

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD
AT BY ZOOM ON MONDAY, 8 JANUARY 2024**

PRESENT

County Councillor E Vaughan (Chair)

County Councillors G Breeze, D Bebb, C Hall, G E Jones, P Lewington, P E Lewis,
DW Meredith, G Preston and S L Williams

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 16
November 2023 as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. NEW WAYS OF WORKING AND COUNCIL MEETINGS - MEMBER SURVEY 2023

The Committee considered the report regarding New Way of working and timing
and format of meetings.

The following comments were made:

- councillors should be encouraged to meet in person, rather than it being mandated to attend in person,
- councillors can develop links with other councillors in a variety of ways, in addition to meeting in person,
- online meetings or hybrid meetings enable councillors to manage their other commitments, including childcare, home commitments and work,
- when external speakers attend a hybrid meeting in County Hall it is important that a larger number of councillors also attend in person,
- online meetings reduce the Council's travel costs and carbon footprint.

In response to a question the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that the Welsh Government guidance regarding the format of meetings was vague and he advised that the interpretation was that hybrid meetings were the best option.

Resolved that the Committee recommends to Full Council that:

- **Current working arrangements and times for meetings continue**
- **Committee chairs (in discussion with their committees) can amend the timing of meetings to suit the Committee membership and also in response to particular agenda items, such as when external participants are required at a meeting**

- **Committee chairs are encouraged to hold at least one in person meeting a year**
- **Members are encouraged to attend meetings in person during the first six months at the start of a new Council term, to enable them to develop links with other members and**
- **Democratic Services Committee reviews the timing and format of meetings in mid-2025, so that any changes can be implemented from 2026 onwards.**

5.	SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE FOR MEMBERS
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The Committee considered the draft revised Social Media Guide for members.

RESOLVED

that the Committee recommends to Full Council that the revised Social Media Guide for members is adopted.

6.	MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION
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The Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that the report contained minor amendments to the Constitution undertaken by him under delegated authority and other proposed amendments for the Committee to consider and if appropriate recommend to Full Council.

Minor Amendments made by the Monitoring Officer

The Committee noted the changes made to Section 18 Code of Conduct for Members and Section 20 Code of Conduct for Employees as detailed in the report.

Resolved that:	Reason for Decision:
the Committee note the minor amendments made to the Constitution by the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer as set out in section 2 of the report .	To monitor, review and make minor amendments to the Constitution in accordance with Rules 2.4, 2.7 and 2.8 of the Constitution.

Further Proposed Amendments for the Consideration of Democratic Services Committee

The Committee considered the proposed changes to:

Section 9 – Regulatory Committees – Rule 9.4.1

Section 18 – Code of Conduct for Members – Rule 18.5.8.3 and 18.5.8.3 (i)

Section 20 – Code of Conduct for Employees – Rules 20.10a and 20.10b

Section 21 – Protocol on Member/Officer Relations – Rule 21.10.2 and 21.21

Recommendation to Full Council:	Reason for Recommendation:
That the changes detailed in the report to the following be made: Section 9 – Regulatory Committees –	In compliance of the Council's obligations to ensure that the Constitution is reviewed regularly

<p>Rule 9.4.1 Section 18 – Code of Conduct for Members – Rule 18.5.8.3 and 18.5.8.3 (i) Section 20 – Code of Conduct for Employees – Rules 20.10a and 20.10b Section 21 – Protocol on Member/Officer Relations – Rule 21.10.2 and 21.21.</p>	<p>and remains fit for purpose.</p>
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The Committee noted the proposed change to Section 21 – Protocol on Member/Officer Relations – Rule 21.10.1, in that Members should approach the relevant Head of Service to provide them with information and advice. Comment was made that this was too onerous on Heads of Service and going to them would delay answers being received by Members. Members should be able to approach officers and if a response was not forthcoming, they should then be able to approach the relevant Head of Service. Comment was made that more consistent answers would be obtained from the relevant Head of Service.

Resolved that the proposed change to Section 21 – Protocol on Member/Officer Relations – Rule 21.10.1 should be reviewed by the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer and brought back to the Committee for further consideration.

The issue of remuneration for the Chair of the Employment and Appeals Committee was raised by the Chair. It was noted that the role is not currently remunerated and they were currently involved in the recruitment of the Corporate Leadership Team. The Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that a formal report would be brought to the Committee for consideration. In response to a question, he advised that if the Committee was minded to recommend to Full Council that the Chair of the Employment and Appeals Committee should be remunerated it could also consider recommending applying this retrospectively.

7.	WORK PROGRAMME
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The Committee noted the Work programme.

In response to a question regarding whether the Committee had considered the Whistleblowing Policy as stated in the Constitution, the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that the Constitution had not been updated to reflect current practice. The Standards Committee and Governance and Audit Committee would be reviewing the policy. However, the policy could be brought to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration.

Comment was made that the review of Member Champions was long overdue and should be considered at the next meeting. The Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that this could be brought forward.

County Councillor E Vaughan (Chair)