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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 13th January, 2025 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor David Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Tomos Davies, Meirion Howells,
Tony Kear, Su McConnel, Peter Strong, Laura Wright, John Crook,
Rachel Buckler and Tudor Thomas

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Williams
John Pearson

Head of Legal & Governance & Monitoring Officer
Local Democracy Manager

APOLOGIES:

None received.

1. Declaration of Interest

None

2. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

3. Proposed Constitution Amendments

The committee was presented with a new draft version of the Council Constitution and given opportunity to provide feedback to the monitoring officer prior to the revised constitution being presented to full Council.

The monitoring officer provided the committee with an overview of the main changes to the constitution including amongst others meeting procedure rules, eligibility to vote, Call-in and Petition Scheme. Members questioned the monitoring officer on the reason for changes and provided their feedback on specific aspects of the constitution changes.

The monitoring officer confirmed that feedback will be noted and referred back to group leaders as part of the whole constitution review ahead of being presented to full council.

https://www.youtube.com/live/Ll8qVo_qhtw?si=G6cu2UM9c91QhpJv&t=79

4. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report

Members were presented with the draft Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Annual Report 2025/26 which sets out the levels of remuneration councillors are due to receive for that period.

The committee was informed that it was circulated to members electronically during the consultation period who could respond directly to the IRPW with any feedback they had.

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At this stage the committee noted the contents and were made aware that the final report for 2025/26 should be published by the end of February 2025.

https://www.youtube.com/live/Ll8qVo_qhtw?si=INhmKSHXW7U8mq2l&t=4332

5. Council Diary 2025-26

The committee was presented with a draft diary of meetings for 2025/26. The Local Democracy Manager informed councillors that the usual protocols around preferred dates and times for meetings had been adhered to where possible and that where able, no meetings were scheduled for the school holidays as members had previously requested.

The committee were given opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed diary prior to it being formally agreed at Full Council in January 2025 and agreed for the diary to put to Council.

https://www.youtube.com/live/Ll8qVo_qhtw?si=C_kVoVg3myDnx3yS&t=4738

6. Full Council Meetings - Views on start time

The question was posed to the committee to establish if there was a desire to further review the start time of Full Council.

The committee were informed that there is a requirement to review the timing of Council meetings at least once during the term of the Council. This was completed following the election in May 2022 where members agreed to allow each committee and its membership to agree the timing of the meeting that best suits the membership of each individual committee and Full Council agreed to retain the start time of Council at 2pm.

A debate ensued amongst councillors with various options for the timing of Full Council meetings put forward but no consensus was agreed. Similarly, members considered an option to survey councillors further on the timing of Council meetings but the committee agreed that this would not gather any new information that previous surveys hadn't already captured.

It was agreed that any further work in this area was not required.

https://www.youtube.com/live/Ll8qVo_qhtw?si=PulqJdr-cPMsTeD4&t=4927

7. Discussion on Voting at meetings

A councillor raised a query with the committee as to why individual votes for councillors are not recorded as a matter of course and that information available on the public facing website for residents to see how each councillor has voted on a particular item.

The committee was informed that historically there has been no discussion on recording individual members votes in meetings and the constitution only requires that voting is dealt with by majority. In moving to hybrid council meetings the processes and rules within the constitution were carried over into the adoption of new technologies at that time. There is a facility within the constitution that permits for recorded votes to be requested where members support the principle of votes being made public for a particular item at full council meetings. The record of individual members votes is included in the minute for the meeting as well as available on the recording of the meeting online.

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Members were informed that currently individual members votes are not recorded electronically due to the interpretation of the constitution. There is a facility to record members votes electronically if it is something the committee would wish to consider.

The Local Democracy Manager informed the committee that a review of the software platform used for council meetings is already underway and potential new platforms to host council meetings has been identified and being explored to introduce at the Council. This would improve the end user experience with bookmarked live streams and placeholders in the videos of councillor names and agenda items as well as overlays of voting results. It would also tighten up the system for voting and make it easier to identify members who haven't voted as well as automate responses to the website of voting preferences.

Until that review is completed it cannot be confirmed that undertaking the work to record individual member votes would be achievable without the need for verbal roll call votes on every agenda item which would add a significant length of time to the meeting. It was agreed in the meantime that any recorded votes that take place at full council meetings will be manually input and reflected on the website so that a view of what it could look like will be available and compliments the details in the minutes for a meeting.

https://www.youtube.com/live/LI8qVo_qhtw?si=4ptAU89uTOznJU03&t=5440

8. Date of the next meeting - 7th April 2024

The meeting ended at 16:02

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