

CONSTITUTION AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2022

Minutes of the remote meeting of the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday, 7 July 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor Robert Davies (Chairman)

Councillors: Gillian Brockley, David Coggins Cogan, Steve Copple, Alasdair Ibbotson, Ian Hodge, Gina Maddison, Roz Mansell, Ted Palmer, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Linda Thew and Antony Wren.

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Linda Thomas (for Paul Johnson)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Officer (Governance), Head of Democratic Services and Democratic Services Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR

The committee formally noted that following the Annual Meeting Councillor Rob Davies be appointed Chair of the Committee

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

The Chair asked committee members for nominations for Vice Chair of the Committee.

Councillor Michelle Perfect proposed that Councillor Gillian Brockley be appointed as Vice Chair and this was seconded by Councillor Vicky Perfect. Councillor Antony Wren proposed that Councillor Ian Hodge be nominated as Vice Chair and this was seconded by Councillor Roz Mansell

Following a vote for both Councillors, the Chief Officer (Governance) confirmed that Councillor Gillian Brockley was elected as Vice Chair of the Committee

RESOLVED:

That the Councillor Gillian Brockley be appointed as Vice Chair of the Committee

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations were received.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January were submitted.

The minutes were moved as a correct record by Councillor Ted Palmer and seconded by Councillor Antony Wren

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Governance) provided background information on the formation of the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee, which were originally the Constitution Committee and Democratic Services Committee. The Committee was the guardian of the Constitution, drafting and vetting changes to the Constitution and considered the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report and changes made by the Overview & Scrutiny and other Committees prior to County Council. Other committees, such as the Standards Committee and the Audit & Governance Committee, regularly review parts of the Constitution and make recommendations for this Committee to scrutinise prior to adoption by Full Council.

The Chief Officer (Governance) and Democratic Services Manager commenced the presentation which included slides on the following:-

- Purpose of the session
- The Constitution and Democratic Services Committee
- Committee Membership
- Committee Functions 1
 - Reviews of Member Development Training
 - Considers recommendations from the IRPW
 - Issues relating to the support of Members
 - Co-ordination of the work programmes of the five Overview & Scrutiny Committees
- Committee Functions 2
 - Designates the post to be statutory Head of Democratic Services
 - Reviews and report on fulfilment of “Democratic Services functions”
 - Makes decisions on a member’s entitlement to family absence under relevant regulations
- Committee workings
- Forward Work Programme

The Chief Officer (Governance) commented that the Terms of Reference for this Committee was attached on the agenda for information.

RESOLVED:

That the work of the Committee is noted.

6. ADOPTION OF THE NATIONAL MODEL CONSTITUTION

In presenting this report the Chief Officer (Governance) explained that prior to the Local Government Act 2000, local authorities were not required to have a Constitution document. He provided background information on how the National Model was prepared in 2014 which had enabled a standard Constitution to be used across all authorities. Following the introduction of the Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021 local authorities were required to offer a plain language summary of the Constitution. He explained that a firm of solicitors had been instructed to update the national model before supplying a plain language guide. This had been funded by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). A list of changes was also provided for local authorities to consider and apply to their own constitution if it differed from the national model.

The Chief Officer (Governance) suggested that a working group of 5 members of the committee be set up to consider the revisions and update to the national model and plain language guide. They would then report back to committee and then the committee would make a recommendation to full council. The Deputy Monitoring Officer would be leading on this, and the Chief Officer (Governance) felt it would be good for new members to be involved to provide different ideas and prospective. It was agreed that the Working Group would include Councillors Ted Palmer, David Coggins Cogan, Gina Maddison together with the Chair and Vice Chair of the committee.

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded by Councillor Ted Palmer and Councillor Michelle Perfect

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the 5 members appointed to the working group consider the updates and revisions to the national model constitution and the plain language guide, before making proposals for their adoption;
- (b) That the working group report back to this Committee in January with the intention of approving the changes at a Council meeting in early 2023; and
- (c) That the date of this Committee in January be brought forward to enable it to consider the working group's recommendations ahead of the Council meeting on 24 January 2023.

7. UPDATE ON THE INDUCTION PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager provided information on the Induction Programme with the first phase planned around 4 themes. Recordings of the training sessions would be made available on the members' page for future reference. Information on attendance and topics discussed at the training sessions was listed at Appendix 1 and 2 and he referred Members to Appendix 3 which provided information on the Member Development and Member Briefings sessions held.

Councillor Antony Wren found the training invaluable and comprehensive but felt it was an information overload. He was glad recordings would be made available to have a refresher.

Councillor Steve Cople asked when the recordings would be made available. In response the Democratic Services Manager confirmed the members' page would be on the Infonet in September but agreed to speak to Councillor Cople outside the meeting and send links to the one he was interested in

Councillor Roz Mansell confirmed that she would also wish to speak to the Democratic Services Manager as she had missed sessions too

Councillor Gina Maddison thanked the Democratic Services Manager for the induction programme and commented that the help provided by IT was brilliant. She asked if the Licensing Training would be provided again for those who missed the sessions. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to speak to the Licensing Manager next week and feedback to the four members who missed the training.

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded by Councillor Ted Palmer and Councillor Antony Wren

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee considered the Member Induction programme held after the elections, included in Appendix 1 - Schedule of Induction Sessions Part a, and, Appendix 2 - Schedule of Induction Sessions Part b; and
- (b) That the Committee considered and supported the approach to Member Development for the rest of the municipal year, included in Appendix 3 - Flintshire County Council 2022/23 Member Development.

8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

In presenting the report for consideration the Democratic Services Manager sought members' views on the items already included in the Forward Work Programme. He added that the Timing of Meetings report, and the Public Strategy report would also need to be factored in and that there would be opportunities for Members to add items to the Forward Work Programme as it was reviewed at every meeting.

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded by Councillor Ted Palmer and Councillor Gillian Brockley.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary; and

- (b) That the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

9. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.10 pm)

.....

Chairman