

Public Document Pack



County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Friday, 27 August 2021

Notice of meeting

Democratic Services Committee

Monday, 6th September, 2021 at 2.00 pm,
County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance

AGENDA

| Item No | Item | Pages |
|---------|--|---------|
| 1. | Apologies for Absence | |
| 2. | Declarations of Interest | |
| 3. | Public Participation Strategy and Petition Scheme | 1 - 18 |
| 4. | Members ICT Survey | 19 - 20 |
| 5. | Induction & Election Update | 21 - 22 |
| 6. | Minutes of previous meeting | 23 - 26 |
| 7. | The next meeting will be held on the 8 November 2021 | |

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| County Councillor Peter Clarke | Llangybi Fawr; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor Christopher Edwards | St. Kingsmark; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor David Evans | West End; | Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru |
| County Councillor Mat Feakins | Drybridge; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor Martyn Groucutt | Lansdown; | Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru |
| County Councillor Giles Howard | Llanfoist Fawr; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor Dave Jones | Crucorney; | Independent Group |
| County Councillor Jamie Treharne | Overmonnow; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor Jo Watkins | Caldicot Castle; | Liberal Democrats |
| County Councillor Sheila Woodhouse | Grofield; | Welsh Conservative Party |
| County Councillor Tony Easson | Dewstow; | Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru |

:

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: Public Participation Strategy MEETING: Democratic Services Committee DATE: 6 September 2021 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All</p> |
|--|

1. PURPOSE:

To review the draft public participation strategy and make recommendations for improvement as required.

2. KEY ISSUES:

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires local authorities to encourage residents to participate in the making of decisions by the Council and requires authorities to develop and publish a public participation strategy to inform residents of how to engage and to introduce e-petitions as a method of residents influencing local decisions.

Section 40(2) of the Act states a public participation strategy must address:

- (a) Ways of promoting awareness among local people of the principal council's functions;
- (b) Ways of promoting awareness among local people of how to become a member of the Council and what membership entails;
- (c) Ways of facilitating access for local people to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Council.
- (d) Ways of promoting and facilitating processes by which local people may make representations to the Council about a decision before and after it is made
- (e) Arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees
- (f) Ways of promoting awareness among members of the Council of the benefits of using social media to communicate with local people

Similarly, rule 42 of the Act relating to petition scheme states that the Council must publish a petition scheme that includes:

- (a) How a petition may be submitted to the Council;
- (b) How and by when the Council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;
- (c) The steps the Council may take in response to a petition received by it;
- (d) The circumstances (if any) in which the Council may take no further action in response to a petition;
- (e) How and by when the Council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.

In drafting a public participation strategy the Council must consult local people and any other persons it considers appropriate and it must be

reviewed at least once during the term of the Council. The petition scheme may also be reviewed from time to time as appropriate.

The above elements of this Act take effect in May 2022 however we already have the capability to introduce e-petitions and there is a desire to review the deadline by which members of the public can submit questions to full Council meetings.

It has long been an issue that needs resolving that the deadline for members of the public to submit questions to a meeting of Full Council is before the deadline for publication of the agenda for the meeting. Therefore, a member of the public would be unable to ask a question relevant to an item being discussed at that meeting. This strategy seeks to move the deadline to three working days before a meeting for submission of questions from the current deadline of seven.

A formal petition scheme has also been included in the strategy. This scheme sets out what a petition can do, who can submit a petition and the restrictions for what can be included in a petition. A discussion point for the committee is to consider the parameters and actions that follow depending on the level of support and number of signatories each petition receives.

As the requirement to formally publish a public participation strategy takes effect next year, this document will form the basis of the strategy that will go out for consultation pending any statutory guidance that is to follow from Welsh Government. The interim adoption of this strategy will enable small changes to be implemented and adapted in the lead up to next years election.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

A clear and easy readable public engagement strategy can contribute to increased public involvement in decision making processes and contribute towards the requirements of the future generations act.

5. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

6. AUTHOR:

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

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Meetings Overview | 3 |
| Committee Responsibility and Membership | 3 |
| Adults Select | 3 |
| Governance and Audit Committee | 4 |
| Area Committees | 4 |
| Cabinet & Individual Cabinet Members Decisions..... | 5 |
| Children & Young People Select..... | 5 |
| Council..... | 5 |
| Democratic Services Committee..... | 6 |
| Economy & Development Select | 6 |
| Licensing and Regulatory Committee | 6 |
| Planning | 7 |
| Standards Committee | 7 |
| Strong Communities Select..... | 7 |
| How do the committees decide what issues to consider and take decisions on? | 8 |
| How can I see what is to be debated at a meeting?..... | 9 |
| I can't attend a meeting of the Council, how can I find out what has been discussed? | 9 |
| Watch a meeting of the Council online | 9 |
| How do I find out about a decision previously taken by the Council? | 9 |
| How can I influence the decisions that are being made? | 9 |
| Voting..... | 9 |
| Stand as a councillor | 10 |
| Attend and take part in a meeting..... | 10 |
| Add an item to an agenda for discussion..... | 11 |
| Submit a question to Council | 11 |
| Submit views to select committees | 12 |
| Submit a comment or complaint | 12 |
| Petitions | 12 |
| How can I submit a petition? | 12 |
| How do petitions work?..... | 13 |
| What happens when the e-petition is complete and how is it submitted? | 13 |
| What issues can my petition relate to? | 14 |

Introduction

Monmouthshire County Council are committed to encouraging members of the public to engage in the democratic process and influence the decisions taken by the Council that effect the everyday lives of residents of Monmouthshire.

This guide has been published to assist residents in understanding the democratic process and the role they can play in local democracy and meets the requirements of Part 3 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. We hope this informs residents and help them understand the processes behind the decisions on what information is available to members of the public to help them get involved.

Meetings Overview

The Council operates under the executive council system. This is where fellow councillors elect a Leader of the Council at every annual general meeting (AGM). The Leader then appoints up to 8 fellow County Councillors to sit on the Cabinet. The Cabinet meet as a whole and make decisions as well each Cabinet member having their own portfolio of services and being able to make decisions individually in their own service areas. The majority of the decisions of the Council will be taken by either Full Council, Cabinet or Individual Cabinet Member Decisions.

These meetings are supported by overview and select committees whose role is to scrutinise decisions taken by Full Council or Cabinet or to present new ideas to the meetings for them to make decisions on. The select committees are split into different topics with varying responsibilities and depending on the nature of the report/decision depends on which select committee it is referred to. The five select committees are Adults, Children and Young People, Economy and Development, Strong Communities and the Public Service Board Select.

There are a number of statutory committees that the council must operate as well as the above including Licensing and Regulatory, Planning and Audit. Other committees include Standards Committee which cover the conduct of councillors, and Democratic Services Committee who oversee the facilities for councillors and promote local democracy. There are also four area committees covering defined areas of Monmouthshire that consider local issues and decisions.

Committee Responsibility and Membership

Adults Select

Adults Select is one of the five select committees in the council who are responsible for scrutinising decisions of the Council and Cabinet to ensure that policies are being implemented correctly and best practice and value for money is achieved. Membership of the select committee is made up of nine members of the council who are not members of the Cabinet.

Adults Select ensure that services are relevant and responsive to the needs of Adults and protect and promote health and well-being, including amongst others the following relevant areas:

- Safeguarding Adults, including Mental Health services and Disability services.
- Adult Social Care, including Domiciliary Care, Residential Care, Nursing Home Care, Community Care, Occupational Therapy, Re-ablement, Assistive Technology, Community Meals Service, Sensory Impairment Services.
- Support to Families and Carers, including Respite and Short Breaks.
- Adult Education, including Learning Disability Services.
- Integrated Adults Services with Health Partners.
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- Protecting and supporting vulnerable Adults.
- “Transition agenda” from young people to Adults.
- Protecting vulnerable Adults (POVA) and Supporting People.
- Homelessness prevention.
- Domestic Violence Service, Drug and Alcohol Services.
- Public health and wellbeing promotion through Single Integrated Plan.
- Leisure services in terms of health outcomes.
- Welfare Rights.
- Community Legal Service.

Governance and Audit Committee

The Governance and Audit Committee has responsibility for ensuring the authority is operating within its remit and ensures sufficient checks are in place to identify any potential misconduct within the authority. The committee’s main responsibilities include:

- Approving the internal audit strategy, plan & performance
- Review internal audit reports and seek assurances of change where required
- Consider the reports of external audit and inspection agencies
- Consider the effectiveness of the authority’s risk management arrangements
- Maintain an overview of the Council’s Constitution in respect of contract procedure rules and financial regulations
- Make recommendations, as appropriate, to Cabinet and Council on any matters reported through the Audit Committee.

The Governance and Audit Committee consist of eleven members of the council and also includes one lay person member, who is not a member of the council, to ensure transparency and independence in the process.

Area Committees

Monmouthshire is split into four area committees, Severnside, North Monmouthshire, Central Monmouthshire and Lower Wye. Each committee is responsible for a defined area and raising awareness within the Council of local issues.

County Councillors for the wards within the area are invited to attend the meeting which is held locally within the area the committee is responsible for.

Cabinet & Individual Cabinet Members Decisions

Cabinet consist of 8 county councillors, including the leader and deputy/deputies, appointed to the cabinet by the leader of the Council. Each Cabinet member has their own portfolio with responsibility for a number of services within the Council.

Decision for cabinet can be taken by all cabinet members at a cabinet meeting or by the individual cabinet member depending on the type of decision, and its implications, that is to be taken.

The main responsibility of Cabinet is to ensure that council policies are implemented correctly and discharge any other functions that are not the responsibility of the Council.

A list of the cabinet members and their portfolio is available on the Council website.

Children & Young People Select

Children & Young People Select is one of five select committees in the council who are responsible for scrutinising decisions of the Council and Cabinet to ensure that policies are being implemented correctly and best practice and value for money is achieved. Membership of the select committee is made up of nine members of the council who are not members of the Cabinet.

The Children & Young People Select ensure that services are relevant and responsive to the needs of young people and protect and promote their health and well-being, including amongst others the following relevant areas:

- Safeguarding Children, including social care and health, services for vulnerable children and families, Child Protection, Children in Public Care, Home Finding, Family Centres and Aids & Adaptations for disabled children.
- Youth Justice and youth offending service.
- Youth clubs and leisure facilities for young people.
- Special Support Services, Pupil Support Services.
- Education, including School Performance Management, Resource Management, Management, Governor Support, Health & Safety, Financial and ICT Services, School Planning, Transport, Admissions, Student Grants and School Meals.
- Management of Individual Schools Budgets, Schools Delegated Budgets, the Authority's Schools Individually Managed Budgets.

Council

Council is a meeting of all the councillors whose main responsibility is to agree the council budget for the forthcoming year and agree policy framework.

The Council also decide upon the political management framework and decide how councillors should be allocated to other committees both internally and externally.

It is also the role of Council to appoint the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and agree any changes to the constitution which the council must abide by.

Democratic Services Committee

The Democratic Services Committee consists of eleven councillors. The committee has responsibility for ensuring that the democratic element of the council is operating correctly including ensuring there is sufficient provision of staff, accommodation and resources to support councillors in their role.

The committee are also responsible for appointing the head of democratic services.

It has also has responsibility for promoting and engaging residents in local democracy.

Economy & Development Select

Economy & Development Select is one of five select committees in the council who are responsible for scrutinising decisions of the Council and Cabinet to ensure that policies are being implemented correctly and best practice and value for money is achieved. Membership of the select committee is made up of nine members of the council who are not members of the Cabinet.

Economy & Development Select ensure they are responsive to the needs of businesses, residents and visitors and promote economic activity, including amongst others the following relevant areas:

- Scrutiny of the Management of Regeneration and Culture Directorate.
- Strategic economic development, place shaping and enterprise.
- Promoting and sustaining economic growth.
- Job creation and ensuring opportunities for skills and vocational training.
- Public Health, Environmental Health and Trading Standards.
- Public realm – Culture, libraries, museums and theatre.
- The Planning Function – Building Control, Development Control, Local Development Plans, Economic Development and Housing.
- Scrutiny of collaborative initiatives such as the Shared Resource Service (SRS) and CMC2 and any others as appropriate.
- Procurement.

Licensing and Regulatory Committee

The Licensing and Regulatory Committee is made up of 12 councillors and considers requests from businesses or individuals to hold an event or conduct their business which requires a licence approved by the local authority. There are also regular sub committees of a small number of Licensing and Regulatory Committee members that consider specific applications that require a licence.

More information on licensing is available on the Council website or [available here.](#)

Planning

The role of the Planning Committee is to guide the council in the formulation of its policies relating to Town and Country Planning and to exercise the powers and duties of the council as the Planning Authority.

The Planning Committee also determines applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and related legislation in relation to the following:

- planning applications for mineral extraction or waste disposal unless in respect of small-scale works which are ancillary to an existing mineral working or waste disposal facility;
- planning applications accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement;
- planning applications which represent a significant departure from Structure Plan or Local Plan Policy;
- planning applications which, by their scale, nature or location, have implications which extend beyond the limits of the area in which they are situated.

More information on planning is available on the Council website or [available here](#).

Public Service Board Select

The Public Service Board Select is one of five select committees in the council who are responsible for scrutinising decisions of the Public Service Board. Public Service Boards are a statutory requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and aim to improve the economic and cultural well-being by strengthening joint working across all public services in Wales.

Standards Committee

The Standards Committee are responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives. It is their role to assist the above in complying with the members code of conduct and, where necessary, investigating reports or complaints of breach of the code of conduct which extend to town and community councils. The committee must also ensure that the authority's whistle blowing policy and complaints procedure operates effectively.

The standards Committee consists of 3 councillors, 5 co-opted individuals with voting powers and 1 individual from the community.

Strong Communities Select

Strong Communities Select is one of five select committees in the council who are responsible for scrutinising decisions of the Council and Cabinet to ensure that policies are being implemented correctly and best practice and value for money is achieved. Membership of the select committee is made up of nine members of the council who are not members of the Cabinet.

Strong Communities Select ensure they are responsive to the needs of residents and promote their safety and well-being. Key roles for this committee are:

- To ensure the Council supports the development of new and sustainable communities and supports the resilience of existing communities through Local area co-ordination.
- To review and improve the Council's links with the Voluntary Sector.
- To scrutinise the delivery of the Single Integrated Plan, allocating specific scrutiny areas to other select committees where appropriate.
- To scrutinise key services provided in partnership to local communities to ensure effective multi-agency action is delivered, including amongst others:
 - Infrastructure and networks.
 - Highways (including SWTRA), Transport and Traffic Management.
 - Street Lighting.
 - Waste Management.
 - Community Safety.
 - Estates and Sustainability.
 - Facilities and Accommodation Management.
 - Citizen Engagement.
 - Community Safety.
 - Chief Executive Function.
 - Revenues, Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Finance.
 - Corporate Costs / Levies.
 - Appropriations (including external debt costs from earmarked reserves, costs resulting from fixed asset disposal).
 - Financing (including core funding from WG, council tax income).

How do the committees decide what issues to consider and take decisions on?

The majority of committees have a document called a forward work programme. These documents are publicly available for residents to review and be aware of the issues that are up for discussion and at which meeting.

The forward work programmes are populated in a number of ways. Officers of the council will populate it with issues that arise, are scheduled for completion or because there is a legislative requirement to review the current policy. The chair of the committee will also populate the work planner with items that he/she consider important to the committee or have been brought to the chairs attention. Additionally, the chair may populate the work planner with items for discussion that members of the public have asked the committee to consider.

For example, a committee such as standards which covers statutory items and policies, will know the items that it is going to discuss in advance and will only change significantly depending on any issues of councillor misbehaviour that is brought to its attention. However, a select committee or Cabinet forward work planner will change frequently due to decisions that a select committee may call in or the urgency of decisions that the committee must consider.

How can I see what is to be debated at a meeting?

For every meeting of the council, at least five clear working days before, an agenda is published detailing the location, date and time of the meeting as well as a list of items that the committee is to debate. Most items on the agenda will also have reports supporting the item which give details as to why a decision needs to be made, background information relating to the issues of the topic and a recommendation as to what decision should be taken.

All agendas and reports are published on the council website and are available for members of the public to download. A small number of paper copies of the agenda and reports will be made available at the meeting for members of the public. If you wish to receive a hard copy at a meeting it is worthwhile informing democratic services so that they can ensure enough copies are available.

I can't attend a meeting of the Council, how can I find out what has been discussed?

For every meeting of the Council a set of minutes will be made and agreed at the next meeting of that particular committee. The minutes will act as a true record of the proceedings at a particular meeting.

[Watch a meeting of the Council online](#)

Most Council meetings are recorded and streamed live for residents to watch, as well as being stored in an archive for residents to watch at a later date on the Councils Youtube page.

More information and recording of meetings is available on the Council website.

How do I find out about a decision previously taken by the Council?

The Council will make available for inspection for a period of 6 years any agendas, minutes and reports of a committee of the council. If the papers are not available on the Council website you can view paper copies by contacting the democratic services office and inspecting them at the council offices.

How can I influence the decisions that are being made?

Voting

The first way residents can get involved may sound obvious but is probably the most influence that any resident of Monmouthshire has over the County Council. County Councillors are elected to the County Council, usually every five years, by the electors of Monmouthshire. By voting, if you have your say on who it is that represents you within the Council and who is the spokesperson for the area in which you live. The relationship between a councillor and their electorate has to be a two way relationship. They want to keep you as a voter happy to be re-elected and the only way they can achieve that is by representing you in the best way possible in the Council. Next time you vote at any election, rather than thinking of it as a cross on a

piece of paper, think of it as how you want to be represented in the future and who will do the best work for you.

To vote in elections you simply need to be over the age of 16 and registered on the electoral roll with the Council. You can register online at www.gov.uk/registertovote

Contact your local councillor

If you do not wish to attend or speak at a Council meeting, you can always contact your local councillor to discuss issues within your ward. A list of all the County Councillors and their contact details are available on the Council [website here](#).

If you are not sure who your councillor is, you can search [online here](#) or contact the Council who can provide this information to you.

Stand as a councillor

Some residents may not vote because they don't believe that anyone standing for election will represent them sufficiently in the Council. This is where it is your opportunity to stand for election to the Council and personally represent the area in which you reside.

To stand for election to the County Council you must be over 18, be a British, Commonwealth or European citizen and meet one of the following four criteria:

- You are, and will continue to be, registered as a local government elector within the local authority area.
- Occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises within the local authority for the whole 12 months previous to the day of nomination and election.
- Your main or only place of work has been within the local authority area for the whole 12 months previous to the day of nomination and election.
- You have lived within the local authority area for the whole 12 months previous to the day of nomination and election.

You can also stand for election to community and town councils in Monmouthshire with the rules on standing for election similar to the above.

The full elections to the County Council and Community and Town Councils is due in May 2022. Vacancies can arise during the term of office for all councils and are advertised on the County Council website as well as in the local area.

Attend and take part in a meeting

Any resident of Monmouthshire can attend any meeting of the Council and observe the proceedings and debate taking place. Most meetings are held in the Council Chamber at County Hall, Usk which has a dedicated public viewing gallery. Other meetings, such as area committee meetings, are held outside of County Hall but members of the public are welcome to attend those as well. Recently, remote attendance at Council meetings has been introduced so even if you are unable to attend the meeting in person, there may be opportunity for you to participate remotely.

The location, date and start time of meetings are available on the agenda produced for the meeting which is available to download from the Council website.

Any person attending the meeting may be excluded from proceedings where an agenda item has been classified as exempt. Exempt items are usually where sensitive or confidential information may be discussed and is only available to those able to vote on the matter.

[Add an item to an agenda for discussion](#)

There are two ways that a member of the public can encourage a committee to consider an item and have it added to the agenda of a future meeting.

- Any member of the public can contact the chair of a committee and request that they add an item to the forward work programme for future discussion
- Attend a meeting of the relevant committee and request at the meeting under the item forward work programmes that an item is added for future consideration.

[Submit a question to Council](#)

Members of the public are entitled to ask a question of any Member of the Cabinet at a meeting of full Council. Questions are limited to one question per individual or organisation and will be asked in the order notice of them was received unless the chairman of the Council wishes to group certain questions together. The total time allotted to public questions at a Council meeting should be limited to 15 minutes.

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by email to the Head of Democratic Services no later than midday three working days before the day of the meeting. Each person submitting a question must provide their name and address.

A question may be rejected if:

- The question is not about a matter for which the Council has responsibility or which affects the County
- Is defamatory, frivolous or offensive
- Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months
- Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information

The Chairman will invite the questioner to put the question to the relevant Councillor. If a questioner who has submitted a written question is unable to be present, they may ask the chair to put the question to the councillor on their behalf. The chairman may ask the question, indicate that a written reply will be provided by the councillor, or as the questioner is not present decide that the question will not be dealt with.

A questioner may ask one supplementary question without notice to the Councillor which may arise directly out of the original question or the reply.

Any question which cannot be dealt with during the meeting, either due to lack of time or non-attendance of the relevant councillor, will be dealt with by a written response.

Submit views to select committees

Under the Local Government Act (Wales) 2011, any member of the public can attend one of the four select committees held by the Council and submit their views on a particular item on the agenda. The Committee must give full consideration to the views submitted by a member of the public under these arrangements. [Further information on scrutiny is available on the Council website here.](#)

Submit a comment or complaint

A member of the public may comment or complain about a service received by the Council by:

- Contacting their local County Councillor
- Contacting the member of cabinet responsible for the service area
- Contacting the responsible officer at the Council or their line manager
- Using the Councils complaints procedure
- Contacting the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at 1 Ffordd Yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ. Telephone: 0845 601 0987 or via the website www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk.

Comments or complaints regarding the conduct of a councillor should be directed to the Council's Monitoring Officer or the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Petitions

Creating or taking part in a petition is one way individuals, community groups and organisations can influence decisions that the Council take that impact on local services.

A petition has the ability to:

- Raise awareness of an issue;
- Bring about a change Council Policy or a different way of delivering services
- Prompt members of the Council to take further action, for example asking questions at Full Council
- Lead to, or influence, a debate at a meeting of the Council

Before submitting a petition you should first check with you local Councillor to see if the Council is already acting on your concerns and that the Council is the most appropriate body to receive your petition.

How can I submit a petition?

Monmouthshire County Council already accepts petitions in paper format. These are presented the Chairman of the Council at Full Council meetings by a local councillor on behalf of the person organising the petition.

The introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 enables Councils to introduce E-petitions. E-petitions will make the submission of a petition to the Council quicker and easier whilst allowing the petition organiser to track its progress.

The submission of both paper and e-petitions to the Council are acceptable however people will only be able to sign a petition once regardless of the format they use.

How do petitions work?

You create a petition. Only people or organisations that live, work or study within Monmouthshire are able to create a petition.

If you are using a paper petition there is no set format that needs to be followed and you can devise your own petition for submission. If you wish to create an e-petition as well, you can do so on the Monmouthshire County Council website at the following link [{ENTER LINK}](#)

When you submit an e-petition you will become the 'lead' petitioner and you will be required to provide the Council with basic personal information so that we can contact you.

If you are signing an e-petition you will be required to provide us with basic personal information, including an email address, to enable us to verify the signatures collected are genuine. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided. The email will include a link which must be clicked on to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your signature will be added to the e-petition. Your name, but no other information, will be published on the e-petitions website.

What happens when the e-petition is complete and how is it submitted?

Your e-petition will need to include:

- A title
- A statement explicitly setting out what action you would like the Council to take
- Any information which you feel is relevant to the e-petition and reasons why you consider the action requested to be necessary. You may include links to other relevant websites.
- A date when you would like your e-petition to live on the website. *Please allow sufficient time for the Council to consider the suitability of the petition and discuss any issues with you.*
- A date when your e-petition will stop collecting signatories. You may want to consider this date in line with the calendar of meetings to ensure the petition is submitted before the relevant meeting of the Council. We will automatically host your petition for 60 days.
- Your name – as lead petitioner your name will be displayed with your e-petition on the Council website.

When an e-petition reaches its closing date, people will no longer be able to sign the petition online. The list of signatories will be collated by Democratic Services and the lead petitioner will be contacted regarding submission of the completed e-petition.

In order for the Council to take action, the petition will require:

Discussion Point

Varying practices as to what level of support requires action to be taken on a petition.

- Minimum number regardless of topic or issue. If happy with this what should the minimum number be?
- Various stages options – if receives less than 50 then nothing is required, over 50 and up to 250 a written response from a chief officer, or over 250 formal submission to Council.
- Open ways in which to submit petitions – rather than just directly through Council should petitions be submitted to Select committees and recommendations followed through. Should Democratic Services Committee monitor petitions that have been submitted between meetings and advise on actions etc.
- Welsh Government have a dedicated petitions committee that consider the actions for any petition that receives over 50 signatories.

A petition that is being presented directly to Council or Cabinet must be presented by a Councillor. Democratic Services will forward the petition and the petitioners details to the relevant ward Councillor following the close of the petition.

What issues can my petition relate to?

Your petition should be relevant to an issue that the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared delivery responsibilities. It should also be submitted in good faith and be decent, honest and respectful.

Your petition may be rejected if the Councils Monitoring Officer considers it:

- Contains intemperate, inflammatory, abusive or provocative language
- Is defamatory, frivolous, vexatious, discriminatory or otherwise offensive or contains false statements
- Is too similar to another petition submitted within the past six months, particularly where further action has been taken as a result of receiving the petition
- Discloses confidential or exempt information, including information protected by a court order or government department or discloses information that could be considered commercially sensitive.
- Names individuals or provides information where they may be easily identified and is contradictory to GDPR regulations.
- Contains advertising statements or is nonsense.
- Refers to an issue that is currently the subject of a formal Council complaint, consultation, public services ombudsman for Wales complaint or any legal proceedings
- Does not relate to an issue upon which the Council has powers or duties or on which it has shared deliver responsibilities

If a petition is deemed unacceptable then the lead petitioner will be notified along with the reasons for its rejection.

During politically sensitive periods, such as prior to an election, politically controversial material may need to be restricted.

If your petition relates to an issue which is beyond the powers of the Council to address, it may be more appropriate to [start a petition on the Senedd website.](#)

This page is intentionally left blank

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

| |
|---|
| <p>SUBJECT: Members ICT Survey MEETING: Democratic Services Committee DATE: 6 September 2021 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All</p> |
|---|

1. PURPOSE:

To consider the survey to members of ICT needs to assist with the selection of ICT equipment for the next term of Council.

2. KEY ISSUES:

In recent years, councils have become more reliant on the use of ICT to assist councillors in delivering their roles. Obviously, the pandemic has increased reliance on ICT with the move to remote and hybrid meetings but councillors also undertake the work in a paperless environment, use more apps and digital services to report issues and keep track of casework, and undertake training and meetings with outside bodies electronically.

At the 2017 elections, all councillors were provided with a Microsoft Surface Pro to enable them to undertake their council work. The device was lightweight, can be used as a tablet or a laptop and is fully supported by the Council ICT provider (SRS). Crucially at the time, with all councillors using the same equipment it meant that first line support through democratic services could be provided in a consistent and more efficient way, resolving issues much quicker than if there were multiple devices using different operating systems. On the whole, these devices have worked well for members and lasted the required life of the term of Council.

There have however been a few drawbacks to this device. Some members have found the screen size to be too small and others prefer a laptop device rather than the hybrid of a tablet/laptop. It has also been apparent that with the additional use of the devices in the last 18 months that instances of overheating and flickering screens as a result of the overheating have caused issues for members.

With all devices issued by the Council now operating under windows 10 and Office365, support is consistent across the board whether members have a laptop or tablet device which opens up different avenues of ICT options depending on a councillor's preference.

With this in mind, all Councillors will be sent a short survey to inform the digital team as to how members use ICT and what they deem important to them in carrying out their role. The results of this survey will guide the digital team in considering the most suitable ICT devices that can be used following the 2022 elections and for the next term of Council.

Below are the questions included in the members ICT survey. If members think anything is missing or there are key aspects missing these can be added to the survey.

- Do you often work and travel to different locations? (yes/no)
- Is your preference to have a bigger laptop screen or something that is lighter in weight? (bigger screen/lighter device?)
- Do you find using a touch screen beneficial for the work you do? (yes/no)
- Do you prefer working on a tablet device (like a surface pro) or on a laptop? (Tablet/Laptop)
- Do you have a monitor to use as a larger screen at home, would find a larger screen beneficial or don't need one? (Yes, Would find it beneficial, don't need one)
- Once we return to physical meetings, is it your intention to attend (remotely, in person, mix of both to meet own needs)
- What do you think are the key factors that your ICT device needs to enable you to undertake the work in the way you want to (freetext answer)
- Any other comments (freetext answer).

The next meeting of the committee is the 8th November 2021 and provided procurement timelines allow members of the committee will be given details of the options available at that meeting. If procurement timescales require us to order the equipment early, members will be sent the relevant information via email.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None. Responses will inform the procurement of replacement ICT for the next term of Council.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

The survey will ensure that all members regardless of skills and capabilities will be able to utilise and have access to ICT to undertake their role as councillor.

5. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

6. AUTHOR:

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

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

| |
|--|
| <p>SUBJECT: Induction and Election Update MEETING: Democratic Services Committee DATE: 6 September 2021 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All</p> |
|--|

1. PURPOSE:

To receive an update on progress regarding preparations for the local elections in 2022 and the induction programme for new Councillors.

2. KEY ISSUES:

The local elections will be held in May 2022 with elections being held to the County Council and Community/Town Councils in Monmouthshire.

Members received at the previous meeting of the Democratic Services Committee a draft induction timetable. Whilst there were still concerns regarding the intensity of the induction programme, particularly for new members, it was agreed that on the whole the induction timetable looked suitable and will be discussed between officers, the chair and vice chair of the committee. At the November meeting of the committee, members will receive a full induction programme and draft council diary for 2022/23 for consideration. This will be a finalised timetable of induction events and committee meetings in preparation of sharing this information with prospective candidates.

To support the sharing of information at the election and carry out our commitment to encouraging diverse candidates to come forward, we have prepared a website for prospective candidates that provides information not only on the election process but also the induction programme, expectations of them as a councillor and support they can expect to receive. Boundary maps of all the new County and Community/Town Council wards are also included on the website. We welcome feedback from the committee on the website and any suggestion for improvements. The website is available here: mcc-elections-2022.webnode.co.uk

Further preparation for informing candidates will be put on hold in the short term as Welsh Government are currently consulting on new rules which will alter the way candidates get themselves nominated for election. Once these rules are clarified and in legislation, likely to be the end of November 2021, we will update resources and make them available to candidates. In person and/or remote information sessions for prospective candidates will also be scheduled once the legislation is confirmed.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None. Rules are currently out for consultation and full cost implications of the proposed changes would be considered at the time of implementation.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

None.

5. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

6. AUTHOR:

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

Public Document Pack **Agenda Item 6**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 12th July, 2021 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Evans (Chairman)

County Councillors: P. Clarke, M. Feakins, M. Groucutt, G. Howard,
D. Jones, J. Treharne, J. Watkins, S. Woodhouse and A. Easson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Matt Phillips | Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer |
| Nicola Perry | Senior Democracy Officer |

APOLOGIES:

Councillors

1. Declarations of interest

None.

2. Public Open Forum

None.

3. Feedback from Working Group

The Committee received the notes from the recent meeting of the working group and were invited to comment.

The Chief Officer for People and Governance informed Members that the Strategic Leadership Team had held discussion with a group called New Local who were involved with promoting community engagement. It was agreed that the group be invited to present at the September meeting of Democratic Services Committee.

County Councillor Howard recommended looking to other local authorities to identify how they operate area committees or similar forums.

Action: Contact officers for dates for the additional engagement forums (NP)

4. Prayers at meetings

The Chair invited County Councillor Sheila Woodhouse to open the item. In doing so she explained that there had been some discussion amongst Members on the best way to conduct prayers at meetings of Full Council.

Members were invited to comment.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 12th July, 2021 at 2.00 pm

Some thought that the best way forward would be to continue with the current arrangements of holding prayers ahead of the meeting, prior to live streaming the meeting. There was suggestion that a separate Teams meeting link be created specifically for prayers. We noted that this could be undertaken dependent on officer and technical availability.

It was agreed that any periods of silence should be conducted within the actual meeting, separate to prayers.

The Chief Officer explained that the agenda is the preserve of the Proper Officer and so if there was to be a change it would ultimately sit with the Chief Executive. However, it would be appropriate for Council to present their view through a debate on a Motion if it wished to do so.

It was agreed that further discussion would be appropriate following legislative changes in November 2021.

5. Response times to members

The Senior Democracy Officer presented the item in response to a matter raised at the previous meeting. A survey had been issued to all Members to identify areas of concern regarding officer response times. It was explained that of 43 Members, 16 had responded, 11 with issues, 5 without. Without going into detail, the survey clearly identified problem areas and the Chief Officer had agreed to highlight the findings to the relevant Chief Officers.

It was also noted that a quick reference contact sheet had been emailed to all members as requested.

6. Discussion on job sharing for Councillors

County Councillor Tony Eason raised the matter of job-sharing for Councillors for discussion. He suggested that this is something that should be considered for lifestyle balance in the future.

We recognised that there is a Family Policy within the constitution, but this circumstance would be separate to that.

Members welcomed the opportunity to open a discussion and the Chief Officer agreed to forward further information.

7. Induction 2022

The Senior Democracy Officer presented the report for the Committee to consider the draft timetable for the Induction of Councillors 2022 and recommend changes or additions considered suitable.

For meetings such as Planning / Licensing it was thought that a training session directly ahead of the meeting had worked well previously.

County Councillor Giles Howard raised concerns around IT equipment and asked that a larger laptop rather than the Surface Pro be considered going forward.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 12th July, 2021 at 2.00 pm

It was asked that the timetable reflect the commitments of working people.

Members agreed that online and recorded sessions would be a great improvement on the 2017 induction.

A Council directory would be a very important tool for new Members.

New Members should receive training on the MyMonmouthshire App and MonMaps.

Prospective candidates should be provided with a copy of the induction timetable.

Action: The Chair recommended that a meeting with himself, the Vice-Chair and Democracy Officers be held to discuss further.

8. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm

This page is intentionally left blank