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## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE 12/02/19

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**Present:** Dewi Owen (Chair)  
Anne Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Anwen J. Davies, Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Charles Wyn Jones, Olaf Cai Larsen, Catrin Elen Wager, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Hefin Underwood, Judith Mary Humphreys, Edgar Wyn Owen and Eryl Jones-Williams

**OFFICERS:** Geraint Owen (Head of Democratic Services) Vera Jones (Members Manager - Democracy Service), Carey Cartwright (Organisational Learning and Development Service Manager) Cara Williams (Members' Development Officer) and Sion Owen (Members Support Officer)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Annwen Daniels and Linda Ann Jones

### 1. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

**RESOLVED:** To elect Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones as Vice-chair of this Committee.

### 2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

### 3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 25 October, 2018 as a true record.

### 4. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROVISION FOR MEMBERS

Submitted - the report of the Learning and Organisational Development Manager providing an overview of the learning and development provision for members and noting the successes and the challenges they had experienced. He noted the following points:

- That the provision had received very positive feedback
- That the learning and development programme was continuing to evolve, including items that had been proposed by members.
- There was an opportunity to hold personal development conversations to discuss their needs, and a mentoring scheme was available.
- Attendance had been inconsistent at the sessions and the service was trying to be flexible in terms of the location and times of sessions and was experimenting with technology.

Observations from the discussion:

- That holding most of the sessions in Caernarfon had proven to be an obstacle for the Meirionnydd members and a wish was noted for more learning and development sessions to be held at Council offices in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd.
- There was a need for the mentoring scheme to be available to newly elected members.
- Had any members who had been identified and qualified as mentors had the opportunity to mentor?
- That the personal development conversations had been appreciated.

- Were there plans to expand the e-learning provision?
- That it was common amongst new members to be uncertain which officers should be contacted in relation to ward matters, and that specific training should be held on Council structures.
- Whilst the importance of learning and development had been acknowledged, that the fact that the sessions were not mandatory meant that members did not prioritise them. Was there any suggestion that the training sessions could become mandatory in future?
- The sessions held at the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019 to discuss the 2019-20 budget had been held in an effective manner, and a request was made to hold similar sessions regularly.
- The officers were thanked for their work and support.

In response the Learning and Organisational Development Manager noted the Committee's observations and added that he was aware that a mentoring relationship had been established between some members, and that the service's direction in future was to hold more learning and development opportunities through digital methods.

The Democratic Services Manager noted that a number of new members had made the same comment regarding confusion in trying to refer ward matters to the appropriate officers, and that this would need to be addressed when inducting new members. He suggested it would be beneficial for Members who had received good learning and development experiences to mention it to other members and to spread the message. He added that making members' training mandatory had been mentioned in consultation documents in local government work, but there was no assurance as to which requirements would be included in the final legislation.

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

The Democratic Services Manager presented her report and stated whilst there was a statutory requirement for the Council to enable members to publish annual reports, there was no requirement for any individual member to do so. The Committee was invited to offer its observations on the reports and the process for creating them.

Observations from the discussion:

- That removing attendance statistics and the details of committees' work from the report and including them in a link was a step backwards.
- It was welcomed that the content of the report focused on the members' work in their wards, as this was important to the electors.
- There was a need to make the link to the reports more visible.
- There was no need to produce annual reports as the electors of conscientious members would already be aware that their members were serving them tirelessly.
- How many of the public read the reports?
- Would it be possible to include links to the members' local newsletters?
- Were there any additional costs to generating the reports?

In response, the Democratic Services Manager noted that the emphasis had changed to ward work as the latest details of members' attendance etc. were published on the Council's website. She added that the use of the web page that included the annual reports increased substantially as an election approached. She confirmed that there were no costs beyond staff members' time to produce the reports, and while she would look into sharing ward newsletters, any material would have to go through the Council's editorial processes before being published on the corporate website.

The Head of Democratic Services added that the annual reports were one of many methods of communicating with electors, and that individual electors received information in many different ways.

## 6. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Submitted - the report of the Democratic Services Manager noting that the committee's workload followed a cycle that reached its peak around election time. In the time between elections, the workload was less and this was also in the workload of democratic services committees of other councils. She noted that there was a statutory requirement for the Committee to convene a minimum of once a year, however no maximum had been noted and there was a need to structure the years' meetings to meet Gwynedd's needs. Discussions regarding rationalising meetings had also been held at other committees.

Observations from the discussion:

- That three formal meetings a year was sensible in the middle of an election term.
- That the meetings needed to be timed so they were held at the right times for the Committee to fulfil its purpose.
- There was a need to revisit the work of promoting diversity in democracy.
- It was anticipated that the Committee's workload would increase when the Welsh Government's next local government legislation would be published.
- There was a need to evaluate the number of members on all Council committees, especially given it was likely that the number of Gwynedd Council members would fall following the next election.

In response, the Head of Democratic Services noted that members were welcome to propose items of the Committee, especially if there was a link to services for members. There would also be an opportunity for the diversity sub-group to work with the project group that was working on achieving the 'Women in Leadership' priority which had been proposed in the Council Plan for the 2019 review.

The Democratic Services manager noted that reducing the number of the Committee's formal meetings would lead to having more time available to drive forward the work of the Committee's sub-groups. She added that it would be possible to call an additional meeting of the Committee should the workload merit this.

It was proposed and seconded to hold three formal meetings a year from 2019-20 onwards

**RESOLVED: To change the scheduled meetings of the Democratic Services Committee from 4 meetings a year to 3.**

## 7. 2019-20 COUNCIL MEETINGS CALENDAR

Submitted - the report of the Head of Democratic Services presented by the Democratic Services Manager submitting the draft version of the calendar of Council meetings for 2019-20. She noted there would be a need to reorganise the dates of the meetings of this committee in light of their previous decision. She added that discussions had been held with other committees to rationalise the number of meetings, and whilst the Standards Committee had agreed to rationalise, the discussions of other committees were not mature enough to be able to reach a decision for the 2019-20 calendar.

A committee member noted that the date of the Aberdyfi Harbour Committee had been set too soon in the autumn and should be moved to a later date to give officers the time to produce a more comprehensive report on the activities of the holiday season.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.05 pm

**CHAIRMAN**