
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE 11/7/17

Present: Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts (Chair).

Councillors: Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Nia Jeffreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Charles Wyn Jones, Linda Ann Jones, Cai Larsen, Dewi Owen and Catrin Wager.

Officers: Geraint Owen (Head of Democratic Services), Huw Ynyr (Senior Information Technology and Transformation Manager), Carey Cartwright (Learning and Development Manager), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager), Nia Meleri Edwards (Change Management and Development Officer), Cara Williams (Member Development Officer) and Siôn Owen (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Annwen Daniels, Anwen Davies and Gareth A. Roberts.

1. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Dewi Owen as Vice-chair of this committee for 2017-18.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 4 April 2017 as a true record.

4. THE ROLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

A short presentation was received by the Democratic Services Manager outlining the role of this Committee. The Committee's duty was noted to assist whilst developing support for the members to represent their co-members, ensure that sufficient staff and resources are provided to support members, and report to the Full Council annually.

Statistics were submitted on the Council's constitution following the May 2017 election:

- That 24 new members were elected in 2017 compared to 30 in 2012
- That fewer female members were members of the Council following the election compared to 2015. By now, 23% of Gwynedd Council members were female.
- That the percentage of the Council's male members between 45 and 65 years old had increased by 18.18%.
- That there were no Council members within the 18-24 age group in 2017.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- It was noted that it was interesting that the number of older members had increased.
- It did not appear that young people took an interest in the democratic process, and it would be beneficial for the Committee to consider engaging with cohorts of young people in order to teach them about the democratic process and encourage them to participate.

- Disappointment was noted that it did not appear that the hard work of the Diversity in Democracy Sub-group brought changes to the statistics of the new Council, although it was noted from the beginning that it would be very difficult to prove the effectiveness of the group's work. It would be beneficial to see whether age/gender analysis was available for all applicants in the May 2017 election.
- It was noted that different stages in life, such as bringing up young children, could be a barrier for some who wished to be Councillors.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted – a report by the Democratic Services Manager suggesting possible items for the Committee's 2017-18 work programme.

Following a discussion, the following matters were added to the Committee's work programme:

- Closer collaboration with the Standards Committee, including receiving a report on the work of that Committee.
- Research to explain the circumstances that could impact the attendance rates of members in the Council's public meetings.
- Bullying and social media
- Expand the work of promoting democracy
- Researching to see how the elected Members of the Council could contribute towards any further savings.

RESOLVED: To add the above matters to the work programme

6. WELCOME AND INDUCTION

The background of the sessions held to induct the Members following the May 2017 election was presented orally. It was noted that hard work was done in order to provide effective sessions and that this had paid off as positive comments had been received by new and returning Members following the election.

A discussion was held on how the induction sessions could be further adapted for the future in order to improve. Observations from the discussion:

- It was noted that it would be beneficial to receive guidance on ward work, especially on how to keep Gwynedd residents at the centre.
- A tour around the buildings in order to familiarise themselves would have been beneficial.
- It would have been beneficial for brief information on committees and their functions to be available for the Members.
- Communication needed to be improved between the Council departments and the Members when work was done or events were held in specific wards.

9. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Submitted – the report of the Learning and Development Manager, updating the Committee members on the current provision and what was in the pipeline, seeking guidance and observations on further developments. Whilst acknowledging and thanking this Committee for its contribution in developing the training programme for 2017-18, he emphasised that Learning and Development was much wider than formal training sessions. He noted that sessions to identify learning needs were available to the Members. He also noted that a Mentoring and Coaching scheme was available to the Members, and many had already shown an interest.

In response to questions by the Committee members, the learning and Development Manager noted the following points:

- Although the mentoring and coaching scheme was not utilising former members, this was not impossible. Nevertheless, any mentors would have to follow good practice.
- The Learning and Development Service had been attempting to arrange smaller sessions and hold them less frequently, so that those who attended would get the most benefit and would get a choice of a number of different times for their convenience. Additional sessions would be arranged if there was enough demand.

Further observations arising from the discussion:

- That there was a need to take advantage of the opportunities that arose from developments in the technology world.
- That further training was needed and more options for individual members in order to get the most value and benefit from the equipment that was being shared out to the Councillors.
- That holding meetings via video conference could work well with effective chairing.

In response, the Senior Information Technology and Transformation Manager noted that it was important that the members communicated any obstacles and problems that arose with the Information Technology Service. He also emphasised this Committee's role in driving these developments forward.

RESOLVED: To accept the report.

The meeting commenced at 10:00am and concluded at 12:00pm.

CHAIR
