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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
on Monday, 27th June, 2022 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor David Jones (Chair)
County Councillor Peter Strong (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Penny Jones, Tony Kear,
Su McConnel, Angela Sandles, Armand Watts and Laura Wright

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matt Phillips	Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Tomos Davies, Meirion Howells and Maria Stevens

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

Noted.

2. To appoint a Vice Chair

County Councillor Peter Strong was appointed as Vice Chair.

3. Declarations of interest

None.

4. Induction Feedback

Members were invited to reflect on the recent induction process to allow officers to learn from their experiences.

Some points raised:

- Excellent overall process
- Some cases of officers 'planting seeds of terror' rather than focusing on what can be done
- Would be useful to draw on the experience of the returning councillors
- Experienced Members could help through a Q&A session
- Would be useful for co-opted members to receive training.

The Chief Officer for People and Governance and Monitoring Officer welcomed the comments and invited members to contact him with any further comments, or reflections of their groups.

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5. Timing of Council Meetings

Members were advised of a legal requirement to discuss and, recommend to Council, the timing of Council meetings for the Civic Year.

It was agreed that individual committees should agree their meeting times.

We recognised that the dates and times are set out in advance and presented through the Council Calendar. It was emphasised that the default position should be to adhere to these dates.

It was expressed that when considering timing of meetings, the attendance of officers and members of the public should be taken into consideration.

We heard that there have been previous trials of alternating Council meeting start times, between 10:00am, 14:00pm and 17:00pm. A later start time could be difficult for long meetings. This could result in less effective meetings, with reducing attendance, officers leaving the meeting, and falling concentration levels.

The importance of a work/life balance was recognised.

It was suggested that given the early stage of the new administration, times remain as they are and are reviewed in 12 months.

The Committee resolved to recommend that:

Democratic Services Committee recommend to Council that meetings of Full Council remain at a start time of 14:00pm and is reviewed in 12 months.

Democratic Services Committee recommend to Council that it remains the discretion of each committee as to the start time of the meetings, that best suits the members of that committee.

6. Public Participation Strategy

The Chief Officer explained that this item comes forward following on from portfolio discussions with Cabinet. The Local Government and Elections Act 2021 brings forward the requirement for all local authorities to create and then take to public consultation, a Public Participation Strategy. A report to the Democratic Services Committee in 2021 outlined an initial strategy which gained the support of the Committee.

County Councillor Catherine Fookes, Cabinet Member with responsibility for public engagement intends to start a Cabinet member Working Group, along with communications officers and representatives of MCC.

Members were asked to consider representation of the Democratic Services Committee for the working group. The first meeting is to take place week commencing 11th July 2022.

A question was raised asking if the working group would consider ongoing consultations, and it was thought that it could be problematic given that consultation is a single part of public participation. However, learning from current and recent consultations would be fundamental.

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It was expressed that encouraging the engagement of younger people is key to the future of MCC.

The following members volunteered to sit on the working group:

County Councillor Laura Wright
County Councillor Armand Watts
County Councillor Tony Kear
County Councillor Angela Sandles

7. To discuss the development of the Forward Work Plan

County Councillor Louise Brown asked that code of conduct and standards of practice between public and officers, public and members be added as an item for the next meeting.

County Councillor Penny Jones added the Timing of Meetings to July 2023.

County Councillor Peter Strong suggested an item to discuss a Social Media Policy.

8. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2021 were approved.

9. Date of next meeting - 26th September 2022 at 14:00pm

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm

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