

## DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor V.J. Bailey (Chairman); Councillor G.D.D. Carroll (Vice-Chairman); Councillors: Mrs. S.M. Hanks, N.P. Hodges, K.F. McCaffer, M.J.G. Morgan, Mrs. S.D. Perkes, A.R. Robertson, N.C. Thomas and M.R. Wilson

Also present: Councillors L.O. Rowlands and E. Williams.

### 207 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

### 208 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

### 209 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### 210 ICT UPDATE FOR MEMBERS (MD) –

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of any new developments or issues within the ICT service and how they related to the services provided to them.

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted.

#### Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

## 211 REVIEW OF THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (HDS) -

The purpose of the report was to seek the Committee's views on the refreshed Elected Member Development Strategy, as attached at Appendix A to the report and that subject to the Committee's views to endorse the refreshed Strategy to allow it to be referred to Cabinet for approval and adoption. The Council had had a Strategy in place for a number of years with the last review of the Strategy being undertaken in 2016. A planned refresh of the Strategy had been programmed for 2020, but due to the global pandemic and related challenges faced by the Democratic Services team the work to deliver the review was delayed.

The Head of Democratic Services in presenting the report advised that the Strategy set out the approach that the Council took regarding the development and support of its Elected Members. The refresh of the Strategy also included the views of the WLGA on its content with the comment being received that the Strategy "is comprehensive, covers most of the areas needed is particularly strong on making sure training is driven by Members' needs, more in depth than many seen."

The review identified that for the most part, the previous Strategy was still fit for purpose with the following main themes continuing to be relevant:

- a commitment to support the development needs of all Elected Members in order to assist them in carrying out the roles which they undertake during their term of office
- a process for identifying the local and national, collective and individual development needs of all Members; and
- the provision of a personal review process which was available to all Members and which would enable them to review and identify their personal development needs.

The refreshed Strategy also included updated information relating to essential (mandatory) and desirable (non-mandatory) training that covered learning areas aimed at supporting Elected Members undertaking their diverse roles. The revised Strategy also now linked to the recently updated WLGA Competency Framework for Elected Members in addition to revised Member role descriptions which had also been updated to reflect changes in terms of duties, expectations and behaviours as a direct result of the introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Other changes to the Strategy related to reference to the All Wales Learning Academy.

In considering the report Members commended the Head of Democratic Services on a comprehensive and interesting document. During the discussion reference was made to how challenging and inappropriate behaviour could be assessed. In response the Head of Service advised that there were a number of routes including the use of the Council's Local Dispute Resolution Procedure. Councillor N Thomas commented that in his experience a discussion with the Monitoring

Officer had been most helpful before considering the escalation of a matter further and advised Members to consider this approach in the first instance.

Rules of debate training was suggested by Councillor Wilson to be an area that should be regarded as mandatory training by all Elected Members in order for Members to be fully aware of the relevant protocols, how business and the general conduct of meetings is/should be conducted. This view was accepted by the Committee

In referring to Members safety in undertaking their duties Councillor Wilson also referred to equipment that could be made available by the Council e.g. the use of body cameras. The Committee considered this point however, the Chairman considered that the use of body cameras raised a number of practical issues in relation to the use such devices, permissions, and holding personal information. The Chairman in his view, considered it would be more appropriate for a personal safety policy be developed to support Members that could provide advice and assistance from the Council when carrying out their duties.

Having considered the report and having regard to the comments made at the meeting it was subsequently,

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the topics contained within the table attached at Appendix B to the report be endorsed with an amendment that Rules of Debate training be included as mandatory training.

(2) T H A T that the development of a personal safety policy specifically for Elected Members be presented to the Committee and Cabinet for consideration/ adoption in due course.

(3) T H A T the inclusion of the WLGA Competency Framework (Appendix C to the report) and the revised model role descriptions for Members set out in Appendix D to the report, as part of the refresh of the Council's Member Development Strategy be endorsed.

(4) T H A T the refreshed Member Development Strategy subject to Resolutions 1, 2 and 3 above be endorsed and referred to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

#### Reasons for decisions

(1) In acknowledgement of essential and recommended learning subject areas to be included in the Council's Strategy.

(2) Having regard to the personal safety of Elected Members.

(3) In acknowledgement that the Framework recognised best practice and reflected the WLGA model role descriptions and themes for a proposed Induction

Programme for new and returning Members and took account of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

(4) To seek Cabinet's approval of the refreshed Strategy having regard to Resolutions 1,2 and 3 above.

## 212 DRAFT MEMBER INDUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2022 (HDS) -

The report outlined the proposed induction and development programme for newly elected and returning Councillors following the Local Government Election in May 2022 as set out in Appendix A and was for consideration by the Committee.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that a comprehensive Induction and Development Programme for Members was undertaken following the 2017 Local Government Election which had informed the structure for the 2022 proposed programme.

The proposed programme, by its very nature and timescale, contained some dates/times and draft content which were indicative and subject to change.

Having regard to the earlier resolutions made by the Committee in regard to the draft Member Development Strategy it was the intention to amend the programme to require attendance at Rules of Debate development sessions as mandatory development. Councillor Thomas requested that the Vale's GLAM and Ethnic minority networks be approached to assist in the delivery of the Equality and Diversity sessions. The Head of Democratic Services gave an undertaking to investigate if this would be feasible. Councillor McCaffer in the interests of inclusivity and diversity suggested that the times for any sessions indicated as 9.00 a.m. commencement be amended so that the sessions started at 9.30am to assist those Members with childcare responsibilities. Councillor Hanks reflecting on the previous induction programme in 2017 asked if more emphasis could be placed on interactive opportunities in particular time for Members to network with each other, that any handouts be provided to Members prior to the sessions they are scheduled to attend and opportunities be considered for Members to meet with other officers in the service areas as well as the Senior Management of the authority.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Robertson that a map of the ward areas of the Vale and a list of contact details for the officers in the service areas as well as Senior Management be provided it was accepted that these would be covered in the programme nearer to the time. Councillor Wilson drew attention to the Member role in respect of appointments as LA representatives on Governing Bodies and it was suggested that this aspect could also be included in some sessions.

Members in recognising the considerable work that had been undertaken by the Democratic Services Team to date in preparing both the Induction Programme and the draft Member Development Strategy acknowledged that information

collated via Members' surveys, Member Expo events and having regard to the 2017 induction programme, had informed the programme.

RESOLVED – T H A T the draft Member Induction and Development Programme, attached as Appendix A to the report, be endorsed and referred to Cabinet for consideration and approval with the following suggested additions:

- Rules of Debate training be included in the Draft Induction Programme as mandatory training
- The Vale of Glamorgan Council's GLAM and Ethnic minority networks be approached with the view to assisting on the delivery of the Equality and Diversity sessions;
- In the interests of inclusivity and diversity the training sessions noted as 9.00 a.m. be amended to 9.30 a.m. to assist Members with childcare responsibilities;
- Member appointments e.g. to Governing Bodies and Outside Bodies
- That further consideration be given to making induction programme sessions:
  - interactive opportunities,
  - time for Members to network with each other,
  - Presentations and handouts to be provided to Members in advance to the sessions they are scheduled to attend,
  - opportunities be afforded for Members to meet with other officers in the service areas, during the induction programme, as well as the Senior Managers of the authority.

#### Reason for decision

To facilitate the approval and subsequent delivery of a Member Induction events and ongoing Member Development Programme and having regard to the comments / suggestions made during the meeting.

#### 213 ANNUAL REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (HDS) -

The purpose of the report was to provide Committee with an outline of the staff resources existing within Democratic Services, a summary of the wide range of duties undertaken within the service area throughout the year, ongoing developments and plans for the future.

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted.

#### Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

## 214 DRAFT CANDIDATE AND ELECTED MEMBER HANDBOOK (2022 EDITION) (HDS) -

The purpose of the report was to seek Member approval of the draft Candidate and Elected Member Handbook (2022 Edition) content ahead of publication as part of the 2022 Local Government Election Nomination Process and the Council's ongoing Member Development Programme.

A Candidate and Elected Member Handbook was an important information resource as it enabled all Election Candidates whom eventually became Elected Members to quickly become familiar with how the Council worked, support available to them, the rules and procedures under which the Council operated and the complexities of the Elected Member role.

The next Local Government Election was scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 with the deadline for Candidate Nominations expected to be on or around Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022. This would be confirmed by the Electoral Commission later this year.

### RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the draft Candidate and Elected Member Handbook (2022 Edition), attached as Appendix A to the report, be endorsed and referred to Cabinet for approval.
- (2) T H A T the Candidate and Elected Member Handbook (2022 Edition) be made available to all Local Government Election 2022 Candidates by the Head of Democratic Services, following the deadline for Candidate Nominations, as set by the Electoral Commission.
- (3) T H A T an electronic copy of the Candidate and Elected Member Handbook (2022 Edition) be uploaded to the Council's Website, Member Committee Hub, Member Desktop 'How-To' Folder and MemberNet Homepage following the 2022 Local Government Election.
- (4) T H A T the Head of Democratic Services be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman of the Democratic Services Committee, to make amendments to the Handbook content relating to typographical amendments or to reflect changes related to keeping policy and/or the Council's Constitution up to date.

### Reasons for decisions

- (1) To facilitate the approval and subsequent publication of a 2022 Edition Candidate and Elected Member Handbook as part of the 2022 Local Government Election Nomination Process and the Council's ongoing Member Development Programme.
- (2) To manage Election Candidate expectations of the Elected Member role and ensure that Elected Members have important information available to them prior to their first day in office.

(3) The Candidate and Elected Member Handbook (2022 Edition) is readily available to all Elected Members whenever required during their term in office

(4) To ensure that the Handbook content continues to develop over the period prior to publication and remains accurate.