

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Remote Meeting on Monday, 7th June, 2021 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Evans (Chairman)
County Councillor J.Treharne (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: C.Edwards, M.Feakins, M.Groucutt, D. Jones,
J.Treharne, J.Watkins and S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matt Phillips	Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors P. Clarke and G. Howard

1. To note the appointment of County Councillor David Evans as Chair

Noted.

2. To appoint a Vice-Chair

County Councillor S. Woodhouse nominated County Councillor J. Treharne as Vice-Chair, duly seconded by County Councillor David Jones.

County Councillor J. Treharne was appointed as Vice-Chair.

3. Declarations of interest

None.

4. Public open forum

No matters for the public open forum.

5. Area Committees

The Chief Officer for People and Governance and Monitoring Officer addressed the Committee to advise of the upcoming working group to discuss Area Committees. It was agreed that the first meeting will be held 28th June 2021. This will be an opportunity to reflect on legislative changes coming into force and allow us to think more broadly about lessons learnt from the Covid period.

An area of consideration will be how the Clusters work and the engagement that happens within those groups with our Community Councils.

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It was agreed that the Head of Enterprise and Community Animation be invited to the working group meeting.

6. Diversity in Local Democracy

The Local Democracy Manager presented a report for the Committee to consider an action plan and once agreed to make a recommendation to Full Council that Monmouthshire County Council commits to becoming a Diverse Council as set out by the WLGA.

It was important to consider that there are elements of the commitment that we have little control over, but it is all linked into the same action plan.

There is a recommendation that we appoint a diversity ambassador within each political group, and it was recommended that should we do so those ambassadors should come from Democratic Services Committee. This would ensure the Committee receive feedback, and ensure we are aware should the action plan and commitments need changing.

Members welcomed the proposals within the report and noted that many are already carried out by MCC.

Councillor Watkins welcomed the promotion of diversity, acknowledging that MCC is well represented by both male and female councillors. She added that MCC should strive to improve representation and participation from BAME communities.

Shadowing and mentoring would be on a member-to-member basis and was something that had been suggested following the 2017 induction programme.

In terms of the DSC Chair attending sessions to provide personal experience of being a councillor to potential candidates, it was suggested that this could be expanded to varied Members to reflect the personal situation of the candidates.

7. Response times to Members

The matter of officer response times was brought to the attention of the Committee in response to concerns raised by some members. There were also concerns regarding IT equipment, and access to remote meetings.

It was suggested that a survey be issued to all members to identify areas of concern.

Members agreed there were varying response times from officers, but it was noted that there was no definitive timescale.

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Councillor Woodhouse added that an updated directory of officer contact details would be beneficial.

The Local Democracy Manager agreed to issue a survey to members to obtain further information.

8. Elections 2022

The Local Democracy Manager presented the report to agree specific areas to bring to the committee in order to ensure necessary and targeted work is undertaken ahead of the 2022 local elections and for the induction of new councillors for the next term.

Matters raised:

- Meeting face to face beneficial for new members – some elements such as signing declaration of office must be done physically so there will be face to face contact. Some sessions which are more information based could be based online. It is thought the key elements will be face to face.
- Mentoring would come naturally to members, as had been experienced following the last election.
- Important the potential candidates are aware that all meeting dates are constantly reviewed.
- Directory would be useful for all members, with the onus on members to keep it up to date.
- Induction sessions being recorded is very useful for members to refer to at any time.

9. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

10. To note the next meeting date of 12th July 2021

Noted.

Agenda item – Discussion on prayers at Full Council.

The meeting ended at 2.50 pm