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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Monday, 6th September, 2021 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Evans (Chairman)

County Councillors: P. Clarke, C.Edwards, G. Howard, D. Jones,
J.Treharne, J.Watkins, S. Woodhouse and A. Easson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors M.Feakins and M.Groucutt

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Public Participation Strategy and Petition Scheme

The Local Democracy Manager presented a report to review the draft public participation strategy and make recommendations for improvement as required.

Both are required under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and will take effect in May 2022.

Members were invited to comment.

The three-day notice for questions to Council was welcomed but it was recognised that the Chair could allow emergency questions.

A petition can be registered on the Council Website. This would then be assessed by the Democratic Services team to ensure it is suitable for publication and at that point the petitioner can share the link. We need to determine the level of support required to take the petition forward. A Councillor could still take the petition to Council. It was suggested that a petition go to a scrutiny committee ahead of Council.

Following a presentation of a petition to Council, Members should be made aware of who owns the petition until further updates are delivered.

It was suggested that the role of officers be included in the Strategy document.

The Local Democracy Manager summarised that Members were happy to continue presenting petitions to Council and following the trigger level we decide to set the petition would go to scrutiny ahead of Council.

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3. Members ICT Survey

The Local Democracy Manager presented the report to consider the survey to members of ICT needs to assist with the selection of ICT equipment for the next term of Council.

We noted that the induction would see multiple digital sessions.

The Council Chamber is undergoing refurbishment and is due for completion mid November. This will allow us to scale up the hybrid meetings.

It was suggested that shorter meetings could still carry on remotely. This reflected the survey responses requesting flexibility for meetings.

We must offer hybrid meetings from May 2022 onwards.

There were some concerns over the type of hardware equipment offered to Members and that there should be more than one option on offer.

4. Induction & Election Update

The Local Democracy Manager presented a report to provide an update on progress regarding preparations for the local elections in 2022 and the induction programme for new Councillors.

We heard that a draft candidate website has been created which includes all the boundary ward maps, role of the Council, information on the election and induction processes.

The website is currently live but not being publicised as some rules may be changing.

The Boundary reviews should be signed off by WG in September 2021.

Members welcomed the useful website.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2021 were confirmed as accurate. In doing so we noted that County Councillor Chris Edwards had attended the meeting.

6. The next meeting will be held on the 8 November 2021

Noted.

The meeting ended at 2.40 pm