

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Democratic Services Committee
4th July, 2016

REPORT BY: Head of Democratic Services

SUBJECT: Matters relating to Democratic Services issues

REPORT FOR: Decision, Information and Discussion

1. Public participation at Council meetings

As a result of a motion and debate at Council on 20th January 2016 it was resolved:

1. to empower the Democratic Services Committee to look at ways in which public participation operates successfully across Wales.
2. to explore options for introducing public participation and make proposals aimed at introducing a system to allow members of the public to contribute in council meetings.

A review has been undertaken of what happens in Councils in Wales and it has been established that 11 of the 22 County Councils allow public questions at Council meetings. One authority also allows public questions at Cabinet meetings. Of the three National Park Authorities [NPAs] only Snowdonia NPA allows public questions at authority meetings.

In light of the above a draft protocol, Appendix A, has been drawn together from the constitutions of other Councils who currently operate public question sessions. A number of questions / principles are posed in the draft for the Committee's consideration. Responses to these questions will assist in the drafting of the protocol to be considered by the committee and Council.

RECOMMENDATION	Reason for Recommendation:
Agree the content of the principles to draft the protocol for public participation in meetings.	To enable recommendation to the County Council for adoption.

2. 2017 Council Election

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

The attached document, Appendix B, has been developed by the Welsh Local Government Association [WLGA] and the Members' and Officers' Support Network. Councils were asked to provide anonymised contributions. It is noted that two contributions have been included from Powys Councillors. The document will be placed on the Council's website.

2.2 Members' Induction Programme

The WLGA and the Members' and Officers' Support Network have developed a template for Member Development programmes for the 2017 Council Election. The MDWG, taking into account the former, has reviewed the Council's 2012 Induction Programme and produced the draft programme Appendix C.

The following should be noted:

- Day 1 Induction - will provide the opportunity for new members [not returning members] to receive a range of training, which will form the foundations to enable them to function in the Council. The training will include using the equipment in the meeting rooms, using the Modern.Gov system which is now used for the publication of agendas and accessing and using laptops. It is extremely important that these new members receive training on the systems used, so that they are able to use these at the Annual meeting which will be held within two weeks of the election. In addition to this training, general housekeeping/orientation will be provided and there will be a brief opportunity for them to receive a strategic overview from the Chief Executive and Directors and to meet them over lunch.
- "Market Place" – this is a process used in other authorities where service areas provide manned stands providing basic information about services, so raising Members' awareness of services. A "Market Place" programme will be agreed and provided at Council meetings and Member Development sessions. This approach to providing information to members will be trailed over the remainder of this Council.

The Members' Induction Programme will be included in all information sent to prospective candidates and political groups. Prospective candidates will be advised that if they are elected they must attend the required development to ensure that they can participate as a member on any committee to which they are appointed.

The MDWG will develop a Member Development Programme for September 2017 onwards.

The Democratic Services Committee is asked to consider the draft Members' Induction Programme.

RECOMMENDATION	Reason for Recommendation:
Agree the content of the Members' Induction Programme.	To ensure prospective candidates and political groups receive the programme in a timely manner.

3. 2017 Council diary

The draft Council diary for 2017 is attached as Appendix D.

RECOMMENDATION	Reason for Recommendation:
To the County Council that the 2017 Council Diary be approved.	To enable the dates for meetings to be published.

4. The following two items are provided for information.

4.1 Support to Members

The MDWG in 2013 developed and agreed a Member Support Service Level Agreement which details the range of support from the Members' Support Unit, Democratic and Scrutiny Services, IT Services, Electoral Services and the Local and Environmental Support. This document was updated in 2014.

The MDWG has recently considered the range of support to Members in respect of business cards/calling cards, newsletters, annual reports, letter writing etc. In addition, as a result of issues recently raised by Members, a protocol for the management and processing of questions / queries from Members by officers across the Authority is being developed. The draft will be considered by the Working Group.

The Member Support Service Level Agreement will be reviewed and the two areas of work referred to above will be incorporated into the Agreement for consideration by the MDWG and DSC. Once approved this information will be included in the Members' Induction Pack.

4.2 Frequency of Shire meetings

As the Committee is aware in January 2015 Council had RESOLVED that shire meetings should change to being bi-monthly with the option to call additional meetings in emergency situations should the need arise. It had been agreed that the arrangement would be reviewed in January 2017.

At its meeting on 16th March, 2016 the Radnorshire Committee agreed the following:
"While noting that Council had determined that shire meetings should be bi-monthly (allowing for the Chair to call additional meetings on need and not as the norm) the Shire felt that this arrangement should be reviewed with a view to permitting the holding of monthly meetings. There are issues with regard to members using meetings for raising issues that would need to be considered, however, it was agreed to **RECOMMEND** to Democratic Services that the current system be reviewed as above."

Further discussions took place at the Radnorshire Committee in May 2016. The Committee commented that there are differing views by member and by shire as to the value of shire meetings. In the light of the position it was agreed that a short questionnaire be sent to members to seek their views in relation to the value of shire meetings and that in September each shire be asked to provide its view to feed into the review. The views of the shire committees would be presented to the Democratic Services Committee who would make a recommendation to the Council in 2017.

4.3 Constitution – Call-In of Cabinet Decisions.

Following the recent changes to the membership of committees, it has been pointed out that the numbers of Members that are required to initiate a Call-In of a Cabinet

Decision to a scrutiny committee will need to be revised as it is based on previous committee membership numbers. Officers will consider this in the next revision of the Constitution.

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