

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS
ON THURSDAY 4 OCTOBER, 2012**

PRESENT: County Councillor Mrs D. Bailey [Chair for the meeting]

County Councillors P.J. Ashton, Dr G.J. Bowker, Mrs L.V. Corfield, Mrs S.C. Davies, D.O. Evans, D.C. Jones, M.J. Jones, W.J.T. Powell, P.C. Pritchard and Mrs D.G. Thomas.

1.	APOLOGIES	DSC7-2012
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors S. Davies, P.E. Lewis and D.H. Williams who was on other Council business.

2.	MINUTES	DSC8-2012
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The Chairman was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July, 2012.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	DSC9-2012
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There were no declarations of interest.

4.	HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES	DSC10-2012
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The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director – Law and Governance (copy filed with the signed minutes).

The Committee noted that the Chief Executive and Management Team had suggested that the role of Head of Democratic Services was already included in the role and responsibilities of the Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services. Although the latter was also currently the Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 did not specify this position as being ineligible to hold the Head of Democratic Services position.

RESOLVED:	REASON FOR DECISION:
That the Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services be designated as the Council's Head of Democratic Services.	To comply with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 that the Council designates one of its officers as Head of Democratic Services.

5.	TIMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS	DSC11-2012
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The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director – Law and Governance (copy filed with the signed minutes).

Timing of Council Meetings: Survey of Members 2012/13

In accordance with the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Government under Section 6(1) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Council surveyed Members in respect of the times of meetings. Whilst the majority of Members had expressed a preference for morning meetings some Members had indicated a preference for evening meetings to accommodate their work commitments. The Committee felt that it should respect the majority view in recommending morning meetings. The Committee noted that Chairs had discretion to agree to change times of meetings.

County Councillor Mrs S. Davies arrived at the meeting. Although Councillor Mrs S.C. Davies is the Chair of the Committee, as Councillor Mrs D. Bailey was already in the Chair, Councillor Mrs S.C. Davies agreed that she was happy for her to continue to Chair the meeting.

RESOLVED:	REASON FOR DECISION:
<p>To recommend to Council the following timings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full Council – 10.30 a.m. 2. All other meetings – 10.00 a.m. with the Chairmen having the discretion and flexibility to change times of individual meetings as required. <p>All other meetings includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet meetings • Regulatory/Employment/Standards/2003 Licensing Committee meetings • Scrutiny/Audit/Pensions and Investment/Democratic Services meetings • Shire Committees. 	<p>To take account of the preferences expressed by Members.</p>

Council diary for 2013

The Committee noted the draft diary and that the Regulatory Committee had been moved from a Tuesday to a Thursday to avoid a clash with Cabinet meetings.

RESOLVED:	REASON FOR DECISION:
To recommend the draft Council diary for 2013 to Council.	To set the diary of Council meetings for the forthcoming year.

6.	JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS STEERING GROUP	DSC12-2012
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6.1 Membership of the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Group

The Committee noted that the Democratic Services Committee's Chair and Vice Chair had been made formal members of the above. Issues regarding support to Members, support for scrutiny and development would be referred from the Steering Group to the Democratic Services Committee to consider.

6.2 Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Group 14 September, 2012

The Committee noted that the Steering Group would develop a business case regarding the resourcing of scrutiny. This would be referred from the Steering Group to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration and recommendation to the Council. It was considered that the notes of the Steering Group should be brought to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the notes of the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Group would be a standing item on the Democratic Services Committee Agenda.

The Committee discussed the IT equipment provided to Members and the ICT support to Members. The Chair advised that she had invited ICT Contracts & Business Continuity Manager to a future meeting.

7.	BLOGGING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING DRAFT POLICY	DSC13-2012
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The Committee received the Blogging and Social Networking draft policy [copy filed with signed minutes].

The Committee noted that the draft policy had been drafted during the last Council. Due to the lapse since the draft was first considered it was felt that the new Democratic Services Committee should review the draft and then seek the views of the Political Groups.

Members discussed issues regarding tweeting at meetings, the use of laptops etc during meetings and the use of blogging and social networking. Reference was made to an article in "First" a Local Government Association journal, which

indicated that Councils would have to allow tweeting from meetings from October, 2012. [Post meeting note: it has been established that this is in respect of Local Authorities in England only].

The Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services advised that the law was lagging behind practice on the issues of tweeting etc at meetings. She advised that this subject would be considered and a report would be brought to the Committee.

Members noted that in addition to the use of blogging and social networking the Council also needed to consider the use of webcasting, as had recently been introduced by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.

Resolved	Reason for decision
<p>i) To note the draft Blogging and Social Networking policy</p> <p>ii) That the use of Council equipment/electronic media for social networking during the election purdah period, as requested by the Standards Committee be considered by the Democratic Services Committee and</p> <p>iii) That the draft Blogging and Social Networking policy be forwarded to Political Groups for comment.</p>	<p>To progress the development of the policy.</p>

County Councillor Mrs D. Bailey
Chair