

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1 - CIVIC CENTRE ON THURSDAY, 11
SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
R A Clay	E T Kirchner	P M Meara
A C S Colburn	D J Lewis	
N J Davies	A S Lewis	

Officers:

P Arran - Head of Legal, Democratic Services & Procurement
L Wenham - Head of Communications & Customer Engagement
H Evans - Head of Democratic Services
A Lowe - Councillor Support Officer
J Parkhouse - Democratic Services Officer

11 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A M Cook and L V Walton. Apologies were also received from the Councillor Support and Development Member Champion, Councillor C Richards.

12 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

13 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee held on 16 July 2014 be accepted as a correct record.

14 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011.**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report which sought to highlight the role of and functions of the Head of Democratic Services, Democratic Services Committee and Scrutiny as outlined in the Local Government Wales Measure 2011.

It was outlined that the Welsh Government had stated that the main intention of the Measure was to strengthen the role of Councillors, particularly those serving outside of the Council's leadership, in carrying out their important duties and functions. The Measure introduced the Democratic Services Committee whose role is to ensure that

the non-executive role of Councillors is fully supported, including when they are acting in the crucial role of scrutineers.

The Welsh Government also stated that all Councillors have crucial roles to undertake. However, it is vital that those who are not part of the leadership recognise the important and essential mandate they have to scrutinise and hold the leadership to account and through that scrutiny, ensure that public services are effective and efficient. Strong local democracy is essential to the delivery of good public services in order to identify any weaknesses in service delivery and to propose improvements. In that sense, the non-executive Councillor is the eyes, ears and voice of the electors they represent and it is vital that all Councillors play a full and vigorous role in scrutiny.

Relevant extracts from Part 1, "Strengthening Local Democracy", Chapter 2 (Local Authority Democratic Services) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 was provided at Appendix A. Relevant extracts from the statutory guidance issued under Section 16 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 in relation to the Democratic Services Committee was provided at Appendix B.

Councillors referred to the role of the Head of Democratic Services, particularly in relation to the function of scrutiny within the Authority. Clarity was sought regarding the legality of the scrutiny function in the Authority, especially as it came under the remit of the Head of Communications and Customer Engagement.

The Head of Communications and Customer Engagement, Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Procurement and Head of Democratic Services responded to Councillor' questions.

In order to seek clarity on the current arrangements within the Authority, it was proposed that Frank Cuthbert of the Welsh Government be invited to the next Committee meeting in order to discuss the current arrangements at the Council in line with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

RESOLVED that the above proposal be accepted.

15 **WORKPLAN.**

No discussions took place regarding the Democratic Services Committee Work Plan.

16 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that the Head of Democratic Services arrange the date and time of the next meeting and inform the Committee accordingly.

The meeting ended at 5.22 pm

CHAIR