

## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE, 03/06/14**

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**Present:** Councillor Lesley Day (Chair)

**Councillors:** Anwen Davies, Tom Ellis, Jean Forsyth, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Jason Humphreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Charles Wyn Jones, Siôn Wyn Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Michael Sol Owen, Mair Rowlands and Mandy Williams-Davies.

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Customer Care).

**Officers:** Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service) and Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

**It was resolved to confirm the Council's resolution at its meeting on 1 May 2014 to elect Councillor Lesley Day as Chair of this Committee for 2014/15.**

### **2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**It was resolved to elect Councillor Tom Ellis as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2014/15.**

### **3. WELCOME**

Councillor Mair Rowlands was welcomed to her first meeting of this Committee.

### **4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

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

### **5. MINUTES**

(a) The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 18 March 2014, as a true record.

(b) It was noted that the reason for the absence of Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones was that she was representing the Chair of this Committee at an external meeting.

### **6. ELECTED MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORTS**

(a) A report was submitted by the Head of Democratic Services outlining arrangements for Members to produce annual reports to include factual information regarding activities, if they so wish.

(b) It was stressed that it was not necessary or statutory for Members to provide an annual report but it was linked to the development of the Members' Charter and a means of providing information to the electorate about the work of Members and it was a requirement for the Council to make provision for Members to be able to produce annual reports. Reference was made to an example of a template attached to the report that would be useful and of assistance to Members to complete their reports.

(c) Whilst members welcomed the idea of providing annual reports, others noted that they were not in favour mainly due to the work pressure on electorate activities. The following points were highlighted by individual Members in terms of the format of the proposed template:

- (i) That it would be difficult to restrict the information to two pages and it was suggested that "purpose of the annual report" should be placed first and then "role and responsibilities" – it was noted that there would be no restriction in the length of the reports.
- (ii) Scrutiny Committee preparatory meetings should be included as they underpin the work together with the Area Forums, Political Group meetings etc.
- (iii) It was suggested that the 'absent' column should be removed from the attendance table.
- (iv) In the same manner, absence due to illness for a specific period could create a misimpression to the public.

The importance of ensuring a balance between attending Committees, being part of workshops, investigations etc. was stressed and working diligently within their communities.

(ch) The above observations were welcomed and it was stressed that the template was available to assist Members and it would be possible to adapt this for the needs of individuals to explain the duties they undertake to the electorate. The template would be available in due course to all Council members via e-mail.

**Resolved: (a) To accept the template format taking into consideration the minor amendments mentioned in (i) to (iv) above.**

**(b) A report would be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee in September on the provision of training in on-line format.**

## 7. WEBCASTING

(a) A brief work programme to introduce the webcasting system under a two year contract with Public-i, who operate in this field throughout Wales, Scotland and England, was presented.

(b) Mr Mathew Jellings, Senior Relationships Manager, Public-i, to the meeting and he gave a presentation. He elaborated on the benefits of webcasting and from experience in other authorities the following trends were noted:

- Increasing in the audience
- Interactive online communication
- Use of multimedia such as i-pads, mobile phones etc.
- The need for an institutional change and social media strategy
- Examples of joint production with communities.

Webcasting would therefore offer opportunities to record the contents of meetings and share these with the public, a possibility of changing people's perception of the Council, the ability to keep a record in an archive as well as opening opportunities to offer a dialogue process with the public.

(c) The observations made by individual members were responded to as follows:

- That the required infrastructure in terms of cameras had already been installed
- In terms of translation a message would appear on the screen when meetings are broadcast where no translator was required stating that no translation was available. However, arrangements could be considered to register the need for a translation beforehand
- That there was a grant provision from the Welsh Government matching the cost of the service for two years.

(ch) The Senior Manager - Corporate Commissioning Service expanded that they would programme to introduce this provision by ensuring specific training to Members and officers. It was proposed to commence trialling the equipment by recording some meetings and not to webcast them in order to see if there were further lessons to be learnt and ensure the correct image of the Council.

**Resolved: (a) To accept, note and thank Mr Mathew Jellings for the interesting presentation.**

**(b) To approve the introduction of a webcasting system in accordance with the brief work programme submitted.**

## **8. MEMBERS' SALARIES**

(a) A report was presented by the Head of Democratic Services updating Members on the publication requirements of Members' Salaries.

(b) The Senior Manager - Corporate Commissioning Service reported that it was a requirement to publish Members' salaries on two occasions namely before the end of July this year (estimate of the payments made for 2014/15) and before the end of September (the salaries and travelling costs paid in 2013/14). It was proposed to publish a list by the end of July on the Website and the 2013/14 payments would be published in 'Newyddion Gwynedd'.

(c) Following concerns last year regarding the publication of Newyddion Gwynedd it was proposed to include an explanation regarding the responsibilities of both backbench Members and Cabinet Members e.g. a sample diary of the types of duties they undertake. The aim was to use Newyddion Gwynedd to give a fuller picture of what Members undertake rather than a bare table of salaries and travelling costs.

(ch) For information, it was further noted that HMRC had recently announced that travelling costs were taxable if it could not be proven that Members' homes were their workplace and it may be necessary to have some element of evidence to this end.

(d) Concern was expressed by a member that the public did not realise the time that some members spent travelling to central meetings, specifically those from south Gwynedd.

**Resolved:** To accept the report and the Corporate Commissioning Service Senior Manager would draft the contents for Newyddion Gwynedd in accordance with what had been outlined.

## **9. ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS**

(a) A report was submitted by the Head of Democratic Services updating Members regarding further proposals to improve engagement with Members.

(b) Following the workshops that took place, the questionnaire sent and the report to the Forum Heads, it was resolved to establish a Task Groups of Heads and Members to jointly discuss what can be done to improve communication. It was further noted that training would be conducted in July on leading communities at a time of challenging change.

(c) The Chair noted that a request had recently been sent for nominations for members to serve on the above Task Group. It was confirmed that the relevant Cabinet Member and Chair of this Committee would discuss the balance of membership if too many names were received.

**Resolved:** To accept and note the contents of the report and approve the above proposals.

## **10. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEWS**

(a) The report of the Head of Democratic Services was presented outlining the latest information on Council arrangements to offer a personal development interview to Members.

(b) The Senior Manager - Corporate Commissioning Service noted that the Welsh Government insisted that every Council offered this process to Members to assess their development needs, although taking advantage of this was optional. It was noted that preparations had proceeded and the intention was to adapt a template that could be used as a basis for the interviews. It was proposed to send a letter to every Member inviting them to attend an interview and the intention was that these would be conducted before September.

(c) In response, some Members were of the view that they had received a great deal of training over the years in day to day work and there was an element of duplication in what was offered. However, others welcomed the training and it was one of the most important tools the Council could offer corporately especially in times of changes.

(ch) The Senior Manager - Corporate Commissioning Service added that the interview would be totally confidential and they could discuss what training Members had attended and what could be offered for their needs.

**Resolved:** To accept and note the contents of the report.

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