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## MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held on Monday, 14th July, 2025 at 2.00 pm

**PRESENT:** County Councillor Lisa Dymock (Chair)  
County Councillor Meirion Howells (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Louise Brown, Tomos Davies, David Jones,  
Tony Kear, Su McConnel, Peter Strong, John Crook and  
Tudor Thomas

#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer

#### **APOLOGIES:**

Councillors

#### **1. To note the appointment of County Councillor Lisa Dymock as Chair**

Noted.

#### **2. To appoint a Vice Chair**

County Councillor Meirion Howells was appointed as Vice Chair.

#### **3. Declarations of interest**

County Councillor Tomos Davies declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest relating to agenda item 6 as a member of the Welsh Government's Innovating Democracy Advisory Group.

#### **4. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

#### **5. Member Online Support**

The Local Democracy Manager presented the report to provide the committee with an update on the changes being made to the intranet where members can access information, and the introduction of Eforms for specific tasks.

The report outlined key improvements being made to the intranet, including redesign of support packages and introduction of Eforms to streamline the common tasks such as submitting questions and motions and call-ins. The recommendation stated that the committee need to consider the changes and proposed changes to improve its use in effectiveness. The enhancements are aimed at making the digital tools more effective, reliable and accessible. Following a demonstration of the new support pages for councillors Members were invited to comment.

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- There were questions around testing and how will ongoing input from councillors be gathered to ensure that the system evolves to work better for members.
- There was a question regarding officer responsibilities being up to date, and it was explained that we tend to focus on departments and roles rather than individuals.
- Questions were raised around the submission of questions and motions for Full Council and whether these could be revisited after submitting. Also to clarify that Members would receive a copy of the submission.
- With regards to call-ins it was understood that this needed input from several members.
- A question was raised if more consideration could be given to a more interactive page and if that could be evolved to help track casework.

The Chair concluded that there had been overall positive feedback from members, and it was an exciting step forward in how we support the work as councillors. The redesigned Intranet pages and introduction of Eforms were thought to be a much more streamlined user-friendly approach. The improvements would not only make it easier to access key information but also help ensure that important processes like submitting motions and questions would be handled reliably and securely. It was a clear sign of progress, and a great example of how digital solutions can enhance day-to-day roles. It was agreed to be revisited at a future meeting of the committee.

**The Democratic Services Committee accepted the recommendation.**

#### **6. Council Chamber Meeting Software**

The Local Democracy Manager presented the report to provide the committee with an update on the upgrade to the Council Chamber and the software used to host Council meetings.

The way we conduct our meetings has evolved significantly over recent years, and the report outlined the next steps in that journey with a new system to improve both the in-person and remote experience for councillors and the public alike. The recommendations asked that the committee to consider the advantages of the implementation of the new software and how it could be used to enhance the experience during meetings, and for residents.

Comments received during discussion:

- In terms of cost implications, the initial outlay for the software was £38,000, and on ongoing cost of £6000 a year for a licence to run the meeting software. When compared to other suppliers who run less flexible software packages the costs were significantly lower.
- WG funding had been received in 2021 which had been used to offset the installation of the current equipment in the Council. There was no additional funding,
- It was a welcome improvement that the new system would further encourage transparency and good governance, fundamental to the role of Councillors, which would allow the electorate to know exactly how votes were conducted
- An extensive training plan was welcome. One to one training sessions would be made available whenever required.

*County Councillor Louise Brown left the meeting at 15:04*

- Further investigation would be undertaken in terms of using phones for meetings, and the assumption was that the Council issued laptops would be used for official Council meetings.

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- With regards to the ability to use time limits it was noted that there is flexibility to set up appropriate templates within the software.

The Chair welcomed the update and the positive steps the software will bring to Full Council meetings, adding that the upgrade reflected the continued commitment to improving the democratic process by making meetings more accessible, transparent and efficient for both councillors and the public. Councillor Dymock added that by integrating remote and in-person participation into a seamless environment, we will be future-proofing our Council Chamber and enhancing the quality of debate. The features such as real time voting displays, clear speaker identification, and improvements to the live stream, will elevate the experience of all involved. The investment and modernisation will support greater accountability and visibility of the Council's proceedings.

**The Democratic Services Committee accepted the recommendation.**

### **7. Date of next meeting - 13th October 2025**

The date of next meeting was noted as 13<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

The Chair advised that she will be meeting with the Local Democracy Manager to establish a forward work programme.

Areas to consider included:

- Training and tools for empowering Councillors.
- Ensuring officers are supported and meet Councillor needs to effectively support our residents.
- Strengthening the democratic infrastructure.
- MyMon App
- How we engage with the planning application process and the use of the planning portal?
- How we can champion local democracy, especially with young people, elderly and vulnerable, under-represented groups and local organisations.
- Ensuring that the Council has a robust forward work plan.

**The meeting ended at 15:18pm**

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