

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

**HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CIVIC CENTRE, SWANSEA ON
WEDNESDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2014 AT 5.00 PM**

PRESENT: M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
R A Clay A C S Colburn A M Cook	N J Davies K E Marsh	P M Meara L V Walton

Officers:

T Meredith	-	Deputy Head of Legal, Democratic Services & Procurement
H Evans	-	Head of Democratic Services
A Lowe	-	Councillor Support Officer

17 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A S Lewis.

18 **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.

19 **MINUTES**

Councillor P M Meara raised the issue that the minutes did not outline the questions asked and responses given. A discussion ensued in relation to the Authority's "house style" of minute recording, which was noted as being a decision log only. The Head of Democratic Services stated the minutes were not meant to be a verbatim record; however was prepared to investigate listing the topics raised during such discussions.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee held on 11 September 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record.

20 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 – SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT**

The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report which sought to address the issues relating to Scrutiny Management which were raised at the Democratic Services Committee held on 11 September 2014 namely:

- a) That the City and County of Swansea were not complying with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 in that the Head of Democratic Services did not line manage the Scrutiny function within the Authority;
- b) There was lack of clarity as to who was accountable for scrutiny arrangements.

The Deputy Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Procurement stated that Frank Cuthbert, Head of Democracy, Diversity and Remuneration Team, at the Welsh Government, had been invited to the Committee but had declined due to the fact that he had held two meetings with Officers prior to the meeting and the issues had been fully discussed and that it was more appropriate to allow internal discussions to continue within the authority.

At the meetings between Frank Cuthbert and Officers of the Authority it had been agreed that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 did not specify that the line management of scrutiny should fall to the Head of Democratic Services. Additionally, the Welsh Government Guidance does stress the need to avoid diluting the effectiveness of existing arrangements.

As a result of the issues raised at the previous Committee a number of additional measures were proposed in order to strengthen the links between the Head of Democratic Services and the Scrutiny Manager. The Welsh Government have seen the proposals and were content with them.

RESOLVED that the following additional measures be implemented in order to strengthen the current arrangements:

- 1) **Democratic Services Committee Annual Report.** This will include a section on Democratic Services and Scrutiny, Team Structures, Meetings, Training and associated issues. This will be presented to the Committee and Council annually.
- 2) **Quarterly Meetings** between Chair of Democratic Services, Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee, Councillor Support and Development Member Champion, Head of Democratic Services and the Scrutiny Manager.
- 3) **2 x 6 Monthly Presentations to the Scrutiny Programme Committee** by the Chair and Vice Chair of Democratic Services and Head of Democratic Services.
- 4) **2 x 6 Monthly Presentations to the Democratic Services Committee** by the Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee and Scrutiny Manager.

20 **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 24 MAY 2012 TO 30 APRIL 2014**

The Head of Democratic Services submitted the first Democratic Services Committee Annual Report covering the period 24 May 2012 to 30 April 2014. He stated that the intention was to produce the report annually.

He asked for comments on the report itself along with style, content and format. The Committee were content with the Annual Report however some general comments were raised:

- i) Councillor Training. Officers need to ensure that the training provided is of a high standard by way of content and delivery. Officers should seek guidance from the in-house Training Team as required.
- ii) Councillor Microsite. It was suggested that a shortcut link be placed on each Councillors computer and those computers in the Political Group Rooms;

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Annual Report be noted and referred to Council;
- 2) The Annual Report be presented annually to the Democratic Services Committee around September / October each year and then referred to Council.

21 **WORKPLAN**

RESOLVED that the Democratic Services Committee workplan be as follows:

- 1) The Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee and Scrutiny Manager be invited to the next available Democratic Services Committee in February / March 2015;
- 2) The Senior Organisation Development Officer / Corporate Training Lead be invited to a future meeting of the Democratic Services Committee to outline different methods of providing Councillor Training.

22 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that the Democratic Services Committee scheduled for 14 January 2015 be cancelled and a new date be arranged for February / March 2015 in order to accommodate a meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee and Scrutiny Manager.

The meeting ended at 6.10 pm.

CHAIR