

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON 15TH JANUARY, 2015**

PRESENT: County Councillor Sandra Davies [Chair]

County Councillors D. Bailey, G.J. Bowker, D.O. Evans, D.C. Jones, M.J. Jones, P.E. Lewis, K. Roberts-Jones, D.G. Thomas, T. Turner and D.H. Williams.

1.	APOLOGIES	DSC1-2015
-----------	------------------	------------------

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P.J. Ashton and L.V. Corfield.

2.	MINUTES	DSC2-2015
-----------	----------------	------------------

The Chairman was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October, 2014.

The Committee noted that the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development, at the Standard Level, had been awarded to the Council for a further three years. The Charter would be presented to the Authority at the Council meeting on 21st January, 2015.

The Solicitor to the Council advised that a number of Members had questioned whether a paper version of the Council Committee meeting diary should be produced each year. The Committee advised that the issue had been previously discussed and Members had agreed that a paper version should still be produced. The Committee noted that amendments to the diary would be emailed to all Councillors due to changes to the cycle of Planning, Taxi Licensing & Rights of Way Committee's meetings.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	DSC3-2015
-----------	---------------------------------	------------------

There were no declarations of interest.

4.	CURRENT AND NEW CONSTITUTION	DSC4-2015
-----------	-------------------------------------	------------------

4.1 Current and New Constitution

The Committee considered the revised Planning Protocol which had been considered by the Planning, Taxi Licensing & Rights of Way Committee.

The Committee noted the amendments and agreed the following:

Page 19 5/3.69 and Page 44 5/3. 131 – training for Councillors who do not sit on the Planning Committee should be provided at “regular intervals”.

Page 56 – A-2.1 2 – officers would seek clarification regarding the number of days in which Members could invoke the “Call-in Procedure”.

RESOLVED:	REASON FOR DECISION:
To recommend to Council to adopt the	To amend the current and new

Planning Protocol.	constitution.
---------------------------	----------------------

4.2 New Model Constitution

The Committee considered the following:

Section 3 – Getting Information and getting involved

Section 12 – Finance matters and contracts

RESOLVED:	REASON FOR DECISION:
To recommend to Council to adopt Section 3 – Getting Information and getting involved and Section 12 – Finance matters and contracts.	To include in the new model constitution.

The Committee noted the progress of the work relating to the new model Constitution. The Chair thanked the Constitution Working Group for its work.

5.	AREA [SHIRE] COMMITTEES	DSC5-2015
-----------	--------------------------------	------------------

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services (copy filed with the signed minutes).

Members considered that the rota for Council Chair should not be changed currently in light of the fact that over the next two years the structure of local government could dramatically change.

The Committee discussed Area [Shire] Committees and noted the following:

- Brecknockshire meeting once every two months worked well
- Moving to meeting bi-monthly would not jeopardise democracy
- All parts of the Authority were being asked to save money and so Members should do the same thing, even if it was a small saving
- Bi-monthly meetings may improve attendance and would be an opportunity to enhance the agendas
- Shire meetings were the only time Members could look at local issues and Radnorshire wanted to continue to meet on a monthly basis
- The Shire Committees should be left to decide the frequency of meetings. It was however, commented that as the Council covered the whole County and therefore there should be consistency across the County.

The Committee was asked to make a recommendation to Council. It was proposed and duly seconded that the Montgomeryshire and Brecknockshire meet on a bi-monthly basis and Radnorshire continue to meet on a monthly basis.

An amendment was proposed and duly seconded that the three Shires meet on bi-monthly basis with the ability to call additional meetings in the case of emergencies. The amendment was put to the vote and agreed.

It was proposed and duly seconded that the arrangements for rotating the Chair of Council between the Shires remain as currently until clarification is received regarding the future arrangements for Local Government in Wales.

RESOLVED:	REASON FOR DECISION:
<p>To recommend to Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. that all Area (Shire) Committees move to bi-monthly meetings, with the ability to call additional meetings in the case of emergencies. ii. that the arrangements for rotating the Chair of Council between the Shires remain as currently until clarification is received regarding the future arrangements for Local Government in Wales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to determine a future direction for the Area (Shire) Committees; and ii. to determine the rotational arrangements for the Chair of Council.

The Committee noted that the Montgomeryshire costs included the rental costs of the two vending machines in Neuadd Maldwyn. The Committee asked whether the cost of hiring the machines were covered by the income generated.

6.	PAYMENT TO CO-OPTED MEMBERS	DSC6-2015
-----------	------------------------------------	------------------

The Head of Democratic Services advised that as the Lay Member on the Audit Committee had been appointed to the new Finance Scrutiny Panel, he would exceed the maximum number of days for which a Co-opted Member may be paid, with this extra appointment. The Finance Scrutiny Panel aims to improve the scrutiny of the budget not only within the Authority but also the project could lead to the development of a template for budget scrutiny used in other Councils in Wales.

Currently the maximum number of days allowed for Lay Member is 20 days. Increasing this to 25 days as an interim measure could be met within the current budget due to two Parent Governor vacancies.

It was duly proposed and seconded that the maximum number of days for which the Audit Committee Lay Member may be paid from the Annual Meeting in 2014 be increased to 25 days as an interim measure.

In addition, it was suggested that there should be a review of the Audit Committee Lay Members' maximum number of days and also those in respect of Parent Governors as they are asked to attend Working Group meetings in addition to Scrutiny Committee meetings which has meant an increase in the number of meetings they attend.

RESOLVED:	REASON FOR DECISION:
<p>To recommend to Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. that the maximum number of days for 	<p>To set the maximum number of days for which co-opted</p>

ii.	<p>which the Audit Committee Lay Member may be paid from the Annual Meeting in 2014 be increased to 25 days as an interim measure.</p> <p>that a review of the limits set for the Audit Committee Lay Member and the Parent Governor Representatives be undertaken at the end of the current financial year.</p>	<p>members may be paid in any one year as required by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Report – December 2012.</p>
-----	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

7.	AN EVALUATION OF WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS	DSC7-2015
-----------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------

The Committee discussed the report on the Evaluation of Welsh Local Government Executive and Scrutiny Arrangements produced by the Welsh Government.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that he assumed the Minister would take account of this Evaluation in the White Paper, which would probably be published in early February. The Committee noted the report.

8.	MINUTES OF THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP	DSC8-2015
-----------	--------------------------------------------------------	------------------

The Committee received the notes of the Member Development Working Group held on 8th September, 2014 [copy filed with the signed minutes].

9.	JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS STEERING GROUP	DSC9-2015
-----------	----------------------------------------------------	------------------

The Committee received the notes of the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Group held on 18th July and 19th September, 2014 [copies filed with the signed minutes].

10.	CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS	DSC10-2015
------------	-----------------------------	-------------------

RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following items of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under categories 1 and 3 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

11.	WEBCASTING	DSC11-2015
------------	-------------------	-------------------

The Committee considered the report from the Portfolio Holders regarding the future level of webcasting by the Council.

The Committee noted the projected costs for webcasting Council, Cabinet, Planning and Scrutiny meetings and that the Cabinet supported the maximum level of webcasting.

It was noted that the new equipment could be used to record Member Development sessions. Officers were reviewing whether these could then be developed into e-learning sessions for those Members who could not attend. Members also considered that the webcasting facility could also be hired to other organisations so generating an income.

RESOLVED:	REASON FOR DECISION:
That the Democratic Services Committee agrees with the recommendation of the Cabinet and recommends to Council that Council should undertake the maximum level of webcasting of meetings.	To allow the Council to conduct efficient business and communicate with its residents.

The Chair advised that she had received an email from a member of the public raising concerns that the Planning Department was no longer adding the public's responses to planning applications on the Planning Portal and this decision should be revoked. The Head of Democratic Services advised that this was a temporary measure due to the staffing issues in the Planning Department and the large workload in redacting personal information in letters and emails. The Head of Regeneration, Property and Commissioning had advised that they hoped to restart adding the public's responses to the Portal in April, 2015. It was noted that a message had been placed on the Portal explaining the current position to the public.

Members commented that the public experienced difficulties in accessing the Portal, which can be frustrating. The Head of Democratic Services advised that he would pass this information to the Head of Regeneration, Property and Commissioning.

County Councillor Mrs S. Davies
Chair