

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD
AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON
MONDAY, 23 JANUARY 2017**

PRESENT

County Councillor S C Davies (Chair)

County Councillors PJ Ashton, D Bailey, J C Holmes, M J Jones and D R Price

In attendance - County Councillor W.T. Jones Portfolio Holder for Finance [with responsibility for Member Development and Support]

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	DSC1 - 2017
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors E. Michael Jones, L.V. Corfield, G.R. Banks, G.J. Bowker and P.E. Lewis.

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	DSC2 - 2017
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September, 2016 as a correct record.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	DSC3 - 2017
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There were no declarations of interest.

4.	MATTERS RELATING TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES ISSUES	DSC4 - 2017
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The Committee considered the report from the Head of Democratic Services [copy filed with the signed minutes].

4.1. ICT support to Members

The Head of Democratic Services advised that due to a breakdown in communications the Head of ICT and Programme Office was unable to attend the meeting or send a substitute. He had however, provided the following written update:

- all new members after the May election will receive a light weight laptop,
- equipment held by returning members will be refreshed within two months of the election,
- the Portfolio Holder for Finance had added a provision in the budget for 2017/18 onwards for all Members to receive a smart phone. This proposal formed part of the budget proposals which the Council is currently considering,
- a Cabinet member is trialling the use of a Microsoft Surface computer. This has more functionality than an iPad, as printing can be undertaken from this. If the outcome of this trial is positive, ICT will look to provide Cabinet members with a Microsoft surface rather than an iPad and laptop from May 2017,

- printers will not be issued as the Authority is promoting a digital way of working. If required, Members will be able to print from their laptops to the corporate printers in offices.

The Committee noted the above information and supported lighter laptops and smartphones although it was acknowledged that not all Members would want smartphones. However, it was considered that Members should have the option to have a printer, as this was seen to be an essential piece of equipment, especially for those living some distance from a Council office. It was noted that the equipment held by councillors not standing at the forthcoming election or held by Members who are not elected in May, would be returned and would be available for re-issue. It was considered that to keep the cost of cartridge supplies to a minimum the printers should be standardised.

It was agreed that the Committee's views regarding the need to provide printers to Members as required should be forwarded to the Head of ICT and Programme Office.

4.2. Contacts from Members to officers of the Council

The Committee considered the draft Protocol on the Contacts from Members to officers of the Council. Members considered that officers should remember that the local councillor could also be a good source of information.

It was noted that in the Council's Constitution requests for documentation not in control of the Cabinet or its committees from Members should be made to Heads of Service and not individual officers, and the protocol should be amended to reflect this.

It was noted that discussions were taking place regarding managing Members casework [see next item] and that this protocol should cross reference with whatever system is introduced for casework.

DECISION	Reason for decision
<p>i. That the Protocol for contacts from Members to officers of the Council is adopted as from 8th May 2017 subject to including the requirements in the Constitution regarding requests for documentation not in control of the Cabinet or its committees and cross referencing this to any casework management system introduced in due course</p> <p>ii. That this new way of working is promoted by the Member Support Unit to staff and</p> <p>iii. That the Management Team promotes the need for</p>	<p>To ensure timely response to Members contacts.</p>

officers to keep Members informed of incidents in their areas and to “Remember the Member”.	
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In response to comments regarding school governing bodies the Head of Democratic Services suggested that the Management Team should ask the Education Department to ensure that a similar message is sent to all schools in that they need to keep their governors aware of issues.

4.3. Member Support Agreement

The Committee received the Member Support Agreement and noted that this was a working document which would be updated as a result of discussions at this meeting. The Committee considered the issue regarding the provision of business and/or calling cards and that the Member Development Working Group recommended that individual Members requiring business and/or calling cards should cover the cost of production of and use the agreed template.

DECISION	Reason for decision
that individual Members requiring business and/or calling cards cover the cost of production and use the agreed Council template as from 8th May, 2017.	To ensure that the Council will not meet the cost of business and/or calling cards.
That the Member Support Agreement be agreed.	To ensure that Members are aware of the support they will receive.

It was noted that the Member Support Agreement would be updated to reflect any changes in the support provided to Members.

The Committee considered whether business and/or calling cards should be provided to Members during purdah. It was suggested that, on request, a small supply would be provided for ward work up until 17th March, 2017 would be acceptable.

DECISION	Reason for decision
That business and/or calling cards will not be provided to Members, where requested, once purdah commences on 17th March, 2017.	To ensure that the Council does not breach the rules regarding the promotion of candidates at an election.

The Portfolio Holder Finance advised that a Focus Group of Members representing the political groups and urban/rural areas and officers had met to consider how casework is currently managed and to look at streamlining this for Members and also officers. Casework Management systems are available on the market but these are expensive. Representatives of the Focus Group visited Swansea City and County Council last week to look at their in house system [the Portfolio Holder provided a copy of the presentation received at this meeting].

The Portfolio Holder advised that the options available were as follows:

- To consider purchasing Swansea Council's Case Management System so that this could be available for the new Council in May 2017 or
- To develop a Powys in-house Case Management System which would be available at a later date.

The DSC discussed the issue and considered that as new councillors already have a number of IT systems etc. on which they will need to receive induction, there was no need to rush into introducing a further system. Members considered it was important to get the system right rather than rushing into providing it.

4.4. Member and Cabinet development and support post 2017 election

The Committee received the Solicitor's report which had been considered and supported by the Management Team. The Committee welcomed the development of information and support for Group Leaders. The Solicitor stated that in the new Council it was hoped that the Group Leaders took a greater role in ensuring members attended meetings, especially scrutiny meetings and their working groups.

The Committee noted that the Council was required in each Council term to ask Members for their views on the timing, frequency and location of meetings. This was planned for October/November 2017 and the results of this would be considered by the Committee. The timing of meetings and whether any should be held in the evening was considered as an important issue but this had to be balanced against the geographical size of the County. It was considered that different ways of working should be used, such as Lync and conference calls for some meetings and also videoing development sessions to reduce the need for Members to travel to County Hall.

DECISION	Reason for decision
<p>The DSC:</p> <p>i) notes the development of the Member Development Programme for 2017-18, the detail of which will be agreed with the Member Development Working Group</p> <p>(ii) supports the development of the "Market Place" in the period leading up to May 2017, and that the "Market Place" be utilised as part of the Member Development Programme for the new Council</p> <p>(iii) supports the development of a Cabinet Induction Programme</p> <p>(iv) supports the provision of induction / development</p>	<p>To complete the Induction process for Member Development and to develop a Member Development Programme for the new Council.</p>

<p>support to Group Leaders and the development of an Information Pack</p> <p>(v) supports the development of information and support to individual Portfolio Holders.</p>	
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4.5. Managing casework

This was considered under Item 3 above.

4.6. Managing the potential changes of councillors in May 2017

The Committee noted the work being undertaken in preparation for the new Council in May 2017.

The Committee considered whether the Council should provide any support to Councillors who do not stand at the election and also to those that are not re-elected. The Solicitor advised that the Council does not have a legal “duty of care” to Councillors but it could be argued that it had a moral “duty of care”.

The following were considered as possible ways of providing support:

- i. Frequently Asked Questions [FAQs] regarding how to access pensions etc.
- ii. Highlighting to Group Leaders their and their Group’s role in supporting any Members not re-elected
- iii. Chair of Council and Shire Chairs inviting former Members to functions during the first few months following the election
- iv. Providing Members with details of development undertaken during their term of office.

DECISION	Reason for decision
That officers review what support can be provided as outlined above by the Council and develop any appropriate information.	To establish what support can be provided to Members who do not stand or are not re-elected at the May 2017 election.

The Solicitor advised that a report was included on the forthcoming Council Agenda regarding the arrangements for the Local Government Elections on 4th May, 2017. Due to the fact that the Elections Team were now in an open plan office, nomination papers must be delivered by hand and by appointment only at County Hall, Llandrindod Wells or Neuadd Brycheiniog, Brecon and Neuadd Maldwyn, Welshpool on designated days.

5.	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP	DSC5 - 2017
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The Committee received the notes of the Member Development Working Group held on 6th June, 2016.

6.	JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS STEERING GROUP	DSC6 - 2017
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The Committee received the notes of the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Group meetings held on 5th July, 13th September, 18th October and 22nd November, 2016. The Committee noted that in the future officers would only provide extracts from the minutes of the Steering Group meetings which related to Democratic Service Committee issues.

The Committee received a report on the Review of Shire Committees survey which sought Members' views on the arrangements for Shire meetings. The Committee noted the low response rate of 31.5% and commented that the survey indicated an apathy by the majority of Council Members towards Shire Committees. The Committee questioned the value of the meetings in relation to the cost of holding such meetings, especially at a time when front line services were being reduced. The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that if the Portfolio Holders wanted to get a message to Members this could be provided in a report and by email. It was agreed that if Shire meetings were not held there was still a civic role for Shire Chairs and Vice Chairs.

RECOMMENDATION	Reason for recommendation
<p>That based on the survey results and the costs of holding Shire meetings the Democratic Services Committee recommends to the Council that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Shire meetings are disbanded from May 2017 and ii. the civic role of the Shire Chairs and Vice Chairs continue. 	<p>To complete the review of the frequency of Shire Committee meetings as agreed by Council in January 2015.</p>

County Councillor S C Davies (Chair)