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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 5th June, 2017 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Evans (Chairman)
County Councillor T. Thomas (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: L.Dymock, T.Thomas, J.Treharne,
S. Woodhouse and J.Watkins

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Kellie Beirne	Chief Officer, Enterprise
Matthew Gatehouse	Policy and Performance Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors G. Howard, P. Clarke and F. Taylor

1. To note the appointment of Chairman

We noted the appointment of County Councillor D. Evans as Chair of Democratic Services Committee.

2. To appoint a Vice-Chairman

We appointed County Councillor T. Thomas as Vice-Chair

3. Declarations of interest

We agreed to take declarations of interest under the relevant item.

4. Public open forum

There were no items for the public open forum.

5. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held on 3rd April 2017 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair

6. Cabinet Member introduction and priorities

As the Cabinet Member was unable to attend the meeting, the Chief Officer for Enterprise provided an update around the new portfolio.

We heard the following areas fall under the Governance portfolio:

Governance
Legal and capabilities

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Democracy
Scrutiny
Elections
Policy, improvement and performance

Members were invited to comment:

There was disappointment that the Cabinet Member had not been able to attend, particularly for the first meeting. It was agreed that he would be invited to the next meeting.

7. Our Monmouthshire - what matters to our communities

The Policy and Performance Manager presented a report to highlights issues raised by communities during the engagement work that informed the development of the Well-being Assessment.

We heard that staff from public services and the volunteer sector had attended more than 80 events and conversations had been held with over 1400 people of all ages.

Following a presentation Members were invited to comment, during which time the following points were noted:

A Member believed there to be a huge dichotomy within the County between families in terms of access and ease of use of service. It was disappointing that things had not seemed to change since the 1980s /1990s, and there is a huge responsibility on the Authority to not only have a plan, and to talk to people, but to act on the plan. The importance of affordable transport was noted.

A Member commented that it was pleasing to see that Caldicot Town Team is very active but with properties being owned outside the County there were concerns on how to incorporate that into regeneration for the town.

The Chief Officer highlighted the importance of identifying the right problems, for example, in terms of access to leisure centres, we should promote our countryside as our fifth leisure centre. One of the findings from the well-being assessment was that people would love to access their surroundings but these were not open or accessible.

A Member expressed that she had been pleased with the consultation events, and iterated the importance of engagement with Town and Community Councils. The Policy and Performance Manager agreed and added that in future more time would be spent with Town and Community Councils, as on a number of occasions there had been good involvement.

It was suggested that all Members would benefit from receiving the detail of the outcome of the survey.

8. Discussion item and paper on New Directions in Democracy

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The Chief Officer for Enterprise, presented a paper requested by the last Committee, on the New Directions in Democracy.

The Policy and Performance Manager explained the Monmouthshire MadeOpen digital engagement platform, describing it as a social platform, for social good. People can use it to raise issues in their community and invite other people to help shape solutions

Following presentation, Members were invited to share thoughts and opinions on how to get people involved and make a key difference.

A Member thought it interesting on the question of how comfortable are the public on visiting a meeting at the Council Chamber. A more relaxed environment would be more inviting and if we want more increased public attendance, we should give thought to this. The Chief Officer recognised the point but noted the need to live stream, to maintain openness and transparency.

Concerning the participation in the democratic process of those 30 and under, we should consider electronic voting.

Praise was given to One Stop Shops and Community Hubs, but thought should be given to satellites coming off that to benefit people less able to travel.

A member questioned the statistics surrounding those using the My Monmouthshire app, and the majority age category of users.

To summarise we concluded that the following be added to the agenda for the next meeting:

- An active demonstration of MadeOpen;
- Further information on the Community Development Office,
- My Mon App – key statistics, facts and figures.

9. Review of Member induction process and feedback/ input

The Chief Officer for Enterprise invited Members for comments regarding the recent induction process. The following points were noted:

Members had overall enjoyed the induction process.

There had been some issues surrounding the timings of sessions.

There had been some surprise regarding the amount of sessions, particular when arranging childcare arrangements.

Members would benefit from written information, or copies of slides.

Whole days dedicated to induction would have been preferable to a couple of hours here and there.

The possibility of skyping into training sessions was questioned.

Members would have appreciated a tour of the building.

It would be useful to ask all new members their opinion of the induction.

The IT training had been very useful.

Overall, the training had been well thought out, and it had helped that it was gradual.

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10. Future Work Programme

The Chair commented that complaints surrounding new equipment should be discussed as part of the future work programme.

11. To note the date and time of next meeting as Monday 4th September 2017 at 2.00pm

We noted that date of the next meeting. In doing so, we agreed to discuss timing of meetings at next meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm