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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
on Monday, 16th July, 2018 at 2.00 pm**

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

County Councillors: D. Dovey, M.Groucutt, S. Woodhouse, F. Taylor
and J.Watkins

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

APOLOGIES:

Councillors T.Thomas, L.Dymock, G. Howard, L.Jones and P. Clarke

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public Open Forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

3. To approve minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held on 4th June 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair.

4. Designated Head of Democracy

The Chief Executive was in attendance to present a report in order to comply with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 with regard to the requirement to designate an officer to undertake the statutory role of Head of Democratic Services following the recent senior leadership realignment.

It was recommended that the Head of Policy and Governance be designated as statutory Head of Democracy for the purposes of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Committee resolved to agree the recommendation.

5. Response to Assembly Inquiry on Diversity in Local Government

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The Head of Policy and Governance presented a report to enable members to discuss the issue of diversity in local government and provide a response to the consultation issued by the National Assembly to inform its inquiry on the subject.

The response to the consultation is based on a small number of conversations with Monmouthshire councillors who have come forward to share their views of some of the difficulties they have experienced and how this could impact on our ability to attract and retain people in the role of councillor.

Councillors were also able to submit individual responses to the inquiry which will allow for more personalised experiences and perspectives to be shared.

During discussion:

Members recognised the importance of communicating with young people, and the benefits of reducing the voting age to 16. A suggested response to the inquiry was that as a Council we work with young people and their organisations to increase and promote their participation.

We were informed that the response captures the views of 6 councillors. Officers did not canvas councillors, but used shared experiences.

A Member expressed disappointment in the lack of interest from Welsh and Local Government. She felt it important to note that when we talk of diversity, it is not just protected characteristics but also diversity of experience, such as professional and personal, socio-economic differences.

It was felt that there should be a clear explanation around the calculation of the remuneration figure.

The Committee agreed the recommendation that subject to amendments, the response be submitted on behalf of the Council.

6. Car Parking Arrangements at County Hall

Response noted.

7. Council and Cabinet Forward Work plan

Members noted the Council and Cabinet Forward Work Plan. In doing so it was agreed that the Committee should further explore selected items, in terms of public engagement, particularly on contentious issues, and develop a relationship with Communications.

Cabinet Member, Councillor S. Jones was in attendance, to speak on Democracy Week 15th to 21st October 2018. Members had reflected on the positive event held with young people the previous year, and hoped to replicate in 2018. As well as a young person's democracy day, it was suggested that we hold a debating competition among primary schools. Further ideas were welcomed in readiness for a meeting with Engage 2 Change on 5th August 2018.

The Chair of CYP suggested that an item be added to the CYP agenda for the meeting due to take place during Democracy Week.

The Cabinet Member suggested that she would undertake a mapping exercise to identify opportunities, and report back to the Committee.

8. To note date and time of next meeting as Monday 24th September 2018 at 2pm

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Noted.

The meeting ended at 3:00pm

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