

Area (Shire) Committee Report to Democratic Services Committee.

Comments from Members

County Councillor John Powell.

“At our last Radnorshire meeting and others Members has expressed that they did not want to see any change as regard to the Shires meetings. Members of Radnorshire have found these meetings very beneficial and been able to relate to concerns, issues and events that effect members within their locality. We in Radnorshire have dealt with many topics that has been hugely beneficial to the local members and then passed on to their own local areas that they represent. We have always held meetings that was relevant and informative bringing forward items that was in need of some clarification, which I am not sure where they would have been debated. This is a forum for discussing local issues by local members for their local residents”.

County Councillor Keith Tampin.

“I would like to keep everything as it is in Radnorshire we find out more what is going on than most other Meetings and always have full agendas”.

County Councillor Darren Mayor.

“With regards to the above I have two comments which I will keep brief.

1. I support the change suggested I chair of council but not sure of the need for a 5 year rotation. 4 yes. (Rad, Mont, Breck, Mont). From my attendance of shire meetings numbers in Rad and Breck are very similar
2. I would question the need of the shire meetings, meeting as regular as they do. All shires to be bi-monthly”

County Councillor David Price.

“When one is faced with the figures that indicate the cost of current Shire meetings, there is no doubt that we cannot afford this ‘luxury’ in the current financial climate.

It is also extremely telling where the report shows how very little actual decision making takes place at Shire meetings. That position is not likely to change as we move forward.

The Council has undergone considerable change since becoming a political authority, and like it or not, a great deal of actual decision making now takes place within group meetings. This further reduces the need to continue with Shire meetings.

In relation to the issue of rotation of Chairs of Council drawn from Shires in turn – perhaps this should continue, but on the basis that we work towards a situation where the Shire Chairs are one and the same as the Assistant Vice Chair and Vice Chair of Council. Thereby continuing the geographical support for the Chair of Council. This brings a financial saving in relation to Shire Chair’s allowances. Whilst a very modest saving, it is another saving worth taking at this time.”

County Councillor Wynne Jones.

1. That I do not consider 'Shire' Meetings to represent very good value in the democratic system, they cannot do scrutiny and they cannot make decisions. Highways matters (quite rightly) have been taken out of the Shire Meetings are dealt with more appropriately by Member/Officer direct or at the quarterly LEI meetings which work well. My feeling is that Shire Meetings act only as 'information' giving meetings, a function that could be better and more cost effectively arranged centrally.
2. Notwithstanding what I have said at (1) above, I know that many Members will want to keep Shire Meetings and if Council is split on this issue, what may be a good way forward, is to go for the 'in between solution' for the rest of this council, which would be for all Shire Committees to operate on the same basis as the Brecknockshire does already, that is to meet on alterative months only, and perhaps all areas meeting then only 5/6 times a year. That would capture some of the savings but also make the Shire Meetings better value in both cost and content, as Brecknockshire have found where the experience has really worked.
3. I still think there is a role for a ceremonial chair from each shire, this provides assistance to the Council Chair, who simply cannot be everywhere and when it is more appropriate for a more local presence.
4. There is an issue about the selection of Chair of Council, as currently nominations come from Shire Committees. This as I understand it, is a separate decision from the none about Shire Committees, an agreed methodology for selection of Council Chars and Vice Chairs, can be enacted without Shire Committees even existing, so I see this as a separate, but important issue.