

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held at County Hall, Usk on 16th December 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Evans (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, P.R. Clarke, D.L. Edwards, R.G. Harris, S.G.M. Howarth, P. Jones and J.L. Prosser

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. H. Ilett	-	Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams	-	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors A. Easson, V.E. Smith and S. White.

2. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

We resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4th November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SELECT COMMITTEES

We received a report by the Scrutiny Manager in which Members were provided with details of the draft revised terms of reference for the Council's four select committees.

The Scrutiny Manager advised that the Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Group had been tasked by the Democratic Services Committee to revise the terms of reference of the four select committees, following requests from Members for a degree of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each select committee. The existing terms of reference that form part of the constitution were considered out-dated and factually inaccurate in part. The Scrutiny Manager explained that the Scrutiny Chairs had sought to clearly define the functions their committees are responsible for scrutinising, in order that other Members, officers and the public could input into the work of the scrutiny committees if they desired.

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 16th December 2013 - continued**

Having received the report the following points were noted:

- The new draft was a considerable improvement to the original terms of reference creating a more descriptive outcome.
- Additional wording to the draft document should be added to indicate that select committees were cross cutting.

We resolved:

- (i) to agree the draft revised terms of reference with the additional wording being added to refer to select committees being cross cutting;
- (ii) that the draft revised terms of reference with the additional wording being added to refer to select committees being cross cutting, be presented to Full Council as part of the review of the constitution.

6. WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

We received a report, deferred from the meeting held on 4th November 2013, which informed the Committee of the WLGA's Wales Charter for Member Support and Development, and to benchmark Monmouthshire against the Charter criteria.

We resolved to defer consideration of the report to the next meeting, as the Head of Improvement and Democracy was unable to attend today's meeting to present the report, as she was involved in a hearing at County Hall, Usk.

7. MEMBERS' PRINTERS

The Chair requested Member's views on Members' printers and whether repair costs should be borne by Members. The following points were noted:

- The printers had been bought by Members. Therefore, Members should pay for repairs to their printers.
- Members currently purchased colour cartridges for their printers.
- New Members had not been supplied with printers.
- It was considered that there might be some redundant printers within the authority that could be re-used and supplied to new Members should they require a printer.
- Members considered that the current policy regarding printer provision for Members needed to be clarified.

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 16th December 2013 - continued**

We resolved that a report be presented to the next meeting clarifying Monmouthshire County Council's policy regarding the provision of printers for elected Members.

8. PAPERLESS MEETINGS

Following an update from Political Leadership Group regarding paperless meetings, Members discussed this matter and the following points were noted:

- Committee meetings were scheduled to go paperless from April 2014.
- It was considered that a questionnaire should be sent to all Members requesting that they identify their I.T. requirements with regard to support / training in preparation for going paperless.
- An appropriate officer should be invited to attend the next meeting to provide the Committee with details, timescales and training required before committee meetings go paperless.
- It was considered that paperless meetings should be introduced gradually to allow Members time to receive appropriate support / training.
- It was noted that large agendas were difficult to read on an IPAD.
- Concern was expressed that the quality of scrutiny might diminish if committee meetings go totally electronic.
- There might be medical reasons hindering some individuals from taking part in totally electronic meetings.

We resolved:

- (i) that the appropriate officer attends the next meeting to provide the Committee with details, timescales and training required before committee meetings go paperless;
- (ii) that a report be presented to the next meeting regarding details of a questionnaire that was sent to elected Members some time ago by the former Democratic Services Manager (with responses received) regarding Members' views on paperless meetings / ICT provision.

9. FEEDBACK REGARDING THE IPAD TRIAL

The following information was received from Members regarding feedback in respect of the IPAD trail:

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 16th December 2013 - continued**

- Some Members required basic training whilst others required further training to operate the IPAD to its full capacity. A structured programme of training was required.
- The IPAD was very useful but could not do everything that a laptop could do. The IPAD was considered to be an adjunct to the laptop.
- It was noted that some local authorities in Wales had introduced tablets for Members' use regarding council business. The Scrutiny Manager stated that she could liaise with her scrutiny colleagues across Wales to ascertain Members' feedback on the benefits / negative aspects of using tablets for council business.

We resolved that the Scrutiny Manager liaises with her scrutiny colleagues across Wales to ascertain Members' feedback on the benefits / negative aspects of using tablets for council business and report her findings to the next meeting.

10. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members reviewed the work programme of the committee and the following points were noted:

- There were no new items on the work programme from February 2014.
- Concern was expressed regarding the future of committee / Members' support from the Democratic Services Section. It was considered that the report in respect of the restructure of Democratic Services / Members' Services / Electoral Registration should be presented to a future meeting of the Committee before the restructure is implemented.
- Resurrect the list of agenda items for the next meeting that was established around the time of the inaugural meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.

We resolved:

- (i) to resurrect the list of agenda items for the next meeting that was established around the time of the inaugural meeting of the Democratic Services Committee;
- (ii) that the report in respect of the restructure of Democratic Services / Members' Services / Electoral Registration be presented to a future meeting of the Committee before the restructure is implemented.

**Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee
dated 16th December 2013 - continued**

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at County Hall, Usk on **Monday 3rd February 2014 at 2.00pm.**

The committee discussed the time of the next meeting and resolved that it would commence at **2.00pm.**

The meeting ended at 2.50 p.m.