

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 20th July, 2026 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor Frances Taylor (Chair)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Meirion Howells, Tony Kear,
Su McConnel, Peter Strong, Tudor Thomas, Christopher Edwards,
Lisa Dymock and Maria Stevens

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

John Pearson
Nicola Perry

Local Democracy Manager
Senior Democracy Officer

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. New Meeting Software Assessment/Feedback

[Click here to watch the meeting](#)

The Local Democracy Manager presented the report for the Committee to consider feedback from Councillors on the use of the new software for Council meetings and identify any areas for improvement.

Positive feedback noted that the system is generally easy to use, particularly for members who attended training, and that it provides clear audio, stable meeting management, improved voting functionality and fewer meeting interruptions.

Members discussed concerns relating to:

- Preference for a gallery view versus single-speaker view.
- Visibility of remote attendees and the order of speakers.
- The absence of a chat function.
- Perceived central control of microphones and participation.
- Remote members feeling disconnected from meetings.
- Camera views and chamber visibility.
- Recording and publication of voting information.
- Technical issues experienced by some users.

Officers advised that:

- The chat function had been removed as it was being used inconsistently with meeting procedure, with alternative mechanisms available for technical support and raising points of order.
- Additional functionality is being explored, including improved speaker-order displays, gallery view options and timer displays.
- A review of constitutional provisions may be required to enable wider publication of individual voting records.

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- The system provides greater transparency and accountability through recorded electronic voting.

The Committee agreed:

- To trial the gallery view at the September Full Council meeting.
- To gather further feedback from members following the trial and additional use of the system.
- For officers to undertake a further survey of members and report findings back to a future meeting of the Democratic Services Committee to inform future consideration of the system and any potential constitutional changes.

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendation to consider any further actions that can be taken to mitigate any concerns or improve the overall user experience.

3. Member Induction Programme 2027

[Click here to watch the meeting](#)

The Local Democracy Manager presented the report for the Committee to consider the draft timetable for the initial induction programme following the 2027 Council elections.

Members emphasised the need for the induction programme to balance essential training requirements with the risk of overwhelming new councillors in the early weeks of office.

Key points raised included:

- The Introduction to Planning Committee training should be considered mandatory for all councillors due to the importance of understanding planning processes and public engagement.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on the role of the councillor, responsibilities, governance processes, motions, questions, voting procedures and committee structures.
- New councillors would benefit from practical guidance on casework management, including who to contact within the Council and how to resolve common constituent enquiries.
- Training should include guidance on social media use, communications, media engagement and reputational risk.
- Consideration should be given to providing scenario-based learning and practical examples, particularly in relation to the Code of Conduct and casework.
- Additional support should be available for Independent members and others without established group support networks.
- Members highlighted the value of a dedicated new members' webpage, providing key contacts, resources, guidance and a mechanism for submitting queries.
- The Committee supported the development of e-learning modules, recorded sessions and a training portal to allow members to complete and revisit training flexibly while enabling completion records to be maintained.
- Concerns were raised about the intensity of the induction period and the challenge of balancing council duties with employment, caring responsibilities and other commitments.
- Members suggested greater use of online learning, evening sessions where appropriate, and clearer information for prospective candidates regarding the expected time commitment following election.
- The importance of opportunities for new councillors to meet officers and fellow members, and to build relationships and understanding of council structures, was highlighted.

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- Support was expressed for mentoring arrangements and the continued development of personal development plans for councillors

Officers advised that the proposed programme seeks to place greater focus on the councillor role, introduce enhanced e-learning and training monitoring arrangements, develop a dedicated new members' resource page, and improve access to information on council services and key contacts.

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendation that the Committee consider the draft programme and consider any recommendations to support the induction programme.

4. South Wales Fire Authority Remuneration

[Click here to watch the meeting](#)

The Committee received information on the levels of remuneration set by the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru for appointments to South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

In discussion, Councillor Brown reflected on her previous experience as a member of the Fire Authority and as an opposition group leader. She expressed the view that scrutiny arrangements could be strengthened by allocating some committee chair positions to opposition members, rather than all chairing roles being held by administration members. Councillor Brown also noted that opposition leadership responsibilities on the Fire Authority could be time-consuming despite not attracting remuneration comparable to certain opposition leadership roles in local government.

The Chair noted that the report before the Committee was for information only and related specifically to the remuneration proposals and legislative arrangements governing appointments to the Fire Authority.

The Committee accepted the recommendation to note the contents of the Commission's proposals.

5. Date of next meeting - 19 October 2026

Noted.

The meeting ended at 4.35 pm