



Complete Agenda

Democracy Service
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Meeting

DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date and Time

1.00 pm, THURSDAY, 15TH JUNE, 2023

Location

Virtual Meeting

For public access to the meeting, please contact us

Contact Point

Eirian Roberts

01286 679018

(DISTRIBUTED 07/06/23)

DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP (15)

Plaid Cymru (9)

Councillors

Annwen Hughes
Olaf Cai Larsen
Gwynfor Owen
Arwyn Herald Roberts
[Vacant Seat]

Linda Ann Jones
Edgar Wyn Owen
Llio Elenid Owen
Beca Roberts

Independent (5)

Councillors

Anwen J. Davies
Eryl Jones-Williams
John Pughe

Anne Lloyd-Jones
Dewi Owen

Liberal/Labour (1)

Councillor Stephen Churchman

Ex-officio Members

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council

A G E N D A

1. VICE-CHAIR

To appoint a Vice-chair for 2023/24.

2. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declarations of personal interest.

4. URGENT ITEMS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chair for consideration.

5. MINUTES

4 - 8

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 16th March, 2023, be signed as a true record.

**6. PRIORITIES OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY SERVICES - 9 - 11
UPDATE**

To submit the report of the Head of Democracy Services.

7. SUPPORT FOR COUNCILLORS AND COUNCILLOR SAFETY

12 - 16

To submit the report of the Democracy and Language Services Manager, the Assistant Head of Corporate Support and the Members' Development Officer.

DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE, 16/3/23

PRESENT:

Councillors: Dewi Owen (Chair), Stephen Churchman, Annwen Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Linda Ann Jones, Olaf Cai Larsen, Anne Lloyd-Jones, Edgar Wyn Owen, Llio Elenid Owen, 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), Sioned Mai Jones (Temporary Democracy Team Leader) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

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

Present for item 6:

Catrin Love (Assistant Head of Corporate Support Department).

Present for item 7:

Carey Cartwright (Organisational Learning and Development Manager) and Cara Williams (Member Development Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Anwen J. Davies, Gwynfor Owen and John Pughe.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

It was explained there was no need to declare an interest in item 9 - The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Report, as there was no automatic right to continue as Chair and as the Committee elected a Chair for each year.

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were raised.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 15 November 2022, as a true record.

5. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY SERVICES

Submitted - the draft of the annual report by the Head of Democracy Services on behalf of the Democracy Services Committee with regards to support for members. The Democracy Services Committee was asked for comments on the draft report outlining the support available for Members and what would be developed in future.

In presenting his report, the Head of Corporate Services thanked his predecessor, Geraint Owen, for the work he had completed during his time in the role. He also thanked the Democracy Service staff and the Monitoring Officer for their support.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- In response to an observation, it was noted that it could be arranged to upload a map and directions for the Council's meeting rooms on the Members' Intranet.
- In response to a question regarding the Members' questionnaire, it was noted there would be regular updates on matters raised by members. It was suggested that it would be useful to send the questionnaire to the members again this year.
- It was asked if there was a way for members to know whether an officer was working in the office or at home on a specific day, without sending an e-mail to the individual first. In response, it was noted that the Council had a duty to ensure service continuation and although the service and the managers knew who was in the office at any given time, it was not believed that this information was available for the whole Council. Enquiries could be made about this, but the members needed to make their own arrangements for the time being.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the information.

6. SUPPORT FOR COUNCILLORS AND COUNCILLOR SAFETY

Submitted - a joint report by the Democracy Services and Language Manager, the Assistant Head of Corporate Support Services and the Members' Training Officer detailing the support that was available to councillors, along with councillor safety.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- It was noted that the disruption from the public gallery during the Extraordinary Council meeting in August last year, and the subsequent observations made on social media, had left members feeling threatened, and it was a comfort that the Council was taking these safety issues seriously.
- It was noted that it was very good to see more publicity given to the mental health of members and staff, and the support that was available to them.
- It was asked who carried out the risk assessments for multi-location meetings and what the guidelines were for them. In response, it was explained that the Democracy and Language Services Manager had begun the assessment and then shared the information with a team of people, giving consideration to the known potential circumstances, and what could potentially develop. It was also noted that the Health and Safety Service had been looking at the basic arrangements that should be in place. Some matters were more structural involving the meeting room, and others were matters of a more managerial nature. Members of the public were asked to leave their bags in the lockers outside Siambr Dafydd Orwig, and it was noted that more work was needed on the layout of the public gallery in the chamber. Beyond this, it would be a matter of escalating the situation as we became aware of specific threats, or if contentious matters arose, although, of course, it was not always obvious beforehand that a matter was contentious.
- It was noted that members had a responsibility to discuss sensitive matters in a sensible and moderate way, using appropriate language and to keep within the requirements of the Behaviour Code.
- The lockers outside Siambr Dafydd Orwig were welcomed, but it was noted that those members who sat in the rear row of the Chamber felt unprotected, and that a barrier more substantial than a rope was needed between the members and the public in the public gallery.

- The importance of members' personal safety out in their wards was emphasised, and it was confirmed that this was now part of the Safe Leadership training, which also addressed safety issues during the election period and in surgeries, along with practical advice regarding visiting electors' homes. It was also noted that the Wales Local Government Association had very good guidelines on personal safety, and that they were available on the 'Looking after yourself' tile on the Members' Intranet.
- Referring to the comment in paragraph 15 of the report that members should ask the Political Group Assistants, amongst others, for information on the contents of the Members' Intranet, it was noted that there were smaller groups on the Council, without political support and that they also needed the message.
- Referring to the Extraordinary Council meeting held last August, it was suggested that it had not been democratic that as few as five members of the Council had been able to call an extraordinary meeting of the Full Council and it was asked whether there should be a higher threshold. In response, it was explained that constitutional matters were being addressed at the moment, and the suggestion would be passed on to the Monitoring Officer. It was noted, however, that the assessment was taking place and that the chairs would be briefed beforehand.
- It was noted that it was important that everyone knew about the support that was available, and every member was encouraged to attend the excellent course held by the Wales Local Government Association on the subject.
- It was noted, although there was a need to be vigilant in terms of the situations that could arise in public meetings, there was a need to avoid overreacting and scaring the public.
- In response to a question regarding managing the lockers outside Siambr Dafydd Orwig, it was explained that the officers of the Democracy Service and the Health and Safety Service welcomed and guided the public into the foyer, explained the arrangements to them and asked them to keep their bags in the lockers.
- It was noted that the officers had acted very quickly at the time of the disruption from the public gallery in August, and that the safety of the officers was also important. The comment was reiterated and it was emphasised that the safety of everyone involved in the meeting was important, the members, officers, the public and members of the press.

RESOLVED to accept the report for information.

7. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROVISION FOR MEMBERS

Submitted – the report of the Learning and Organisational Development Manager providing an update of the Learning and Development provision for members highlighting successes, challenges and developments. The Committee was invited to consider the training arrangements and the proposed steps and approve them.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- It was noted that it was difficult to get people to attend training sessions during the day, especially brief sessions that lasted for only an hour, as people were not able to take an hour off from their work, and it was asked if it would be better to combine more than one session to fill an entire morning or afternoon. In response, it was noted that the Service had experimented with holding some training sessions in the evening, but it had not been a success in terms of the attendance numbers. It was noted further that the Service was open to the idea of combining training, or any other suggestions members had to offer.
- Concern was expressed there were only five members present in a recent Equality training session, and the importance of matters such as equality and prejudice was

emphasised. It was noted, however, that many of the members who had been on the Council before May 2022 had attended the training in the past.

- It was noted that some training sessions were popular, and others were not, and it was suggested there was a need to place more emphasis on the method of promoting some opportunities.
- It was enquired whether it would be possible to upload a recording of every training session on-line so that members could watch it at a time that was convenient for them. In response, it was explained that sessions were recorded wherever possible and were then available on the Organisation's Learning and Development page following the event. However, if no non-Welsh speaking members attended the sessions, it would not be possible to obtain an English recording. However, if a request was made for an English recording, the capacity of the Translation Team to translate the session and upload it onto the Intranet would need to be assessed. It was also noted that viewing the recording was not valid proof that the member had completed the training, especially core titles, and members are therefore urged to make every effort to attend the core titles.
- It was suggested, that although the need to record attendance in mandatory courses was accepted, that this might not be that important in terms of optional titles.

The Democracy and Language Manager noted that following the success of the Mental Health First Aid course that had been held in January, that requests had been received to hold a further two-day course, and the members' support was sought to consider whether it would be practical to hold the course during the last two days of the summer half-term (1-2) June as no committee meetings were to be held that week.

It was agreed to look into this option.

RESOLVED to approve the training arrangements and the proposed steps.

8. SUPPORT FOR COUNCILLORS – PERFORMANCE OF THE DEMOCRACY SERVICES TEAM

Submitted - the joint report of the Democracy and Language Services Manager and the Temporary Democracy Team Leader outlining some of the themes and issue that had been highlighted during a series of conversations with individual councillors to seek their opinion on the support provided to members and what could be done to assist councillors in their role.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- It was enquired whether it would be possible to provide an office as a quiet workspace for members, as was the case some years ago before Council meetings. In response, it was noted that by now very few meetings were being held in the offices, and the practice of offering rooms for the political groups to meet on the morning of the Full Council meeting continued. It was agreed to look into this, but it was emphasised that no promises could be made on this.
- It was noted that the Democracy Services Team provided an excellent service, and everyone was very willing to provide assistance and support.
- Reference was made to difficulties in contacting some Council officers on the phone. In response, every officer had a responsibility to ensure that their phone number was correct on the internal directory, and that work was ongoing in the Information Technology Service to ensure that the numbers were still current. It was also noted that it was important that teams used a system where a call was transferred to someone else if the officer was not available. The member was asked to contact the Service if he had any specific examples of the problem.

RESOLVED to note the observations and accept the report.

9. THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES' REPORT

Submitted - the report of the Democracy and Language Service Manager inviting the committee to form a recommendation for 2023/23 senior salaries to be submitted to the Full Council on 4 May 2023.

Further to the content of the report, the Democracy and Language Service Manager noted that an information sheet noting the changes would be posted on the Members' Intranet and would be shared as part of the weekly Bulletin for Members.

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- It was noted, in light of changes with appointing a lay member to the Chairpersonship of the Governance and Audit Committee, that 1 of the 18 senior salaries had not been allocated, and it was proposed that that senior salary should be paid to the Chair of this Committee based on the workload associated with the role, and would be likely to increase in future. In response, it was noted that the recommendation had been formed on the basis of the responsibilities listed in the appendix to the report, and it would be a requirement to secure the necessary evidence to identify the 18th salary. It was also explained, that although no senior salaries had been allocated to the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, that the Council paid a lay member fee to the individual for their work.
- It was suggested that we should correspond with other councils to gain an understanding of the situation in each authority.
- It was noted that although it was important to know what other authorities were doing, that it was more important to have an understanding of what other Gwynedd chairs were doing, and the allowance should be paid to the chairs with the greatest workload.
- As a way forward, it was suggested that the Committee should ask for additional information in terms of the responsibilities and workload of the Chair of this Committee, including a comparison with the situation in other counties, and recommending to the Full Council that a senior salary should be paid to the chair of this Committee, if the additional information merited this.

RESOLVED

- 1. To recommend that the Full Council adopts the senior salaries list for 2023/24 and for the future (as seen in paragraph 14 of the report to the committee).**
- 2. To note that the Committee has requested additional information in relation to the responsibilities and workload of the Chair of the Democracy Services Committee, including a comparison with the situation in other counties, and a wish to recommend to the Full Council that a senior salary should be paid to the Chair of the Democracy Services Committee, if the additional information merits this.**

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm and concluded at 3.45pm.



Date of meeting:	15 June 2023
Subject	Priorities of the Head of Democracy Services - update
Recommendation	The Democracy Services Committee is asked to receive the report for information.
Contact Officer:	Ian Jones, Head of Democracy Services

What is the background and relevant considerations?

1. As part of my first annual report I noted that I have four priority fields that will receive attention during 2023/24. To remind you, the priorities can be viewed below
 - Safety and support for Councillors
 - Personal development conversations (consultative session)
 - Examine our scrutiny arrangements
 - Paperless Council
2. A separate report is submitted to you today on safety and support for Councillors. This report therefore seeks to address two of the other priorities, namely personal development talks and a paperless Council.
3. For information, I will not report on the Scrutiny arrangements aspect to this committee as they relate to governance arrangements and therefore will be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee.

Consultative Sessions

4. All Elected Members have been invited to take advantage of the Consultative sessions available.
5. Everyone is different, with different strengths and a wide variety of development requirements. Maybe an individual is unsure of the development that they need, or what is available.
6. An informal discussion with a Specialist from the Development and Learning team will provide you with an opportunity to discuss your role as

an Elected Member, consider the things that come easy to you, elements that are more challenging and maybe of concern to you, and your hopes for the future. It will also be an opportunity for you to discuss how you wish to learn – what suits you?

7. A Personal development plan is usually agreed at the end of the session (personally developed for you) with a variety of development and learning elements.
8. You may contact the Councillor development officer (Cara Williams) to arrange a session.

Paperless Council

9. I have already reported on the proposal to move towards becoming a paperless Council to reduce our carbon footprint and to realise savings by reducing printing and postage costs (in accordance with the Full Council's decision).
10. The grounds for action are clear:
 - environmental benefit of being paperless, particularly as a result of the Council declaring a Climate Emergency in March 2019.
 - benefit from electronic communication with information shared directly, avoiding any issues that may arise with a slow postal service having an impact on the receipt of committee papers etc.
 - evidence that it is possible to work paperless very effectively.
 - the need to deliver the relevant savings plans in accordance with the decision of the Full Council on 03/03/2023
11. We have already started to prepare and encourage everyone to move to be paperless for some time and recognise that changing habits can take time and can be challenging at the start.
12. At the start of the new Council term, the Councillors were given a choice of IT equipment to best respond to their requirements when attending meetings (remotely and on location). The offer of an additional screen was made to enable effective paperless working, using one screen to read the agenda and the other screen to be part of the committee (joining via Zoom).
13. We have continued to offer paper copies of agendas following the 2022 Election and 29 Councillors have chosen to currently receive paper copies. This was on the grounds of the individuals' choice.
14. As a result of the full Council's decision the printing and postage budgets has been reduced significantly, with only a small budget left for paper provision where there are specific medical requirements.

15. Following the decision an equality impact assessment was drafted before moving on to form a plan of action. The assessment notes the mitigation steps which includes providing hard copies where there is a medical need. In addition, the impact assessment also identifies that working electronically can be more beneficial and accessible, as it is possible to change screen and font size etc., to correspond with the requirements of the individual.

16. In addition, we have also consulted with health and safety experts to identify standard criteria and specific 'health conditions' to be considered eligible to receive paper copies - should this be the individual's choice.

17. We have already concluded that forcing change and doing so overnight would not be sensible. We recognise that changing long-term habits may be difficult, and therefore we are very keen to support you through this change.

18. As noted, 29 currently receive paper copies and therefore we will offer:

- a. Screens for those who have not requested screens so far (if they wish to receive them)
- b. Training will be offered on using the equipment - this will probably be 1:1 based training as everybody's questions will be about their own personal use. It will be necessary for Councillors to organise a specific time with the appropriate officer.
- c. Correspond with Councillors to explain the above and give individuals time to contact us and present evidence if they continue to require paper copies.

19. We are aware that there will be a few exceptions to the rules and are currently in the process of forming the exceptions.

20. We hope to be as paperless as possible by the Autumn term.

Recommendation

21. The Democracy Services Committee is requested to accept the report for information.

Agenda Item 7

Date of meeting:	15 June 2023
Subject	Support for Councillors and Councillor Safety
Recommendation	The Democracy Services Committee is asked to accept the report for information.
Contact Officer:	Vera Jones, Democracy and Language Services Manager Catrin Love, Assistant Head of Corporate Support Cara Williams, Members' Development Officer

What is the background and relevant considerations?

1. A report was presented on Support for Councillors and Councillor Safety to a meeting of this Committee on 16 March 2023. There were considerable discussions regarding Councillors' concerns during the meeting.
2. The Head of Democracy Services reported in his annual report that the safety of Councillors is one of the main priorities for 2023-24. Two principal themes have been highlighted.
 - There are increasing pressures on Councillors and, therefore, the need to ensure **support and health and well-being support** for you.
 - In addition, issues with regards to **Councillor safety** have become apparent in light of national incidents, incidents within the Council and to individual Councillors.
3. The purpose of the report is to update you on the work which has been undertaken over the last few months in this field.

Communication

4. During the previous meeting of this committee, and in recent conversations with some Councillors, it has become apparent that every Councillor is not aware of the support already available to assist you to look after your health and well-being. This includes your physical and mental health.
5. Members Intranet. The 'Looking after yourself' page on the Members' Intranet refers to the support that is available.
6. Very useful information is available on the Members' intranet. We are also aware that not all Councillors are aware of the provision available here. A brief session will be held, following today's committee, to present information to all committee members. You are asked to spread the word amongst your fellow councillors about the available provision.

7. Members' Bulletin. As a result of the observations about the lack of awareness, it was decided to draw regular attention to the support that is available in this field. In the Members' Bulletin there is a specific piece every month that is shared with every councillor drawing attention to the different elements of support available every month. You have probably already noticed the following in the Members' bulletin.

Your Wellbeing



8. There is a monthly bulletin that focuses on a specific field in terms of your mental health or your safety.

March	The first bulletin drew your attention to the Conference held for Council Managers on the theme 'Mental Wellbeing - moving the conversation forward' sharing a recording of the event with you and drawing attention to the Safe Leadership training that is available.
April	Training was the focus in April as well, promoting the first aid mental health course.
May	The Medra Counselling Service was highlighted in the May bulletin. Full information is available on the Members' Intranet; however, all Councillors are reminded that the service is strictly confidential and you can contact Medra directly, and do not need to contact a Council officer to gain access. The bulletin also drew attention to the Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Training to be held on 21/06/2023.

Training

9. Several training sessions have been offered over the last few months specifically because of your requests as Councillors to get support in the mental health and safety field.

10. Mental Health. Several training sessions have been offered in this field.

- a. At the beginning of January, a two-day 'Mental Health First Aid' session was held, and very positive feedback was received.
- b. Another course was organised for June, but unfortunately not enough names were received to justify running the course. We will revisit the demand to hold this course again in the Autumn.
- c. In addition, because of a request from Councillors, Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Training will be offered on 21 June. The half-day course will be beneficial to assist you to identify the signs amongst the public in your wards, know how to respond and where to refer them for further assistance.

11. Security. As noted, the violence and harassment suffered by some Members increases their stress and the 'Safe Leadership' course has been adapted to help address this. It includes discussion and practical steps regarding personal safety to assist you to keep safe and to reduce personal stress. For those members who attended the course some time ago, but who have not received the new element on personal safety, a short session is available for the safety item only.

12. Below, is a summary of the incidents held and the numbers who attended the training.

Social Media - Managing your reputation on-line 15/12/22

5 Elected Members attended. This course was commissioned externally at the request of Members.

Social Media - how to create good content (18/01/23)

5 Elected Members attended. Again, this was a course organised at the request of Members.

Safe Leadership and Personal Safety 27/4/23

6 out of 30 attended - 4 left early, therefore only 2 received the new element on personal safety


Your Personal Safety 27/4/23 (a specific course for those who had already attended the Safe Leadership Course)

10 out of 23 attended

Helping people through the cost-of-living crisis - 26/4/23 and 10/5/23

16 attended - this was open to all interested. Another session is to follow soon.

13. The numbers who have been registering for the events have been quite low, however the feedback received from the sessions is extremely positive. A further message has been sent to every member who has not had an opportunity to attend the 'Safe leadership' course to strongly encourage them to attend. You are asked as committee members to encourage your fellow Councillors to take advantage of this very important provision that is available to you.



14. It was noted that the feedback from the sessions has been positive, and practical matters with regards to personal safety have been suggested by Councillors during the “Your Personal Safety” session held at the end of April. There were five elements raised, including

- a. Organised threat
- b. Conflict between neighbours
- c. Training to deal with difficult or dangerous people/situations - de-escalation
- ch. Discussion Forums
- d. Support Booklet

15. Work is being undertaken to move forward to respond to some of the matters raised. A general guide regarding “organised threat’ and ‘conflict between neighbours’ is being developed. Care must be taken in developing any guidance as all circumstances will be unique.

16. We are already trying to contact potential providers to organise training to deal with difficult or dangerous people or situations. An “Assertiveness” training session has been organised for the 20th of September – register with the Members' Development Officer (Cara Williams).

17. It was decided not to create a specific information booklet on safety matters as all the information is available on the Members' intranet. There is always a risk when printing hard copies of any information to have dated, and a failure to include the latest information. A request was also made to establish informal discussion forums and we will consider the request in the context of any formal arrangements to report on bullying etc.

Practical matters

18. It has already been reported that practical steps are in place to ensure the safety of Councillors, the safety of those attending the Chamber and staff during multi-location meetings. A report was given at the last meeting on the steps already taken, including risk assessments etc.

19. Since the last meeting further steps have been taken on physical safety measures in the Chamber. There are stronger arrangements to separate the public gallery from the Chamber floor, allowing access when required for individuals who need to attend the Chamber such as in the Planning Committees or to ask a question at the Full Council meeting.

20. We are also aware that as Councillors you are out and about in the community all the time. There are specific steps that could be considered to protect your safety and your family's safety, such as not publishing your home address on the website. Useful guidelines regarding safety considerations before holding surgeries in the community have also been included on the Members' Intranet and are discussed during the Safe Leadership training sessions which will assist you.



Mental Health.

21. One of the key services available to you is the Medra counselling service. The Service is confidential, and you can refer yourself to the Service - details on how to do so are on the Members' intranet site.

Sharing information further.

22. As representatives of all Members on the committee, you are asked to share this information with your fellow members to ensure that we all take responsibility for looking after ourselves and each other.

Recommendation

23. The Democracy Services Committee is asked to accept the report for information.