

No.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 1st July, 2024.

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

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

Present: Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson (Chair); Councillor N.C. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors G. Bruce, G.D.D. Carroll, E. Goodjohn, S.M. Hanks, S.D. Perkes and J. Protheroe.

172 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Interim Head of Democratic Services 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”.

173 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor H.C. Hamilton.

174 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 27th November, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

For Members’ information, in drawing attention to the minute relating to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, the Interim Head of Democratic Services advised the Committee that the Members’ schedule of remuneration for 2024/25 was required to be forwarded to the IRPW and uploaded to the Council’s website by 31st July, 2024.

175 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

176 “TOOLS OF EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY” ELECTED MEMBER WORKSHOP(S) (REF) –

The reference from the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group on 28th May, 2024 as contained within the agenda was presented. The Interim Head of Democratic Services in presenting the report provided an update on the progress to date and feedback received following the workshop sessions that had been held in

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March 2024 being one of the 13 principles that had been agreed to be progressed with regard to the Tools for Effective Scrutiny.

Appendix A to the report detailed the results of the feedback received which had been extremely positive with Members stating that they highly rated the workshop, it had been well run, very useful, engaging and that it had met all of its objectives.

Following consideration of the report at the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group and the recommendation that such an event be considered mandatory within the 2027 Member Induction Programme following the next Local Government elections, the findings had been recommended to the Democratic Services Committee for its consideration.

A number of Members on the Democratic Services Committee who had attended the workshops stated that they considered that the sessions had been extremely worthwhile.

Councillor Carroll commented that the workshops should be optional stating that the previous Member Induction Programme in 2022 had been overwhelming, in particular for new Members, and suggested that different approaches to induction should be considered for 2027.

The Chair noted that future Member Induction sessions would no doubt be different as in 2022 we were still in Covid, and this training may be developed differently in future, including which subjects were to be considered mandatory and how they would be delivered.

Having fully considered the reference and the report, it was subsequently.

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet with the recommendation that the “Tools of Effective Scrutiny” workshop be included as a mandatory session within the 2027 Elected Member Induction Programme.

Reason for decision

In order for Cabinet to consider the Tools of Effective Scrutiny workshop being included as a mandatory training session in the 2027 Elected Member Induction Programme.

177 ANNUAL SCRUTINY IMPACT SURVEY: 2024 EDITION (REF) –

The Democratic Services Officer presented the reference from the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group of 28th May, 2024 which had been referred for the Committee’s consideration. Appendices A and B to the report provided the results of the survey and proposed actions to the responses with Appendix C referring to actions from the previous survey which had been completed with some actions being noted as ongoing work with Democratic Services.

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Members commented on their disappointment with the limited number of Members who had engaged with the survey. Councillor Thomas' view was that it was important for Members to engage in the process. The officer further advised that the report had been recommended to the Democratic Services Committee by the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group with the intention also that it may promote further awareness and increase the number of returns in the future.

Councillor Carroll commented that responsibility for responding to questions in scrutiny was, in his view, often led by officers rather than politically responsible Cabinet Members, and suggested that this could be done differently. The Chair noted the discussion around this within the actions proposed as a result of the survey, and said that it would be interesting to hear the outcome from this to improve the format of Scrutiny Committees.

Having regard to the fact that the findings would be progressed and monitored by the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group, the Committee subsequently.

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the reference, the report and appendices.

178 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (IHDS) –

The report of the Interim Head of Democratic Services provided the Committee with a summary of the wide range of duties undertaken within the service area throughout the year, ongoing developments and plans for the future.

In presenting the report the officer also referred to her appointment as Interim Head in the current absence of the Operational Manager and Head of Democratic Services, Jeff Rees, who had also previously advised the Council that he would be retiring in September 2024.

The Chair, with the support of the Committee, wished to take the opportunity to thank Jeff for his decades of work within the Council and to wish him well in his retirement.

Councillor Thomas, in echoing the Chair's comments, also thanked the Interim Head and her team in Democratic Services for their second to none support to Members.

Following consideration of the report, the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the report be noted.

(2) T H A T the Committee's appreciation for his work over the years and best wishes for the future be extended to Jeff Rees on his retirement.

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Reason for decisions

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and comments made at the meeting.