
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE 4/04/17

Present: Councillor Lesley Day (Vice-chair in the Chair).

Councillors: Annwen Daniels, Jean Forsyth, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Annwen Hughes, Jason Humphreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Charles W. Jones, Dilwyn Morgan and Michael Sol Owen.

Officers: Geraint Owen (Head of Democratic Services), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Thomas G Ellis and Dylan Fernley.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 29 November 2016, as a true record.

3. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Submitted - a draft of a report to be submitted to the Council in June 2017 outlining the support for members delivered to date over this Council term, along with the elements still being developed for elected members.

The Head of Democratic Services took the opportunity to thank the Democratic Services Manager and the rest of the Team for their support for members over this Council term. He also thanked Arwel Ellis Jones, who had now commenced a period of flexible retirement from his post as Senior Corporate Support Manager, and who was staying on for a period in order to introduce councillors to the work of the new Council following the May elections. He thanked both Chairs of the committee over this Council term, Councillors Lesley Day and Thomas G. Ellis, and he extended best wishes to those members who would be standing down from the Council in May.

He noted that the date of the Full Council in the second bullet point of the Governance Arrangements under the heading 'What changes have taken place since 2012?' would be amended to read 2 March, 2017.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- Although the website included a list of the dates of scrutiny investigation meetings, it was noted that the documents were not available for those meetings. The Democratic Service Manager replied that the agendas and notes from the scrutiny investigation meetings were not public documents and that members were the only ones who could view them. She also noted that work was afoot to further develop Modern.gov.
- It was noted that there was very little reference in the annual report to the IT provision for members, despite the fact that the Focus Group had spent a considerable amount of time addressing this; however, the intention to move from

the Ipad to more useful devices in the new Council was welcomed. It was noted that there would be an opportunity to discuss IT requirements in full during the next item.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2017

Submitted - a report updating the committee on the member induction arrangements following the elections on 4 May, 2017.

The Democratic Services Manager gave a short presentation on the election arrangements, and referred to:-

- The Current Situation
- Timescale
- Induction

In response to questions from members, the Democratic Services Manager noted:-

- That members would sign-up to accept the post when visiting the Code of Conduct stall on the Welcome Days on the 9 and 10 of May and that this would be legally acceptable.
- There would be a need to consider the situations of those members who served on outside bodies, but who would not be re-elected to the Council after May, on a case-by-case basis.

The latest version of the Members Portal was displayed and members were asked to contact the Democratic Services Manager, or a member of the Team, if they wished to present ideas on how the portal could be developed further.

The Head of Democratic Services provided an update on the situation of the IT provision to members from May onwards. He noted:-

- As a result of differing opinions amongst the members of the Focus Group (three were of the opinion that we should standardise on the Microsoft Surface Pro 4, one preferred the Surface Pro 4 personally, but was happy for others to choose and one favoured the Ipad Air 2 for everyone), that he had been asked, as the Head of Democratic Service, to make a decision on the matter.
- That he had thoroughly considered the matter, taking into account the views of the majority and consulting with officers and the Deputy Leader, who was a member of the Focus Group, but that he had ultimately decided on the Microsoft Surface Pro 4, on the grounds that it offered much more than what was possible with other types of devices.
- The intention over time would be to move completely to the Surface Pro 4, and although everyone would be encouraged to use the Surface Pro 4 from the start, the returning members would be allowed to continue using the Ipad until the time would come for them to renew their device.
- Members would also be entitled to use their own personal devices and the IT Unit was confident that they could support those devices also.

The Chair expressed her disappointment that this committee had not been given the opportunity to make a decision on the matter and she asked those members who had served on the Focus Group to submit their views.

Every member of the group noted that they supported the Head of Service's decision. The Democratic Services Manager added that the timetable for purchasing the equipment meant that it had not possible for the Focus Group to report back to the committee.

The importance of arranging training for members on the new equipment early-on was emphasised. The Head of Democratic Services replied that training had been arranged for June/July and that IT officers would be available on the day of the Annual Council to assist members to gain access to their documents. The Democratic Services Manager added that every member would be asked to fill in a questionnaire at the start of the new Council regarding their level of confidence when using technology.

A discussion was held on what would happen to the current equipment. It was noted that the Focus Group had recommended that the members be asked to return the equipment to the Council and that they be gifted to schools so that they could continue to be used as a Council resource.

Some members expressed their disappointment that members would not be offered an opportunity to purchase the devices at a reasonable price. It was noted that the I pads were no longer in a very good condition and that the schools would prefer to receive more up-to-date equipment.

Since the Head of Democratic Services had been asked to make a decision regarding the devices, it was suggested that it would also be sensible for him to make a decision regarding what would happen to the I pads. The Head of Democratic Services replied that he would have to check this, but that he would like members to propose their recommendation before that happened.

RESOLVED

- 1. To support the decision of the Head of Democratic Services to select the Microsoft Surface Pro 4 as the most suitable electronic device for members from May onwards.**
- 2. In relation to the existing devices, a recommendation to the Head of Democratic Services to give members the option to:-**
 - Purchase the I pads at a reasonable price.**
 - Return them to the Council to be cleaned of all data and gifted to schools.**
 - Continue using them for the time being, and to select one of the above-mentioned options when the time came for them to be upgraded to the Surface Pro 4.**

5. MEMBERS CHARTER

Submitted - a report updating the committee on the request for a Members Charter, referring specifically to the work of developing descriptions of members' roles.

It was noted that one of the main advantages of creating and adopting a 'description of roles' would be so that new members could use them as a guide to better understand the various roles on different committees. The committee was invited to submit the 'description of roles' in their current draft form as a recommendation for the new full Council to adopt them formally at its meeting in June. The committee was also requested to publish the draft 'description of roles' on the members Portal as a tool to assist new members in May, before the new Council formally adopted them.

It was suggested that the 'description of roles' should include a clause that members had to attend meetings, but it was noted that this would be in breach of the 6 month rule, namely Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, which provided that a member's period on

the Council would end 6 months after his/her last attendance at a Council meeting, unless the authority approved the absence.

The Democratic Services Manager noted that it was a matter of encouragement and that 'attending all relevant meetings and committees...' had been listed as one of the specific functions in the description of the role and responsibilities of a Council Member. An enquiry was made as to whether or not this function could be highlighted in bold print, but it was noted that this could undermine the other functions on the list, which were as important.

The Democratic Services Manager suggested that Welsh Government's recent White Paper on local government reform could be considered in order to see whether or not the expectations in relation to attendance could be strengthened.

RESOLVED

- 1. To submit the 'description of roles' in their current draft form as a recommendation to the Full Council to be adopted formally at its meeting on 15 June, 2017.**
- 2. To submit the 'description of roles' in their current draft on the Members Portal until they are formally adopted by the Full Council.**

6. FINANCIAL REMUNERATION FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Submitted - a report updating the committee on financial remuneration matters and seeking their views on the recommendations to the new Council regarding what should be paid in the first year of the new Council.

Reference was made to the main points in the Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales published in February, and the committee's views were sought on two specific points, namely:-

- Each individual council to decide on setting Cabinet Members on one of two levels, Level 1 (£29,100) or Level 2 (£26,200).
- Each individual council to decide on setting Committee Chairs on one of two levels, Level 1 (£22,100) or Level 2 (£20,100).

Members were reminded that the Council had decided to make payments on Level 1 the previous year. It was noted, when making the decision for this year, that the Council should consider, not only on which level to place the various posts, but also whether or not there was a difference in the responsibilities shouldered by Committee Chairs (including those who received special recognition at present and those who did not).

RESOLVED to recommend to the Council:-

- 1. That salary levels for Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs remain at Level 1 in the first year of the new Council.**
- 2. To carry out a survey of the workload of all chairs within a year to see whether or not there is room to vary the decision or reconsider the salary levels.**

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.40 am

CHAIRMAN