
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE, 09.09.14

Yn bresennol: Councillor Lesley Day (Chair);
Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones (Vice-chair).

Councillors: Tom Ellis, Jean Forsyth, Selwyn Griffiths, Annwen Hughes and Jason Humphreys.

Officers: Geraint George (Head of Strategic and Improvement Department / Head of Democratic Services), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager - Corporate Commissioning Service), Vera Jones (Members Manager – Democratic Service), Huw Ynyr (Senior Manager - Information Technology and Transformation) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Anwen Davies, Gweno Glyn, Dilwyn Morgan, Michael Sol Owen, Mair Rowlands and Mandy Williams-Davies.

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 3 June, 2014 as a true record.

3. ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBERS

The Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service submitted the report of the Head of Democratic Services regarding recent discussions and further proposals being developed on improving engagement with members.

During the discussion:-

- Failure to consult local members regarding developments in their ward was noted.
- It was noted that councillors did not always know which officer should be contacted regarding various issues.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to ask for a report back on action plans to improve.

4. DIVERSITY

The Chair submitted the report of the Head of Democratic Services on the recent findings and proposals regarding improving diversity in Local Government.

During the discussion:-

- Concern was expressed that this could be pushed too far. In response, it was noted that this was not the intention, but rather to approach the schools, etc. to actively promote the work and role of councillors.

- Objection was expressed to the idea of establishing a Women’s Forum as all members served on the Council as a person, rather than as a man or woman.
- The proposal of attempting to get young people in schools to understand the democratic process was welcomed. In terms of the specific reference in the report to engaging with Years 12 and 13 in secondary schools, it was noted also that this would need to be extended to include Coleg Meirion Dwyfor also.
- The importance of ensuring that any work completed in this field was measured was emphasised.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To establish a Democracy Sub-group from the Democratic Services Committee under the leadership of the Chair, with membership to include the Disabilities Champion - Councillor Peter Read, and the Children and Young People Champion – Councillor Mair Rowlands, along with Councillors Anne Lloyd Jones and Sion Jones, and also contact the remaining members of this committee to invite them to take-up a seat on the sub-group.**
- (b) **To seek to hold the sub-group’s meeting by means of video conferencing.**

5. REMOTE ATTENDANCE

The Senior Manager—Corporate Commissioning Service submitted the report of the Head of Democratic Services which sought the committee’s views on changes made to the Constitution in an attempt to deal with the potential complexities of remote attendance at committees.

A discussion was held on various draft clauses of a Procedure Rule.

In response to concern that the remote connection could be lost, it was emphasised that managing the meeting was the Chair’s responsibility and that it had to be accepted that there was an element of risk, although the provision was much stronger by now.

RESOLVED to express the following observations on the draft of a Procedure Rule for the Council so that it could be processed for inclusion in the Council’s Constitution in due course:-

- **4.17.1 – Agree that video-conferencing should be provided in the Council’s offices in Dolgellau and Pwllheli and in Siambr Dafydd Orwig and Siambr Hywel Dda in Caernarfon to allow members to attend committees remotely.**
- **4.17.2 – That the scrutiny committees, the Democratic Services Committee and the Language Committee should be listed as the only ones that are eligible for remote attendance, as they do not make executive decisions.**
- **4.17.3 – That a member who wishes to remotely attend a committee should give at least 4 days’ notice to the Head of Democratic Services. A note should be included on the front of the agenda instructing members to contact the Member Support and Scrutiny Officer if they wish to attend a committee remotely, and for the same instruction to be included in the e-mail sent to members with the link to the agenda.**
- **4.17.4 – It is not believed that this rule is required. Having this rule and rule 4.17.5 (which is statutory) complicates the committee’s administration without contributing much to its management.**
- **4.17.5 – That the number of members who attend in the room where the meeting is held should account for 30% of all members attending the meeting (be that in the committee room or remote attendance).**

- **4.17.6 – If the connection is lost, it will be a matter for the Chair to decide whether or not the meeting should be deferred, but out of courtesy, every attempt should be made to contact the members in Pwllheli and Dolgellau to inform them of the decision.**

6. WEB-CASTING

The Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service submitted the report of the Head of Democratic Services which presented the latest information regarding the web-casting developments and sought the views of the committee.

During the discussion:-

- The importance of publicising the web-casting was emphasised.
- It was suggested that it would be beneficial to web-cast the Cabinet's meetings as they made the executive decisions.
- The Senior Manager – Information Technology and Transformation was asked to ascertain how many hits committee minutes received on the Council's website.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

7. WEBSITES FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The Members Manager – Democratic Service submitted the report of the Head of Democratic Services which provided an update of the plan to support town and community councils to develop websites.

The Senior Manager – Information Technology and Transformation elaborated on Option 2, namely to collaborate with other town and community councils in the county to create a joint-website.

During the discussion:-

- Concern was expressed that it would be expensive for the small councils to maintain the websites continuously.
- It was suggested that it would be better for the councils to establish joint-websites.

RESOLVED to continue to support the work of facilitating the development of establishing websites for Town and Community Councils during 2014/15.

8. ELECTED MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORTS

The Head of Democratic Services submitted his report which provided an update on the situation regarding Elected Members' Annual Reports for 2013/14.

During the discussion:-

- It was noted that a word processing facility was needed on the Ipad so that members could prepare their annual reports. The Senior Manager – Information Technology and Transformation explained that there were various Apps available for word processing purposes, but that the Ipad was not the best tool for doing so. He added that some packages could be trialled, but regardless of how good the App would be, training would have to be provided on it also.

- It was noted that there was a need to arrange up-to-date training for members on the general use of the Ipads.
- It was suggested that including a diary in Newyddion Gwynedd which depicted an average week of a councillor's work would be another way of raising awareness about what councillors did.
- The importance of publicising the message was emphasised, along with the fact that resources were scarce.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To ask the Chair to send out a message through Rhaeadr reminding members to submit their annual reports before the end of the month.**
- (b) **To trial some word processing packages on the Ipads with members and arrange up-to-date training for members on general use of the Ipads and to ask the Senior Manager - Information Technology and Transformation to work with the Members Manager - Democratic Service, to establish a timetable for the work.**

9. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEWS

The Senior Manager – Corporate Commissioning Service submitted the report of the Head of Democratic Services presenting the latest information about the Council's arrangements.

During the discussion:-

- It was suggested that it would be beneficial to ask, in due course, for feedback from the 20 members who would have received a personal development interview.
- The Chair referred to two national documents regarding the Competencies Framework and Councillor Development Strategy, noting that she was eager to obtain the committee's views on them as she would represent the Council at a meeting to discuss these issues on 16 September.

RESOLVED

- (a) **To submit a report to the March meeting of this committee on the response of the 20 members to the personal development interviews and how the experience has subsequently influenced their work.**
- (b) **To circulate the national documents on member development to all members of the committee and ask them to submit any observations directly for the attention of the Chair via e-mail.**

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.55am.