

SUBJECT:	Changes to the format of committee minutes
MEETING:	Democratic Services Committee
DATE:	October 2023
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	N/A

1. PURPOSE:

To consider the changes to the format of the minutes for committees and bring them in line with a similar format introduced for full Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

To approve the changes to the format of minutes and provide consistency across all committees.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 It is a legislative requirement that minutes are drafted and agreed for all committees of the Council to accurately record the decisions taken and agreed at each meeting. There is no prescribed legal definition of the format or content of a set of minutes for a meeting and views can vary from verbatim records through to brief action points or decision logs as meeting the legal requirement.
- 3.2 The legislative requirement to record minutes pre dates the introduction of technology to support meetings and the online library of recordings of meetings that is now available. Whilst it became mandatory to live stream certain council meetings in May 2022, Monmouthshire has been live streaming all council meetings where possible since 2014 and recordings are available on the Councils youtube channel.
- 3.3 The recording of the meeting being available to refer back to allows individuals to watch the full debate and the context in which the debate took place as well as allow individuals to hear the full verbatim contribution from councillors should they wish to do so. This eradicates the need for most committees that the minutes reflect any detail of the debate and the contributions councillors make as the full record is already publicly available for review.
- 3.4 From the meeting of Full Council in July 2023 a new style format of minutes was trialled which have been approved at both meetings. The new style is summarised as follows:
- An agenda item title
 - A brief overview the decision to be taken linked to the purpose/recommendation of the report
 - A link to the time stamp of the online recording where the item begins on the whole recording

- An overview of the decision taken where the result is clear; or the details of the recorded vote where one is taken be that at the request of councillors or due to the close nature of the vote.

3.5 In most cases, the new style format should be sufficient to cover most committees and scenarios that arise at meetings. There will inevitably be occasion where the summarised format might need further clarification for various reasons and where this is the case the chair or members of the committee can request that additional details are included. Exemptions to the new format could include but are not limited to;

- Scrutiny Committees – Given the flexible nature of the debate at scrutiny committees and need to summarise the debate and questioning from committee members, a link to the debate as well as a summary of comments/questions could be included in the minutes.
- Quasi-Judicial Committees – Committees such as planning and licensing which are heavily guided by legislation and can be impacted by other agencies may require a different format depending on the nature of the decision being taken.

The de facto position should be to retain the standard format where possible but its appreciated that certain scenarios could arise where clear clarification is required and committees have the responsibility to determine those instances.

3.6 Committee chairs were consulted as part of the change to gather their views on the new format. On the whole, chairs are supportive of the changes with only one chair commenting that they would prefer to retain the current format for their committee.

3.7 It is recommended that Democratic Services Committee review the format in 12 months time to ensure that the new format is effective and accessible for councillors as well as members of the public.

4. **REASONS:**

To simply the recording of decisions taken at committees and utilise new technologies to better reflect fuller debate held at committee meetings.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

None

6. **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no sustainable development or equality impacts arising from this report.

7. **SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

There are no safeguarding or corporate parenting implications associated with this report.

8. **CONSULTEES:**

Committee Chairs
Group Leaders

10. **AUTHOR:**

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