

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD
AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON
MONDAY, 4 JULY 2016**

PRESENT

County Councillor S C Davies (Chair)

County Councillors L V Corfield, PJ Ashton, G R Banks and D R Price

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	DSC13 - 2016
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Apologies were received from County Councillors D. Bailey and G.J. Bowker and County Councillor M.J. Jones who was on other council business. It was noted that a number of new members had been appointed to the Committee at the Annual meeting in May. County Councillor D. Mayor, a newly appointed member, had sent his apologies as he had already got diary commitments.

2.	ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR	DSC14 - 2016
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RESOLVED that County Councillor L.V. Corfield be elected as the Vice Chair for the ensuing year.

3.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)	DSC15 - 2016
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 30th March, 2016 as a correct record.

4.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	DSC16 - 2016
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There were no declarations of interest.

5.	MATTERS RELATING TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ISSUES	DSC17 - 2016
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The Committee considered the report from the Head of Democratic Services [copy filed with the signed minutes.]

1. Public Participation at Council meetings

The Head of Democratic Services advised that following the request of Council a review had been undertaken to establish whether other Welsh Authorities allowed public participation at Council meetings. As a result a draft document containing principles which could be developed into a protocol had been developed. It was noted that a discussion was needed with the Cabinet to consider if it wished to have public participation at its meetings before the protocol was extended to the Cabinet.

The Committee considered the issues and agreed:

- That questions should be asked of Cabinet Members and Chairs of Committees at Council meetings.
- Questions could be asked by letter/email and supplementary questions would be made verbally at Council meetings.

- Questions should be submitted no later than 10 working days prior to the meeting date and the requestor would have to submit their name and address.
- The reasons for refusing questions was noted but it was agreed that people should be advised of the complaints process and the public participations process should not be used in its place.
- The Chair would however have discretion regarding the questions taken.
- Questions would be asked at the beginning of Council meetings.
- Questions and answers in written form would be included on an agenda and a verbal supplementary question could be asked and answered at the meeting. The person submitting the question would not be required to read out the question at the meeting. Time limits for this would be 1 minute for the supplementary question to be asked and 3 to 4 minutes for the response. A maximum of 20 minutes would be made available for this part of the agenda.
- One question per requestor would be taken at each meeting and an individual requestor would be allowed to submit a maximum of two questions per council year.
- Any questions not added to the agenda would be added to a list for future meetings, unless due to the time lapse the question had been overtaken by events or the requestor asked that it not be taken. All questions which were not rejected would receive a written response, even if the requestor was not invited to attend the meeting. These questions and responses would be published on the council's website with the agenda for the Council meeting. This response would count towards the total number of questions which could be asked in a year. Rejected questions would not be publicised or available for inspection.
- Consent issues would need to be included in the protocol as Council meetings were webcast and requestors needed to understand that their question would be made public.
- The system would be trailed at a Council meeting and then reviewed by the DSC.

It was noted that the public would need clear guidance of any system introduced and be advised that the Council meetings are webcast. The trail would need to be promoted and advertised to the public.

RESOLVED	REASON FOR DECISION
<p>(i) That a draft protocol based on the discussions be developed for consideration by the Committee and the Council;</p> <p>(ii) That once the protocol was agreed the Council undertake a trial at a Council meeting and then review the process</p>	<p>To enable the Council to consider the introduction of public participation at Council meetings.</p>

and outcome.	
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2 2017 Council Election

2.1 Candidate information – “Be a Councillor Make a difference”

The Committee received a document developed by the Welsh Local Government Association [WLGA] and the Members’ and Officers’ Network. It was noted that two contributions had been included from Powys Councillors. The document would be added to the appropriate page on the Council’s website.

2.2 Members’ Induction Programme

The Committee received the draft Induction Programme developed by the Member Development Working Group. It was noted that this information would be included with any information sent out to prospective candidates and provided to political groups, to ensure that prospective candidates know of the need to attend Induction training.

RESOLVED	REASON FOR DECISION
To agree the content of the Members’ Induction Programme subject to the lunch break on Day 1 Induction being brought forward to 12.30 p.m.	To ensure prospective candidates and political groups receive the programme in a timely manner.

3. 2017 Council diary

The Committee received the draft 2017 Council diary. It was noted that on the request of the Finance Department the date of the Council meeting to set the budget in February 2017 would change and as a result dates of the Planning and Standards Committees would also change to accommodate this. The Head of Democratic Services advised that the Joint Chairs meeting dates would need to be checked due to changes in the dates for Cabinet meetings.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL	REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION
To approve the 2017 Council diary.	To enable the dates for meetings to be published.

4. The following three items were provided for information

4.1 Support to Members

4.2 Frequency of Shire meetings

4.3 Constitution – Call-In of Cabinet Decisions

The Committee noted the work in respect of the above.

The Committee adjourned for five minutes.

6.	ELECTED MEMBERS TRENT SELF SERVICE UTILISATION	DSC18 - 2016
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On reconvening the meeting, County Councillor D.R. Price was absent for the following item. County Councillor W.T. Jones attended the meeting for this item.

Elected Members Trent Self Service Utilisation

County Councillor W.T. Jones, Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked the Chair for allowing the report to be added to the Agenda. It was noted that the Members' use of the Trent Self Service system, for claiming travel expenses, had reduced. By using the system the Council could save approx. £3000k and officers' time could be better used in promoting the service to other potential users. The Portfolio Holder advised that training would be provided at Shire meetings in September/ October 2016 to support current members in using the system and training would be included in the Induction Programme for new members after the 2017 election.

The Committee suggested that the staff in the Member Support Unit be trained to provide support to Members in using the system and in response to a question the Portfolio Holder advised he would establish whether an automatic email reminder could be sent to Members every month reminding them to submit claims.

In response to a comment the Portfolio Holder advised that during this period of reducing services to the public, Members had been affected little by the cuts. It was important that they used modern practices which meant that savings could be made.

The Committee supported the Portfolio Holders' approach.

Councillor D.R. Price returned to the meeting room.

7.	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP	DSC19 - 2016
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The Committee received the notes of the Member Development Working Group held on 11th March, 2016.

8.	JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS STEERING GROUP	DSC20 - 2016
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The Committee received the notes of the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Group held on 18th March and 12th April, 2016.

County Councillor S C Davies (Chair)