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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Friday, 28 May 2021

Notice of meeting

Democratic Services Committee

Monday, 7th June, 2021 at 2.00 pm,
Remote Meeting

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	To note the appointment of County Councillor David Evans as Chair	
2.	To appoint a Vice-Chair	
3.	Apologies for absence	
4.	Declarations of interest	
5.	Public open forum	
6.	Area Committees	Verbal Report
7.	Diversity in Local Democracy	1 - 6
8.	Response times to Members	Verbal Report
9.	Elections 2022	7 - 8
10.	Minutes of the previous meeting	9 - 12
11.	To note the next meeting date of 12th July 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 Alan Davies	Green Lane;	Independent
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

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Public Information

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Watch this meeting online

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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.

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

SUBJECT: Diversity in Local Democracy
MEETING: Democratic Services Committee
DATE: 7th June 2021
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: N/A

1. PURPOSE:

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.

2. KEY ISSUES:

At its meeting on the 28th September 2018, WLGA Council committed to advance gender equality and diversity in local democracy ahead of the 2022 local elections. As such a cross party working group was formed to explore issues and actions that could be developed to improve diversity in local democracy.

WLGA Council received and approved the report of this cross party working group in early 2021 and identified three areas for action:

- Encouraging Councils to ensure all councillors receive their full entitlement to allowances and salaries and encouraging the introduction of resettlement grants, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it
- An agreement by Council to undertake new or developed work in this area and visibly commit to this by signing up to becoming Diverse Councils.
- To discuss positions and making representation to political parties and acting locally to set quotas and/or voluntary targets for the election of councillors from underrepresented groups.

Monmouthshire County Council has limited or no control over some aspects of the recommendations such as the way in which political parties put forward their candidates for election and the issue of providing resettlement grants to senior salary post holders who are not successful in getting re-elected. Further information on these proposals will be provided at a future meeting of the committee should they take effect.

This report focusses solely on the request for all Councils to commit to being a Diverse Council by July 2021 and the actions needed to demonstrate the work that is/will be undertaken to support that commitment.

Attached at appendix A to this report is an example declaration and list of actions for consideration of the committee to support this

commitment should the Committee wish to make a recommendation to Full Council to sign up to the Diverse Council program.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Limited resource implications. Most of the requirements of the pledge are already being undertaken or scheduled to take place already.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

In signing up to be a Diverse Council, the Council is ensuring candidates and local representatives from all backgrounds are able to stand for election and represent the views of their communities. The more diverse the Council can be, the more diverse and wide ranging policies and decisions taken by the Council will become and better reflect the communities those decisions effect.

5. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[WLGA Report - Diversity in Local Government](#)

7. AUTHOR:

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

Appendix A – Example Diverse Council Declaration

This Council commits to being a Diverse Council. We agree to:

Commitment	What do we do? Actions needed?
Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy	Action: Democratic Services Committee to make a recommendation to the next Full Council meeting requesting the council sign up as a Diverse Council underpinned by the actions here.
Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct	Diversity ambassadors to promote the standards within their own groups as well group leaders adhering to the expected levels of behaviour as set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
<p>Set out a local Diverse Council Action Plan ahead of the 2022 local elections including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint a Diversity Ambassador for each political group on the Council to work with each other and local party associations to encourage recruitment of candidates from under represented groups • Encourage and enable people from underrepresented groups to stand for office through the provision of activities such as mentoring and shadowing programmes and information and learning events for people interested in standing and official candidates • Proactive engagement and involvement with local community groups and partner organisations supporting and representing under represented groups. • Ensure that all members and candidates complete the Welsh Government candidates and councillors survey distributed at election time. • Set ambitious targets for candidates from under-represented groups at the 2022 local elections. 	<p>Action: appoint a Diversity Ambassador from the Democratic Services Committee membership for each political group who can feed back updates on progress for committee to monitor and review?</p> <p>Shadowing and mentoring to be considered as part of the induction plan and preparation for the 2022 local elections. Needs political group involvement and buy in and relies on candidates being re-elected to follow through on mentoring programme.</p> <p>At 2012 and 2017 elections, pre-election briefings held with potential candidates to provide details on election process and highlight duties/expectations/commitments needed of a Councillor. Chair of DSC to attend sessions to give personal experience of being a councillor to potential candidates. Work with other departments to promote sessions as widely as possible.</p> <p>A copy of the survey is given to all candidates who submit a nomination paper to stand for election and it can be filled in online. As much as its promoted and followed up response levels have been low at both 2012 and 2017 elections.</p> <p>What would an ideal target be for Monmouthshire? Should there be a national target or local targets?</p>
Work towards the standards for member support and development set out in the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.	Significant work was undertaken in 2019 to evidence work to apply for charter status with the WLGA but work was halted due to the general election, preparations for the 2020 PCC election

	<p>and the pandemic.</p> <p>At the time the only additional evidence required to achieve charter status was below and can be prepared as part of this commitment.</p> <p>A1. Role descriptions for Scrutiny Co-optees and member champions</p> <p>A2 and A3. Attendance records for training</p> <p>B1 Minutes of the DS committee in November when available</p> <p>B2 evidence of PDRs having taken place for Senior salary holders</p> <p>B3 a copy of the annual training programme</p> <p>B7 some evidence of a budget for member development</p>
<p>Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing access to counselling services for all councillors • Having regard for the safety and wellbeing of councillors whenever they are performing their role as councillors. • Taking a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment by members including through social network. 	<p>A dedicated Health and Safety area for members is included in the member area on the hub here: Democratic Services - Health and Safety</p> <p>All members can access the Councils counselling services already through Democratic Services.</p> <p>A recent survey of members was undertaken to identify levels of abuse/harassment members receive in their role. Thankfully, incidents in Monmouthshire are currently very low but the Head of Democratic Services and the Monitoring Officer can support members in dealing with any issues that arise.</p>
<p>Provide flexibility in council business by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times • Encouraging and supporting remote attendance at meetings • Agreeing recess periods to support councillors with caring or work commitments 	<p>The timing of Full Council meetings are reviewed through the Democratic Services Committee at least once every term of Council (twice this term).</p> <p>Committees and Committee Chairs are given the flexibility to adjust their meeting times as they see fit in achieving the outcomes they wish to achieve.</p> <p>The Council Constitution was amended around 2015 to allow remote attendance at Council meetings subject to certain conditions. New legislation allows councillors to attend meetings remotely without the conditions attached to it and members are provided with the equipment and skills to participate remotely where they wish to do so.</p> <p>The Council diary is already drafted with school holiday periods defined as a period for not allocating meetings where possible and coupled</p>

	with the conditions above on timings of meetings allow members/committees to influence the meeting diary to suit their needs.
Ensure that all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it	<p>All members automatically receive the allowance they are entitled to, as set out by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, with exceptions only made at the request of individual members.</p> <p>In publishing the details of allowances, a total cost of care across all members is published rather than itemised against each councillor to encourage members to claim the costs they are entitled to.</p>
Ensure that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.	This would be a role the Diversity Ambassador from each political group would feed into their own groups to encourage appointments to different roles the group are entitled to are distributed with this in mind.

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

<p>SUBJECT: Elections 2022 MEETING: Democratic Services Committee DATE: 7th June 2021 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: N/A</p>

1. PURPOSE:

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.

2. KEY ISSUES:

The 2022 local elections will be held on the 5th May 2022 and will elect 46 Councillors to Monmouthshire County Council, an additional three new members as a result of an electoral review carried out by the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission.

As part of the Diverse Council pledge, pre-election work will need to be conducted to encourage candidates to stand for election and make them aware of the expected duties and commitments of being a councillor.

All members who are elected to the Council will need to undertake an induction programme to bring them up to speed with how the Council operates immediately following the election to ensure Council business can commence as soon as practicable.

Various topics for the committee to consider over the next few meetings include:

- Council Diary 2021/22 to be presented at the next Democratic Services Meeting running to September 2022 with a draft schedule of dates for induction training included through May and June 2022.
- A schedule of induction sessions, their aims and objectives, along with a list of mandatory sessions and actions will be prepared for review along with a consideration of how these sessions can be delivered (in person/online)
- A list of pre-election activities and actions will be prepared for review to raise awareness of the election and promote candidates to stand for election.
- Members ICT Refresh – a review will be undertaken with all members to establish what their ICT needs are before presenting options to the committee based on those responses and suitability of equipment
- Members Welcome Pack – Review the induction pack from 2017, update with relevant information and identify extra information that would assist new members

- Members intranet area – Review the contents and usability of the members area on the intranet, can this be tailored in a way for new members to have access to key information, what key information would they need etc?
- E-Learning – A review of the current capabilities to embed e-learning into our practices and support for members. Work currently being undertaken nationally on this through the All Wales Academy but currently its difficult to navigate and not user friendly.
- Mentoring/Shadowing – Opportunites for new members to be mentored by experienced councillors. How would this work in practice? What if those who are trained as mentors are not re-elected?

Members are invited to suggest any other topics for consideration as part of the induction and pre-election preparations that need to be considered for new members in 2022.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

The work will ensure that newly elected member have the skills and knowledge to be able to undertake their work as a councillor quickly and effectively following the election and that anyone who wishes to stand for election has the opportunity to do so.

5. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting training sessions will be built in to the induction programme for Councillors to make them aware of their responsibilities in their role.

6. AUTHOR:

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

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 10

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Remote Meeting on Monday, 15th March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: P. Clarke, D. Evans, M.Groucutt, G. Howard,
J.Treharne, J.Watkins and S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance

1. Declarations of interest

None.

2. Public Open Forum

No matters for the public open forum.

3. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales – Annual Report 2021/2022

The Local Democracy Manager presented the report to the Committee. In doing so it was noted that there were no changes between the draft report and final version. The biggest change to note is that the cap on care allowance has been removed, and changes in how Members can apply for the allowance.

The Committee resolved to accept the report.

4. Hybrid Meetings and Area Committees

The Head of Policy and Governance presented a report to provide the committee with an opportunity to debate the timescales and approach for hybrid meetings, re-starting Area Committees and the most effective format for these.

A discussion had been held with the Chairs of Area Committees and there remains a strong appetite for the meetings to restart.

The paper proposed a sub-group of Democratic Services Committee is established to look at the issue of Area Committees and whether the North Monmouthshire approach should be rolled out to the other committees, or we continue with different arrangements in each area.

The Local Democracy Manager explained that requirement to live stream Area Committees has been removed, which would hopefully reduce some of the issues with external participants involved.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Remote Meeting on Monday, 15th March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

Results of a survey to Members on their wishes regarding the status of meetings seemed to state that Members should be able to decide how they wish to attend a meeting, be that in person or remotely.

Members were invited to comment.

- It was suggested that Area Committees begin following the AGM in May 2021.
- Suggestion that some smaller committees take place face to face in County Hall, and this should be phased in after May 2021
- The Chair of North Monmouthshire Area Committee was in attendance for the item and expressed her desire to keep the area committee, as one place for local people to interact with Councillors.
- Encouragement of virtual attendance at Area Committees might better serve the purpose of the meetings.
- Timings of meetings – maybe look at evening meetings?
- A sub-group should include Area Committee Chairs.
- Planning Committee should be held in Chamber as soon as possible.
- Remote meetings are effective in terms of the Climate Emergency.

The Head of Policy and Governance confirmed that the sub-group should consist of the current Area Committee Chairs, Cllrs Evans, Webb, Treharne and Powell. Members of the Committee welcomed the opportunity. Cllrs Jones, Howard, Groucutt and Watkins were happy to join.

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendation:

That members consider the meetings that should continue fully remotely and those which should operate as hybrid meetings, in the event that stay at home restrictions are lifted in the coming months.

To form a sub-group of this committee to explore the most effective approach for Area Committees in future.

5. Elections 2022 Discussion

The Local Democracy Manager opened a discussion on 2022 Election. This will remain as a standing agenda item going forward

Ideas were sought on how to advertise to potential candidates and how best to highlight that timings of meetings are not fixed.

It was noted that feedback on the 2017 induction programme showed it to be too heavy a programme, too soon following the election. We could now consider how best to factor in remote training sessions.

Other areas for consideration include how best to interact with potential candidates.

A comment was made that interaction with potential candidates in terms of explaining processes and what to expect would be beneficial.

Suggestion was made that we consider providing IT equipment that meets specific needs.

In terms of timings of induction sessions, suggestion was made that new members receive separate sessions.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Remote Meeting on Monday, 15th March, 2021 at 2.00 pm**

6. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2021

The minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held on 18th January 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record.

7. To note next meeting date as Monday 7th June 2021 at 14:00pm

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm

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