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## DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE, 24/02/26

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### **PRESENT:**

#### **Councillors:**

Anne Lloyd-Jones (Chair), Annwen Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Ioan Thomas, Edgar Wyn Owen, Beca Roberts, Cai Larsen, Stephen Churchman

#### **Officers present:**

Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager), Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader), Ian Jones, (Head of Corporate Services), Alun Lloyd Williams (Talent and Apprenticeships Lead), Catrin Owen (Members Development Officer), and Courtney Leigh Jones (Democracy and Civic Services Officer).

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Sian Williams, Robert Dewi Owen, Anwen Jane Davies, Arwyn Herald Roberts.

Apologies were received from Mari Edwards (Learning and Development Manager), Catrin Love (Assistant Head of Corporate Services).

### **2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received.

### **3. URGENT ITEMS**

No urgent issues were noted.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Chair accepted the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 4 November 2025 as a true record.

### **5. SUPPORT FOR COUNCILLORS**

The Democracy Team Leader presented the report. Reference was made to the Satisfaction Questionnaire which was distributed to members annually enquiring about the service provided by the Democracy Services Team. It was noted that 27 Members had responded to the Questionnaire, which was below the average that had responded over recent years. It was acknowledged that the busy period with extraordinary meetings of the Full Council and Scrutiny Committees may have led to fewer responses. However, it was highlighted that 88% had said that the service was "very good" with 11% stating "good", which was an increase from last year when one

Councillor said that the standard was “acceptable”. Attention was drawn to some examples of the comments received which indicated a high level of satisfaction, with the availability and punctuality of the team's response highlighted in the high-quality support they provided.

Reference was made to members' suggestions to improve the provision. It was noted that a member had proposed that ‘it would be useful to have up-to-date and accurate information on the Council's site for Councillors about the names of staff and telephone numbers of every department’. A Member proposed the idea of developing an App, and the Team Leader confirmed that she would be contacting the individual to discuss the idea further. With reference to the members’ bulletin, which was sent out to members on a weekly basis, it was confirmed that the questionnaire showed that most members did read it and were satisfied with its contents.

It was reported that Members had expressed frustration at delays in responses from Officers and Departments within the Council, and it was assured that further work was underway by the Corporate Director to investigate the matter in detail. It was hoped that a further update on this work would be presented to this Committee during the summer term. Members were welcome to contact the team at any time for any assistance.

A Member expressed that he had experienced difficulty completing the Members' on-line Questionnaire. In response, it was confirmed that the Department would post him a paper copy in future.

Referring to the Questionnaire, it was clarified that the information obtained from the responses would be used in preparing the election work for next year. A Member asked for more details about the proposed improvements by the 2027 election. In response, it was assured that the service was committed to providing the best possible support to the county's members. It was confirmed that the Democracy Team Leader and Service Manager were currently putting together a work programme for the 2027 election to develop and refine the service provided. It was hoped that a report on the work could be presented to the Democracy Services Committee in June, which would set out the planned actions and serve as an opportunity for the members to have input to ensure they were involved in the proactive process of formulating the welcome and induction programme by the election period.

It was elaborated that a second questionnaire had been sent out this year - 'Intranet and More' - with 19 members stating that they made regular use of the members' Intranet. It was noted that elements needed to be improved to ensure that the information was consistent and up to date. In response to an enquiry, it was confirmed that several officers were responsible for updating the Members’ Intranet, primarily the Democracy Team Officers, the Members Learning and Development Officer and the Communications Team. It was explained that the updates were a cross-departmental responsibility, as the relevant knowledge and expertise was within different teams. It was confirmed that the Democracy Services Team was responsible for ensuring that the Members’ Intranet provided comprehensive information and worked effectively for the benefit of the members, as this team was responsible for providing direct support to the Council's members.

A Member asked why all informal meetings, such as the area forums, had not been included in the Calendar of Meetings for the year. In response, it was confirmed that these meetings were internal and informal, and therefore were not published on the Modern Gov system used by the department. It was clarified that the meeting papers were not public and were only sent out to the relevant members. It was explained that only the public meetings were included in the Calendar of Meetings on the website for public information. Consideration was given to including internal meetings in the Calendar of Meetings for the year and it was confirmed that Officers would be assessing this in the future. It was acknowledged that there were still some differences between different types of meetings and forums, and that the department planned to review and sort out these details over the next year.

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report.**

### **6. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026/27**

The report was presented by the Democracy Services Team Leader. It was highlighted that the date of this year's annual meeting of the Full Council had been pushed forward to 14 May, due to the Senedd Election on 7 May 2026. It was confirmed that the calendar had been discussed with the National Park and the Fire Service, and as a result some dates had to be amended in order to minimise and avoid conflicts between meetings. It was decided at the Scrutiny Forum that two meetings (of the Education and Economy Committee and the Care Scrutiny Committee) would be held in July to avoid holding the meetings during the run-up to the election. It was noted that these dates had not been included in the draft calendar but would be added before the publication of the Full Council's meeting papers. It was highlighted that the date of the Full Council in May 2027 was also later due to a local authority election, and that time would be needed for the induction of new members before the Council's annual meeting.

A Member enquired if the informal meetings could be included in the Calendar. In response, it was confirmed that officers would make every effort to identify meeting dates as soon as possible after the adoption of the formal Calendar of Meetings to ensure that Members received invitations to the upcoming meetings in the year.

It was pointed out that only one meeting had been scheduled for the Harbour Committees across the county. It was acknowledged that this was an error and would be changed before the formal papers were published for adoption at the Full Council. In response to an enquiry, it was confirmed that the number of meetings held annually was based on the decision sought in the Full Council in 2022. Reference was made to the questionnaire which was sent to all members in 2022. It was confirmed that Members had been given the opportunity to note what times would be most convenient for them to attend meetings in order to facilitate arrangements. Members were reminded that a questionnaire would be sent out to them again, immediately after the local authority election/beginning of the next electoral term, to ascertain members' wishes for the next period.

A Member asked about the possibility of holding more hybrid meetings and fewer solely virtual meetings. In response, it was confirmed that the service already maintained a provision of hybrid meetings for meetings of the Full Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny and Planning Committees following a principle established in 2021. It was explained that conducting hybrid meetings required much more resources compared to just virtual meetings. Members were assured that increasing hybrid provision would be considered and that the situation was being constantly monitored and reviewed.

More details were requested regarding the record of attendance at committees and meetings. It was confirmed that members' attendance at formal and informal meetings was recorded on the Council's website. Various reasons for members not being able to attend meetings and committees were considered, and it was asked whether it would be possible to reflect the reasons for apologies on the Council's website. It was asked how the various reasons could be distinguished - some members were unable to attend due to other commitments as part of their role as councillors. It was recognised that Councillors' attendance at Council meetings was not necessarily a full reflection of their work. It was assured that consideration could be given to including reasons for apologies on the website to show that Members had apologised due to undertaking other duties on behalf of the Council.

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report, noting the changes and additions discussed, and to recommend that the Calendar of Meetings be adopted by the Full Council.**

## **7. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROVISION FOR MEMBERS**

The report was presented by the Talent and Apprenticeships Lead, in the absence of the Learning and Development Manager. The appointment of a new Members Development Officer was confirmed and Catrin Owen was welcomed to the post.

Details were given of the eight Core Areas identified for Members, noting that Members were continually being encouraged and reminded to complete them as a minimum in order to be able to carry out their role as councillors effectively. Disappointment was expressed that there had not been a significant increase in the number of Members who had completed more of the core titles since February of last year. Further frustration was expressed that seven Members had not completed any of the eight Core titles, following various requests for them to do so. Members were reminded that they could access the provision of core courses on-line at any time, and that members were welcome to get in touch at any time if there were any difficulties. It was noted that the department had uploaded videos and developed resources on the Members' Intranet to try and facilitate arrangements. It was explained that this enabled members to watch the videos at their convenience. Members were encouraged to attend the safeguarding training session on 6 March.

It was mentioned that there was an opportunity for Members to have discussions around personal development and that some had already taken up the offer. Members were welcome to contact the Department's Learning and Development Manager if they

wanted to add any title or training session as it was the last year of the current electoral term. Reference was made to the new title - 'Ward Leadership' - which was currently under development, noting that arrangements were in place to establish this soon. It was elaborated that discussions with heads of department were underway to determine further training proposals for the new electoral period.

Disappointment was expressed that six Members had not completed any of the training, especially the Code of Conduct. The importance of completing the core courses was emphasised. The importance of the core courses and the possibility of them being renamed as mandatory fields were noted. A reminder was given that the number of courses completed by members was now public information on the Council's website. A question was asked as to whether members could receive personal and direct reminders stating exactly which training they had not completed. It was explained that a note was available on the members' personal page on the intranet to show this information and which clearly indicated the core training that had been completed. Members were encouraged to contact the Members' Learning and Development Officer if they had any queries.

A Member questioned whether the Committee could act to establish an LGBTQI+ training area as an additional core training. A Member expressed that it was a very useful and helpful course in terms of the appropriate language to use in the LGBTQI+ community. It was reiterated that this course would help to ensure that the Council's members were more open and welcoming. It was mentioned that all core areas for members could be reviewed over the next year, identifying which core training members would be expected to complete and follow in the next electoral cycle.

The desire for members to complete all core titles early on in the next electoral period was noted. Consideration was given to linking core training titles to specific functions and seats within members' responsibilities. For example, ensuring that members attended specific training relating to care, if they wanted to be a member of the Care Scrutiny Committee. Reference was made to developments with the Member Development Strategy, with the intention of strengthening training expectations for Members. It was assured that the Strategy would be presented to the Committee in November, before being formally adopted by the Full Council in March 2027

## **DECISION**

**To accept the report.**

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 14:00.