

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
HELD IN CHAMBER ON FRIDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2020**

PRESENT: County Councillor E Vaughan (Chair)
County Councillors G Breeze; D Davies; D Jones-Poston; J Charlton; K Laurie-Parry;
K Silk; L Corfield; M Weale; S Davies; S Williams; S Hayes; K Lewis; P Roberts

Clive Pinney, Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)
Ness Young, Corporate Director: Resources and Transformation
Diane Reynolds, Interim Head of Digital Services

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D Rowlands; D Evans; R Williams.

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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There were no declarations of interest.

3.	MEMBERS' FACILITIES AT COUNTY HALL – PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE MEMBERS' LOUNGE
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The Chair welcomed Isobel Bowen, Property Services to the meeting to update the Committee on Members' facilities in County Hall, since the last meeting. It was noted that since the last discussion at this committee, a discussion with group leaders has been held and there was a suggestion there is a need for a room to facilitate the opposition groups and that a Chairman's Office is required.

Draft plan was circulated and CP provided outline of layout for Committee's comment. CP advised that members support would sit immediately at entrance of members lounge; current chairman's office to be utilised by Cabinet; two further additional meetings rooms partitioned which would be available to any member; move chairman's office to room next to Cttee Room B; kitchen will remain. Confirmation has been received from Welsh Government that they will not provide funding to support the refurbishment of the members lounge.

The Committee raised concern regarding the cost for refurbishment and cost of lighting and requested a breakdown of the virement for members room refurbishment. The need for sound separation for meeting rooms was raised to be considered. It was confirmed that a new lift will be installed to allow people the access to this part of County Hall.

The Committee also raised concern on space. Noted that it is accepted that on full Council day it will be full, however the current members' lounge space is currently under-utilised.

RESOLVED	Reason for decision
That the proposal to utilise existing furniture is accepted.	Message is to minimise spending and cost and utilise existing furniture.
Detailed information on the cost of members room refurbishment.	To provide confirmation that this is

	value for money and complies with financial procedure and procurement rules and to ensure there is no cost avoidance.
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The Chair thanked Isobel Bowen for attending.

4.	RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE ACCESS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS
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The Chair had circulated the Terms of Reference for this Committee.

The report next on the agenda is private and confidential that contains information on staff and therefore would not be appropriate for staff to learn about it through any other means other than through the formal consultation process.

The Committee were advised that the reason behind the report is to put in place a structure that enables multi-skilling to provide adequate, appropriate and a more resilient support for Members, which does result in a saving.

The Chair noted that the report refers to the Local Government Act 1972 and his understanding is that Part 1 is for England and Part 4 is for Wales. CP apologised if it has been stated wrongly.

Committee voted (4 x no; 2 x abstentions) and it was agreed that they would enter a private and confidential session to discuss the next item on the agenda.

Press left the meeting.

5.	PROPOSED CHANGES TO SUPPORT MEMBERS
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5.1 Proposed restructure of Democratic Services, Committee Service and Members Support Service

Committee were reminded that this report relates to individuals and their post and the need to respect the importance for staff to hear from their manager at the appropriate point.

The Committee considered the report regarding the proposed restructure for Democratic Services, Committee Service and Members Support Service. The proposal is to have a multi skilled team and a reduction of 2 fte in this proposal. There will be different methods of working to enable extra capacity. CP's judgement is that the degree of support will be adequate, reasonable and appropriate for the demands that members have and there will always be opportunity to review and change it if appropriate (proposal to review in 6-9 months time).

Committee raised concerns around Scrutiny and that in the past it has not been well resourced and there is a need for a really strong powerful scrutiny section and if there is a reduction, scrutiny will not be supported to the extent they require in order to grow. Members also raised concern that by an officer working across different areas, will risk putting into jeopardy the improvement made with Scrutiny. CP and NY confirmed there is commitment from the Senior Leadership

Team to continue to improve scrutiny and there is commitment that SLT fulfil their obligations to Members to scrutinise service areas.

Committee were informed that a formal review is to provide members comfort. The proposed structure should provide more resilience to all sections and there will continue to be 1:1 scrutiny officers. It was also noted that it is a legal requirement for a Democratic Services Manager role, as the law currently stands the Monitoring Officer cannot also be the Democratic Services Manager.

3:45pm – County Councillor S Hayes left the meeting.

Committee was advised that officers could provide further detail on the operating model and what ongoing improvements it could deliver and the support that members would receive.

The officer's recommendation was put to the vote and approved, with a request that Committee's concerns and anxieties on the proposal are included within the report recommendation.

RESOLVED	Reason for decision
That Committee's concerns and anxieties are noted.	
Recommendation is approved, and that a formal review of the structure is undertaken at 6 months.	Committee felt that 6-9 months was too long of time period.

5.2 IT Support

The Chair welcomed Diane Reynolds, Interim Head of Digital Services to the meeting. The Committee considered the report regarding the proposed ICT support to Members. The Chair noted that a report with the same proposal had been considered by this Committee in April 2019 and had been rejected.

The Committee were advised that the proposed changes should not be viewed as a reflection on the current member of staff, but to put a more robust service in place.

DR brought a Service Level Agreement to Committee which set out what ICT would be provided and hold DR accountable to. This would set out a formal agreement and strengthen the service provided and provide continuity of service. The proposal is to train other officers within ICT and implement a staff rota and build on their experience of working with Members.

Members noted that the current system works well and the level of support is superb. Members asked if training for members could be offered. DR advised that Microsoft are potentially visiting in April to update members on Microsoft packages to assist with accessibility.

The officer's recommendation was put to the vote and was agreed.

RESOLVED	Reason for decision
The proposal for the SLA for ICT	

support for Members be supported.	
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**COUNTY CLLR E VAUGHAN
CHAIR**