
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE, 11.09.12

Present: Councillor Dewi Owen (Chair);
Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones (Vice-chair).

Councillors: Lesley Day, Tom Ellis, Jason Humphreys, Charles Wyn Jones, Dilwyn Morgan and Mandy Williams-Davies.

Cabinet Members: Councillors Dyfed Edwards (Cabinet and Council Leader) and Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Customer Care).

Officers: Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service), Huw Ynyr (Senior Manager – IT and Business Transformation), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Endaf Cooke, Anwen Davies, Selwyn Griffiths, Dyfrig Jones, Linda A.W. Jones, Sion Wyn Jones and Gareth Thomas.

Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department) was wished a speedy recovery following his recent illness.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 29 May, 2012 as a true record, conditional on noting that Councillor Jason Humphreys was present at the meeting.

3. SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS – MEMBERS' OBSERVATIONS

Submitted – the Chairman's report summarising the observations he had received in response to a letter sent by him to his fellow members, explaining the role of this committee in respect of supporting members.

The Democratic Services Manager elaborated on the observations that had been received.

The Chairman called for training for the new members in the fields of work examined by the scrutiny committees.

The Senior Manager – IT and Business Transformation gave an update of the situation with regard to introducing iPads to the members.

The views of the Cabinet Member – Customer Care and the Council Leader were received on trialling the use of iPads over the past two months. It was noted that some difficulties had emerged and that there were some restrictions, but that training was key for members who were more comfortable with paper. However, it was emphasised that

the Council's ambition was for not using paper to be the norm. This would take time, but there was no reason why that could not be achieved.

The Senior Manager – IT and Business Transformation replied that problems with opening documents could be resolved, and the Chairman emphasised the importance of instructing all departments to submit documents to members in the most compressed form at all times.

The Chairman expressed his concern that a substantial number of the members would still wish to receive paper copies of documents, and the members present had varied opinions on the matter.

It was noted that it could be difficult to follow a document on the iPad if the pages were not numbered, and that every document should be of the same standard in terms of template, page numbering etc.

The Chairman noted:-

- (1) That the clear message here was that the training and the conviction were extremely important. The Senior Corporate Commissioning Service Manager suggested that advantage could be taken of the experience of those members who already used the new technology to carry out their work as members of other bodies, such as the Police Authority, when deciding how best to structure the training.
- (2) That it was important to schedule the training as soon as possible so that members could keep those dates free.
- (3) That it was important to ensure that there was someone at the end of the phone to help members, and the Senior Manager – IT and Business Transformation elaborated on the support provided by the Council's Helpdesk.

A member enquired about the possibility of providing 3G iPads. The Senior Corporate Commissioning Service Manager answered that he did not anticipate that the majority of members would need 3G as they had broadband connection at home, and that Wi-fi was available in all the Council's meeting rooms etc. However, if the nature of the members' work meant that they attended numerous external meetings, perhaps there was an argument for having some 3G models, and he agreed to look in to the situation.

RESOLVED to move on with the Council's ambition of not using paper as the norm, bearing in mind the messages from the discussion above.

4. SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS

Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services, presenting information about support to members, and inviting the committee to challenge progress on developments.

The Senior Corporate Commissioning Service Manager reported that the Leader wished to emphasise that the Cabinet was well aware that other members felt they did not know what was going on and that they had no influence, and that the move towards holding surgeries, workshops etc. was a means of overcoming this.

The Democratic Services Manager elaborated on the various points as she went through the report.

Concern was expressed that Cabinet Members talked to the press about matters that affected particular wards, without contacting the local member.

Members also expressed dissatisfaction with regard to the rights of the local member at Planning Committee meetings, on the grounds that there was no means for them to respond during, or at the end of the discussion.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To submit this report to the next meeting of the full Council on 4 October in order to raise members' awareness of the support available to them, or the support being currently developed.**
- (b) **To include an additional part to the report about the role and rights of the local member, explaining how the local member can obtain information about what is going on in their ward, their rights in relation to the Cabinet and how to contact a Cabinet Member if they are not satisfied with an officer's response. It should also be emphasised that a Cabinet Member (or anyone acting on their behalf) is expected to contact the local member with respect to matters affecting their ward.**
- (c) **To refer the comment regarding the local members' rights at Planning Committee meetings to the Head of Regulatory Department and the Monitoring Officer, asking them to discuss it together and bring a response back to the members.**

5. MEMBERS' REPORTS

Submitted – the report of the Chairman and the Democratic Services Manager giving details of the likely requirement in the Welsh Local Government Measure (2011) for every elected member to produce an annual report on his/her activities as a member of the authority, and asking the committee to offer initial guidance on the nature and format of the report in order to complete further work on it.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To include the matter in the report to the next meeting of the full Council on 4 October in order to raise all members' awareness of the likely expectation for them to publish annual reports, and suggest that everyone starts keeping a record of their main activities.**
- (b) **To invite the members' observations on the annual report model developed by Bridgend Council.**
- (c) **That the Democratic Services Manager produces a further report recommending the way forward for this committee, and that her recommendations:-**
 - **Respond to the considerations noted in part (3) of the report submitted to this meeting;**
 - **Follow/respond to the further guidelines that are to be published by the Welsh Government;**
 - **Are based on further research work into what happens currently in Wales.**

6. MEMBERS' TRAINING

Submitted – the report of the Chairman and the Democratic Services Manager inviting the committee to recommend the way forward with training developments.

In response to complaints about a recent clash between a meeting of the Council's Local Consultative Joint Committee and a North Wales Councils Induction Session for members, and the time of the session having changed, apologies were given for the situation and it was noted that all officers were now asked to check the Council's electronic diary before arranging any meeting for members.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To establish a sub-group of this committee (namely the Chairman along with Councillors Lesley Day, Dilwyn Morgan and Mandy Williams-Davies) to discuss additional training for members and future requirements, as well as any other matters relevant to training, with the Learning and Development Manager and the Democratic Services Manager, and to report back to the next meeting on 11 December, 2012.**
- (b) **That the Democratic Services Manager contacts Councillor Jason Humphreys (who had had to leave the meeting early) to ask if he, or another member of Llais Gwynedd on the committee, would be interested in serving on the sub-group.**

7. RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MEMBERS' WORK

Submitted – the report of the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department which recommended making a request to abolish a plan to secure a saving of £54,000 in the budget of the former Democracy and Legal Department in 2013/14. The Senior Corporate Commissioning Service Manager explained that, in light of transferring the Democratic Services to the Strategic and Improvement Department and looking again at the needs, it had become evident that it would not be possible to realise the saving and continue to provide the necessary support to the members of the Council.

RESOLVED to accept that the savings scheme cannot be realised while delivering the need to give Council Members the necessary support, and to therefore make a request to the Cabinet Member – Resources that the Savings Strategy be revised to recognise this.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.50am.