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## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE, 15/6/23

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### PRESENT:

**Councillors:** Dewi Owen (Chairman), Anwen J. Davies, Annwen Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Linda Ann Jones, Olaf Cai Larsen, Anne Lloyd-Jones, Edgar Wyn Owen, Llio Elenid Owen, John Pughe, Arwyn Herald Roberts and Beca Roberts.

**Officers:** Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Support Department / Head of Democracy Services), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Services Manager), Sian Ellis Williams (Civic and Democracy Services Officer), Ffion Elain Evans (Democracy Services Officer).

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Menna Trenholme (Cabinet Member for Corporate Support).

### Present for items 6 & 7:

Catrin Love (Assistant Head of Corporate Support) and Cara Williams (Members' Development Officer).

#### 1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Two names were proposed and seconded for the post of vice-chair, namely Councillor Arwyn Herald Roberts and Councillor John Pughe.

**RESOLVED To elect Councillor Arwyn Herald Roberts as Vice-chair of the Democratic Services Committee for the year 2023/24.**

#### 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Gwynfor Owen and Councillor Stephen Churchman.

#### 3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

#### 4. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were raised.

#### 5. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 16 March 2023, as a true record.

#### 6. PRIORITIES OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY SERVICES - UPDATE

The item was presented as a continuation to the annual report of the Head of Democracy Services concentrating on two of the four priority fields noted as part of this report: personal development discussions and a paperless council. It was explained that work had already started on trying to ensure that the Council was moving to be as paperless as possible, to reduce carbon footprint and reduce printing and posting costs, in accordance

with the decision of the Full Council. The intention was to try and move to be as paperless as possible from the start of the autumn term, recognising that changing habits can take time and can be challenging at the beginning.

It was noted that such a change will not happen overnight and it was emphasised that support and guidance was available to guide the councillors through this gradual change. The intention was to offer a screen to the councillors that hadn't received one already as well as offering an opportunity for councillors to arrange 1:1 training on how to use ITC equipment. It was noted that it was likely there would be exceptions to the rule and by undertaking the changes gradually, it could be ensured that there's an opportunity for councillors to contact and present evidence in order to justify why they should be excluded and continue to receive paper copies.

Other matters raised during the discussion:-

- In response to the report, some councillors made reference to their current situation noting why they would need to continue to receive paper copies. The Head of Democracy Services noted that the meeting was not an opportunity to discuss personal circumstances but by introducing the changes gradually consideration could be given to the personal situations of individual councillors.
- The Democracy and Language Services Manager noted that there would be an opportunity for members to arrange a session with the Development Officer to address any concerns they had and asked the members to spread the word on the sessions amongst their co-members. She noted that the Council's officers had already undertaken the change to be as paperless as possible and had seen a benefit in doing so.

**RESOLVED to accept the report for information.**

## **7. SUPPORT FOR COUNCILLORS AND COUNCILLOR SAFETY**

Submitted - the report of the Democracy and Language Services Manager as an update of what was available as support for councillors. Attention was drawn to the Members Intranet, which was a comprehensive source of support for councillors, the members bulletin which includes a monthly item on the well-being of councillors, and the training opportunities available for them. It was noted that the numbers attending the training sessions were low and the Democracy and Language Services Manager asked the members to share the information on the training opportunities with their co-members.

Other matters raised during the discussion:-

- It was noted that the safety pack for councillors had improved compared to the situation a few years back but that there was still room to develop and increase the pack.
- Some members made reference to the way councillors had to be thick-skinned when dealing with the public out in their wards and that observations from members of the public could be extreme at times.
- It was noted that councillors were used to being judged by members of the public but that the situation had significantly worsened over the past few years. It was argued that the public were far more willing to challenge things today and this was highlighted by current matters.
- Reference was made to the way that the use of social media had increased the criticism of councillors. It was asked if it was possible for the Council to do anything

to help councillors that receive nasty, false messages from fake profiles on social media.

- In response, the Head of Democracy Services noted it would be difficult for the Council to intervene in the context of personal specific messages, but it would be possible to send out a general message against this type of behaviour.
- The Democracy and Language Services Manager noted that the safety pack that was available for councillors sought to get to grips with the different elements and there was a need for councillors to ensure they draw the attention of Council officers to the matters that were a cause of concern to them.
- The Head of Democracy Services added that councillors needed to report any matter that caused them concern for the Council to be able to respond and take appropriate steps. He noted that this meeting was a valuable opportunity to identify the different concerns and risks that face councillors and was an opportunity to develop a fuller risk assessment.
- Praise was given to the support of the Democracy Team and the Legal Service.

**RESOLVED to accept the report for information.**

The meeting commenced at 1:00pm and concluded at 1:50pm.