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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 12th June, 2023 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor Ann Webb (Chair)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Meirion Howells, Su McConnel,
Peter Strong, Armand Watts, Laura Wright, Rachel Buckler,
Tudor Thomas and Alistair Neill

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matt Phillips	Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Maria Stevens

1. To note the appointment of County Councillor Ann Webb as Chair

Noted.

2. To appoint a Vice Chair

County Councillor Peter Strong was appointed as Vice Chair.

3. Declarations of interest

None.

4. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2023 were approved. In doing so we noted that the following should read September 2026:

There was concern around the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education being replaced by the Standing Advisory Council, considering that SACRE would still be in existence until September 2024. The Chief Officer assured Members that both SAC and SACRE would be covered under one committee, which could be titled SAC/SACRE. The Monitoring Officer advised that any further concerns be directed to the relevant officers.

5. All Councillors teams channel & chatbot

The Local Democracy Manager referred to the dedicated Members area on the intranet where we upload documents such as guidance, induction training and seminar

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recordings. Members were informed that a specific Teams channel has been created and will be rolled out fairly soon and were provided with a demonstration.

Members were invited to use the channel for a couple of weeks and provide feedback.

In terms of resources it was recognised that the development of the system allows access to information out of hours and is the digital way of moving forward. The set-up is complete and it would now be a case of monitoring and updating.

There were some concerns around the use of AI.

The Committee welcomed the channel and chatbot and looked forward to using it. It was agreed that an update be brought to the next meeting.

6. Area Committees

The Chair opened a discussion on the possibility of reinstating Area Committees. The local Community Council had considered this a useful forum and were keen to re-establish Lower Wye Area Committee.

There were mixed views on Area Committees:

- Area Committees had been more of a talking-shop and not an effective use of time.
- Had been useful when grants were being issued to local groups
- Officer attendance had been problematic.
- The status of the meeting meant that they were not taken seriously.
- Issues raised had been important
- Scrutiny Committees are able to invite relevant key partners for updates.
- Severnside Area Forum is up and running and was considered successful.

It was decided that Members should be able to establish an informal forum, but this would not be across the board and only when necessary.

7. Date of next meeting - 9th October 2023

Noted.

It was agreed to arrange the tour of the County in September.

The meeting ended at 2.48 pm