
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE 10/3/15

Present: Councillor Lesley Day (Chair)
Councillor Thomas G. Ellis (Vice-chair)

Councillors: Annwen Daniels, Anwen Davies, Jean Forsyth, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Siân Gwenllian, Jason Humphreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Sion Wyn Jones and Michael Sol Owen.

Officers: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager - Corporate Commissioning Service), Vera Jones (Members' Manager – Democratic Services), Huw Ynyr (Senior Manager - Information Technology and Transformation - for items 5 and 6 on the agenda) and Bethan Adams (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Annwen Hughes and Dilwyn Morgan.

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 meeting of this committee held on 9 December 2014, as a true record.

3. WEB-CASTING

Submitted – the report of the Head of Democratic Services sharing the latest information regarding web-casting developments. It was reported that the below meetings had been web-casted thus far, and an update was provided on the viewing figures:

Committee	Date	Live	Archive	Total
Planning Committee	12/1/15	82	186	254
Cabinet	13/1/15	23	89	106
Services Scrutiny Committee	12/2/15	7	55	60
Cabinet	19/2/15	23	53	73
Communities Scrutiny Committee	24/2/15	4	74	76
Full Council	5/3/15	35	71	98

Attention was drawn to the fact that most of the viewing happened through the archive site and that the archive figures were likely to increase.

During the discussion the following main points were noted:-

- That one 'hit' was registered as a viewer from each specific address;
- In response to a member's comments regarding web-casting all the Cabinet's meetings, it was noted that the decision to web-cast meetings of the Cabinet would be dependent on likely interest levels due to web-casting time restrictions;
- It would be beneficial to receive information in terms of what device was used to view the web-casts;

- In response to a member's enquiry regarding notifying the public of the meetings that were being web-casted, it was noted that a meeting would be held with the Communication Unit to identify advertising opportunities;
- People appreciated viewing discussions such as setting the council tax and praised the Council for web-casting;
- On members' requests, web-casting guidelines had been formed to assist them and not to encumber them.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to accept the report;**
- (ii) that enquiries should be made with the company responsible for the web-casting website in respect of the availability of information regarding what device is used to watch web-casts.**

4. MEMBERS' INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

It was reported that following receiving a great deal of observations from elected members regarding the need for further training on the use of i-pads, a session had been arranged with the Headteacher of Ysgol Gynradd Llanrug for around 10 members.

The Senior Manager - Information Technology and Transformation noted, following the Committee's decision at its meeting on 9 December 2014 that a group of members should trial a word processor on the i-pads, that he had sent an email to the Chair providing instructions on how to download the 'Pages' app. He added that the app would be circulated to other members that were part of the pilot.

A member noted that the i-pad worked well as a reader but that it was not ideal to create documents. In response, the Senior Manager – Information Technology and Transformation noted that 'Pages' was being trialled to see whether it would meet the needs of members.

Members' opinions were sought regarding requests that had been received from members to gain access to information through different technical equipment in addition to the i-pads provided by the Council. Attention was drawn that following changes to the Council's information technology system, to respond to additional security requirements, that setting up additional access to members would have an installation cost of around £30 and an annual cost of around £30 per device.

Members noted that there were difficulties regarding reading older e-mails on the i-pad and that it was not possible to print from the i-pad. In response, it was noted that the Council had invested in i-pads for elected members to facilitate their work and a possible solution would be sought for the problems highlighted by members.

A member noted that it could be possible to suggest an option for the members to pay the costs involved with access to information on their own other devices.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that requests from members for additional access to what is provided through the i-pads should be refused at this time;**
- (ii) to re-assess the requirements following the further i-pads training sessions.**

5. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEWS

Submitted - the report of the Head of Democratic Services providing an update on the training that was provided at present along with training that was being arranged at present

in order to respond to the requirements that had been highlighted when holding the personal development interviews.

It was noted that the 20 members who had been part of the arrangement were asked for their observations on the process and a fairly positive response had been received. It was added that a review of the procedure would be held in the future in terms of the benefit of the process for members and that the findings would be reported to the Committee in due course.

A member noted that practical training would be held on the use of social media rather than the protocol would be useful.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

6. ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS

The Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service noted that in accordance with the Committee's wish, a consultation had been held with members regarding the Council's general engagement arrangements as well as contact with councillors. It was reported that a task group had been established that included officers and elected members, and it had been concluded that two main matters should be focused upon, namely:

- Major Changes / Gwynedd Challenge
- Operational Liaison Arrangements.

The action steps that had been noted in the report were expanded upon.

In response to members' observations, it was noted that:-

- In terms of working at night, although Galw Gwynedd was not open outside working hours, it was still possible to send an e-mail to the call-in centre through Ymholiadau@gwynedd.gov.uk;
- It would be possible to feature e-mail addresses as well as phone numbers on the list of key contact points on Rhaeadr;
- It was necessary to increase the use of scrutiny beforehand, ensuring that the scrutiny work was timely;
- Members could be encouraged to contact through e-mail in the first place but that members would have the option to contact over the phone;
- Members saw the benefit of receiving a tracking number from Galw Gwynedd for enquiries to ensure that there was an identification path;
- In regards to respecting trust and confidentiality and consulting with local members beforehand, in terms of individual Cabinet Members' decisions the local member's observations would be requested on local matters prior to publishing a decision.

RESOLVED to approve the action steps subject to encouraging members to contact through e-mail in the first place if it is practical for them.

7. CONSULTATION PAPER ON REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

It was reported that Leighton Andrews AM, the Minister for Public Services had published a consultation paper on Reforming Local Government and observations on the paper were invited by 28 April 2015.

It was noted that all members had been notified of the consultation through Rhaeadr. An opportunity was given at this Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 26 March for members to give their observations, before the Cabinet would formally approve the observations on behalf of the Council on 14 April.

In response to a member's question, the Senior Manager - Corporate Commissioning Service noted that individual members and political groups could respond directly to the consultation.

A discussion was held on the paragraphs listed in the report.

A specific observation was made that it was necessary to send a message to the Minister for Public Services that the Committee appreciated the opportunity to comment on this paper, but asking when it would be possible to see the result of the other discussions on the reorganisation of local government.

RESOLVED that the opinion of the Committee regarding the specific listed paragraphs was:

- Paragraph 3.1 - The arrangement of holding elections every four or five years should remain;
- Paragraph 3.2 - In favour of having members from different backgrounds on the Cabinet but of the opinion that it was a mistake to place a duty due to the risks involved. That specific work should be undertaken to improve the balance in terms of men and women on a Cabinet whilst acknowledging the Leader's right to appoint;
- Paragraph 3.4 - Support placing a duty on Councillors to publish an annual report;
- Paragraph 3.5 - Steps should be taken to encourage/promote diversity amongst Councillors, but uncomfortable with having procedures in place to enforce due to the complexity of cases. That it was necessary to undertake specific work on equality in terms of men and women within Local Government;
- Paragraph 3.6 - Support the review of the best way to pay Councillors;
- Paragraph 3.7 - When deciding on the number of councillors, the number of electorates and the nature of the area should be looked at, including populations that 'come and go', the rural nature of the area and the need to be a local representative rather than the number of electorates only;
- Paragraph 3.8 - That a limit should not be set on the number of terms that Councillors can serve;
- Paragraph 3.9 - Support introducing an arrangement of recalling Councillors in specific conditions;
- Paragraph 3.10 - Rules should not be slackened to allow local government officers to stand for election to become a councillor. Councillors in Local Government should not be stopped from serving as Community Councillors;
- Paragraph 4.2 - The need to look at Community Governance led by members is seen, but there is concern regarding an enforcement procedure;
- Paragraph 4.6 - The procedure where an individual can operate on the Main Council and Community Council should remain. Support preventing County Councillors from becoming a member of more than one Community Council.

8. IMPROVEMENT GRANT - WELSH GOVERNMENT

The Chair notified the members that Sarah Titcombe, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) had been in a car accident and suggested that a card should be sent to her wishing her a speedy recovery.

It was reported that following the Minister for Public Services' decision that the Welsh Government Improvement Grant would come to an end at the end of March 2015, this

would lead to eliminating the WLGA Equality and Improvement Teams and the Local Government Data Unit.

It was noted that the information regarding the WLGA consultation on the Competencies Framework for members had been shared with members through Rhaeadr. It was reported that the framework would be formally accepted at the members' services officers' network meeting at the end of the month.

A member noted that the framework set a target for members but that it was necessary to acknowledge that it would be challenging for members to meet the requirements.

Reference was made to the WLGA Wales Charter for Member Support and Development, known as the 'Members Charter', and it was noted that as a result of deleting the teams that it is unlikely that it would be possible to gain the qualification. It was noted that it was considered that the elements included in the Charter were very important and that identifying and working towards the important elements of the Charter should continue in order to ensure that the appropriate support was developed for members.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to send a card to Sarah Titcombe wishing an early recovery;**
- (ii) to support the Head of Democratic Services to continue to identify the important elements of the contents of the charter to ensure that the appropriate support was being developed for Gwynedd Council members with a view to have all the important elements in place by the next Local Government elections.**

9. THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES' REPORT

It was reported that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales had published its report for the 2015/16 financial year. It was noted that the Panel had decided that there would not be an increase in the remuneration received by elected members of local councils, given the continuous restriction on local government spending.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

10. HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Chief Executive reported that the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department had been appointed to the post of Head of Democratic Services in May 2012 in accordance with the requirements under Section 8, Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. It was noted that as a result of merging the Strategic and Improvement Department with the Human Resources Department that a new Head of Democratic Services needed to be appointed.

It was noted that the procedure that had existed since 2012 had worked well and that the sensible thing would be for the responsibility to fall on the Head of the new Department, namely the Corporate Services and Organisational Development Department from 1 April 2015 onwards.

RESOLVED to denote the Head of Corporate Services and Organisational Development Department as Head of the Council's Democratic Services from 1 April 2015 onwards.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 12.30pm.