determinations in this draft report to the 2019/20 report are:

- The basic salary for members will increase to £14,218.
- Remuneration for the executive, civic roles and committee chairs will increase in line with the uplift in the basic salary.
- Similar uplifts to the basic and chairs salary have been determined for members of national parks and fire authorities.

The Committee resolved to note and receive the draft determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

5. Member Training and Development Strategy

The Committee received a report to consider and approve the Members Training and Development Strategy.

The strategy builds on previous discussions at Democratic Services Committee meetings and creates potential for Members to self-assess.

We discussed the introduction of e-learning which is currently being considered. The intention is to have e-learning in place in readiness for the next Council elections in 2022, therefore assisting with the induction process.

Members agreed that the previous induction process had been overwhelming and electronic, bite-size sessions would be helpful.

Commendation was given to the Scrutiny Manager regarding Scrutiny Training, particularly the joint sessions with TCBC.

The Chair asked for information around the results of the questionnaire issued to Members. The Head of Policy and Governance agreed to follow this up.

6. Update - Make your Mark Youth Conference

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting, ensuring invite is issued to Charlie Jade Atkins to attend the meeting on 30th March 2020.

7. Members IT

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 10th February, 2020 at 2.00 pm

The report was presented to support the discussion with regards to Members IT issues, added to the agenda at the request of members.

We heard that amongst the issues, 2 or 3 Members have recurring problems with being 'locked out'. It was thought that there may be a potential solution for this.

Officers will be looking to send out an additional request for information, to include:

- Structured questions to understand problems.
- Offer of one to one sessions with Head of Policy and Governance or Digital Officers.
- Individual workshops.
- Finding most effective solutions to problems.

Members agreed the survey would be useful and suggested that the importance should be stressed when issuing to Members.

8. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed by the Chair.

With regards to Cabinet Members attendance at meetings, we heard that Cabinet Members attendance at the invite of the Committee is considered the right and effective way forward.

It was suggested that the Sub-Group be reformed to specifically look at public participation and the notice period of public questions being submitted to full Council.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

This page is intentionally left blank