

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE  
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS  
ON FRIDAY 4 JANUARY, 2013**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor Mrs S. Davies [Chairman]

County Councillors P.J. Ashton, Mrs D. Bailey, Mrs L.V. Corfield, S. Davies, D.O. Evans, D.C. Jones, M.J. Jones, W.J.T. Powell, P.C. Pritchard, Mrs D.G. Thomas, T. Turner and D.H. Williams.

The Chairman welcomed County Councillor D.R. Price, Regulatory Committee Chairman to the meeting who was in attendance for Item 5.

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<b>DSC1-2013</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Dr G.J. Bowker. The Committee congratulated her on the recent birth of a baby boy and the Chairman advised she would send a card. It was noted that she had forwarded views on various agenda items.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>DSC2-2013</b>
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The Chairman was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October, 2012.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	<b>DSC3-2013</b>
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There were no declarations of interest.

<b>4.</b>	<b>PROTOCOL ON CIVIC AND EXECUTIVE MATTERS</b>	<b>DSC4-2013</b>
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The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director – Law and Governance (copy filed with the signed minutes).

The draft Protocol was discussed and it was agreed that it should include a paragraph on regalia making reference to the fact that the Vice Chairman and Assistant Vice Chairman should wear regalia when deputising for the Chairman at functions and that Shire Chairmen should also wear regalia at functions even if the Council Chairman was in attendance.

<b>RESOLVED:</b>	<b>REASON FOR DECISION:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. That the Committee agree the amended draft and</b></li> <li><b>2. That the draft be forwarded for discussion with Political Group Leaders and</b></li> <li><b>3. that following agreement a report would be made to Council to formally adopt the protocol.</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>To progress the adoption of the protocol.</b></p>

<b>5.</b>	<b>RE-INTRODUCTION OF SHIRE PLANNING COMMITTEES</b>	<b>DSC5-2013</b>
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The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director – Law and Governance (copy filed with the signed minutes).

County Councillor P.C. Pritchard advised that the Montgomeryshire Committee had concerns regarding having one regulatory/planning committee, that local knowledge was paramount and that the move to one committee had also had an impact on attendance levels.

The Committee discussed the issues and the following comments were made:

- Consistency of decisions across the County was important.
- Attendance at meetings was good with the average attendance being 79%
- From 2013 the Regulatory Committee would be held on Thursdays so as not to clash with Cabinet meetings.
- The Powys Change Plan stated that the Authority had to work as one across the county and not in shires.
- Members may still have to serve on a committee outside their Shires to ensure committees were politically balanced.
- The 2008 Wales Audit Office report was highly critical of shire based committees and to move back to this would be a retrograde step. It also originally recommended that the Council should have a single committee.
- The Planning Protocol allowed local members to make the local views known and where site visits were undertaken they could participate in these. However, planning decisions had to be in line with planning policies but taking into account local knowledge.
- The name “Regulatory Committee” was confusing to the public and “Planning” should feature in its name, however, it was agreed that the name had to also reflect the other work of the Committee.

It was suggested that the Planning Protocol should be reviewed and minor amendments made. The Regulatory Committee Chairman advised that at the last meeting he had asked the Committee to consider the notice period Town and Community Councils and the public had to give, to register their wish to speak at Committee meetings. This was currently three days and this timescale had recently caused some problems.

<b>RESOLVED:</b>	<b>REASON FOR DECISION:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. That the Regulatory Committee continues as currently constituted</b></li> <li><b>2. That its name be changed to Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee and</b></li> <li><b>3. That the Planning Protocol be reviewed by the Regulatory Committee Chairman and Vice</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. To respond to the issues raised by Montgomeryshire Committee</b></li> <li><b>2. To ensure that the name clearly reflects the role of the Committee.</b></li> <li><b>3. To review the Planning Protocol</b></li> </ol>

<b>Chairman, planning officers and representatives of the Democratic Services Committee and a report be brought back to the Democratic Services Committee for discussion.</b>	
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In respect of planning, comments were made that Members were not automatically advised of the content of Section 106 agreements agreed in respect of some planning applications.

<b>6.</b>	<b>BLOGGING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING DRAFT POLICY</b>	<b>DSC6-2013</b>
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The Committee considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services (copy filed with the signed minutes).

Members commented that using blogging and social networking was one way of reaching a wide range of people including young people. However, Members needed to be very careful when using such media. It was noted that the Members' Code of Conduct applied to Members when using blogging and social network sites. The Committee noted that the Labour Group had also agreed to the draft.

<b>RESOLVED:</b>	<b>REASON FOR DECISION:</b>
<b>1. That the Democratic Services Committee noted the comments on the draft Blogging and Social Networking Policy and</b> <b>2. Recommends the adoption of the policy to Full Council.</b>	<b>1. To progress the adoption of the policy</b>

<b>7.</b>	<b>WELSH AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF SCRUTINY</b>	<b>DSC7-2013</b>
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- 7.1 Draft characteristics of effective overview and scrutiny**
- 7.2 Verbal update regarding the review**

The Committee received the draft characteristics of effective overview and scrutiny. It was noted that Carmarthenshire would undertake a peer review of scrutiny in Powys County Council [PCC] and PCC would undertake a review with Rhondda Cynon Taf. It was hoped that the review would identify good practice. A report would be brought to the Democratic Services Committee regarding the review.

The involvement of the public in scrutiny and engagement of the public in the Council's work in general was discussed.

<b>RESOLVED:</b>	<b>REASON FOR DECISION:</b>
<b>That Anya Richards, Senior Communications Manager be invited to</b>	<b>To develop an awareness of public involvement and</b>

the next meeting to discuss promoting engagement and public involvement.	engagement.
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8.	<b>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE NETWORK</b>	<b>DS86-2013</b>
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The Committee received the letter of 7 December, 2012 from the Welsh Local Government Association [WLGA] regarding the support available from the latter. It was noted that the establishment of a Democratic Services Committee network had been suggested.

The Committee noted that such Committees were in their infancy and the schedule of meetings across Councils varied from the required one per annum to meeting on a quarterly basis. Members and officers were already meeting in the Member Development Networks and there was concern at the last Member Services Officers Network that another network would involve the same people. It was suggested that a decision on a network should be held in abeyance until Committees had been operating for at least a year.

The Committee agreed that there should not be duplication in meetings but supported the principle of a Democratic Services Committee network.

9.	<b>MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP</b>	<b>DSC9-2013</b>
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The Committee received the minutes of the Member Development Working Group held on 6 September and 18 October, 2012 [copies filed with the signed minutes].

10.	<b>JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS STEERING GROUP</b>	<b>DSC10-2013</b>
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The Committee received the notes of the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Group held on 11 October and 8 November, 2012 [copies filed with the signed minutes].

The following was noted:

**11 October, 2012 notes – Item 18 Other business** – development of guidance for Members regarding the use of laptops by Members during training events had been added to the Member Development Group work programme.

**8 November, 2012 notes – Item 9 Blackberrys for Members** – consideration of the need to update IT for Members had been added to the Democratic Services Committee work programme. Members also asked for an update on proposals to replace the congress system in County Hall and the Shire offices in Brecon and Welshpool.

County Councillor Mrs S. Davies  
Chairman