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To: Cllr Robin Guest (Chair)

Councillors: Alex Aldridge, Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Chris Bithell, Clive Carver, David Cox, Peter Curtis, Paul Cunningham, Glenys Diskin, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, Dave Mackie, Neville Phillips, David Roney, Ian Smith, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, David Williams and Arnold Woolley

21 January 2016

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee which will be held at 3.00 pm on Wednesday, 27th January, 2016 in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold to consider the following items.

Please note that the meeting will be held in the Delyn Committee Room and will commence at 3.00pm or on the rising of the Constitution Committee.

A G E N D A

1 **APOLOGIES**

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 **MINUTES** (Pages 3 - 8)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting.

4 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR 2016/17** (Pages 9 - 12)

Report of Member Engagement Manager

Purpose: To ascertain views on the desirability and feasibility of our holding some committee meetings alternating AM and PM and also evenings

Yours faithfully

Peter Evans
Democracy & Governance Manager

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE **1 JULY 2015**

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 1 July 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Robin Guest (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Chris Bithell, Clive Carver, David Cox, Paul Cunningham, Ian Dunbar, Andy Dunbobbin, Veronica Gay, Dave Mackie, Tim Newhouse, Ian Smith, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, David Williams and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES: Councillors Peter Curtis, George Hardcastle, and Neville Phillips. The Democracy and Governance Manager.

SUBSTITUTION: Councillors Mike Lowe (for Alex Aldridge), Mike Reece (for Glyn Banks)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Bernie Attridge

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Officer (Governance), Member Engagement Manager, and Committee Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair sought nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chair for the municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer be appointed Vice-Chair for the Municipal year 2015/16.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 January 2015, were submitted.

Matters arising

Councillor Clive Carver referred to the response times to Member communications and commented on the difficulties he had experienced in failing to receive responses to his emails to Chief Officers. The Chief Officer (Governance) agreed to pursue the issue raised by Councillor Carver.

RESOLVED:

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

4. REVIEW OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report on a review of the Member Development Strategy. He provided background information and advised that a copy of the recently updated Strategy was appended to the report.

The Member Engagement Manager advised that a review of the Strategy provided the opportunity to refresh its provisions to reflect initiatives that had recently been introduced. To reflect this he explained that it had been suggested that a new paragraph be added to the Strategy, following paragraph 3.4, as detailed in the report. The Committee was asked to put forward and consider any alterations it believed appropriate to the Strategy as indicated in the key considerations in the report and any work that should be undertaken to improve delivery of the Strategy.

Councillor Chris Bithell referred to the information in paragraph 3.05 of the report that arrangements are in place for each Member to have the opportunity of having an annual personal development meeting with a Senior Member to identify their training and development needs. He sought clarification around the reference to a Senior Member and queried whether such an arrangement was necessary. The Member Engagement Manager advised that there was a requirement for such an arrangement to take place. The Chief Officer (Governance) commented that Members may have personal aspirations and may wish to discuss how they could develop their political career. They may feel uncomfortable raising such matters with Officers. Councillor Clive Carver suggested that the wording be amended to read Senior Member or Officer as Members may wish to discuss training concerning matters such as IT for example. The Member Engagement Manager explained that despite Officer representations the WLGA had retained the reference to Senior Member in the wording of the Charter. The Chair commented on the opportunity afforded to Members to raise training and development needs at the Annual Personal Development meeting.

Councillor Chris Bithell referred to Appendix 2, paragraphs 53 and 54, and raised a concern in relation to the scrutiny process and Cabinet decision making and referred to the previous Committee structure. The Chief Officer (Governance) responded to the comments and referred to the role of scrutiny in contributing meaningful comment and response.

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed a concern regarding the format of the wording in the appendices to the report and said there was a problem concerning the spacing of text.

RESOLVED:

That the Member Development Strategy be approved with the suggested amendments being incorporated as indicated in paragraphs 3.01 and 3.02 of the report.

5. ANNUAL MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR 2015/16

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report for the Committee to agree the Annual Development Programme for the Council Year 2015/16. He provided background information and advised that in response to consultation with Members a number of topics had been suggested and a draft Member Development Programme 2015/16 was appended to the report for consideration.

In response to a concern raised by Councillor Ian Smith about those Members who work full time having access to training and development events held during the morning or afternoon, the Member Engagement Manager explained that whilst training events were offered at alternative times evening sessions had been poorly attended. To achieve meaningful interaction a minimum number of Members are needed to be present and for the training session to be cost effective.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin suggested that training sessions could be provided to Members on film so that the information could be accessed in Members' own time. Councillor Chris Bithell also spoke in support of the suggestion and referred to the benefit of being able to forward on training programmes recorded in this way to new Members in the future. He asked if the facility to record training programmes/events could be explored.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Annual Member Development Programme for 2015/16 as submitted be approved;
- (b) That the Democracy & Governance Manager , in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee be authorised to add items to the programme as necessary; and
- (c) That a report on the use of webinar (web based seminars) and the filming of training sessions be the subject of a report to a future meeting of the committee

6. MEMBERS' SUPPORT

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced a report for the Committee to satisfy itself that all Members are given as much support as necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. He provided background information and referred to the key considerations in the report around the determinations made in the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (The Panel) Annual Report issued in February 2015. The Chief Officer advised that Officers believed the level of resources provided to Members met the recommendations of the Welsh

Local Government Association (WLGA) Charter for Members' Support and Development.

Councillor Dave Mackie drew attention to the information contained in Appendix 1, paragraph 3.23, of the IRPW report that Members should have electronic access to appropriate information via an internet connection, and sought further clarification on the statement in terms of internet and telephone provision for Members. Following discussion the Committee requested that the Chief Officer (Governance) investigate what the Independent Remuneration Panel's intention had been when it stated in relation to internet access:

'It would not be appropriate for such facilities (electronic access) only to be available within council offices within office hours.'

The Chief Officer (Governance) responded to a further query raised by Councillor Clive Carver regarding Determination 7, page 41, and the claiming and payment of expenses.

Members requested that for future meetings, the agenda and reports be displayed on screen in the Committee meeting rooms to alleviate any potential iPad reception problems.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee confirms that all Members are given the support that is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively; and
- (b) That the Chief Officer (Governance) be requested to investigate whether the IRPW had intended that councils should provide internet access at Member's homes

7. FEEDBACK ON MEMBER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report to provide feedback on the Member development events held since last reported to the Committee. He referred to the development events which had been held in January, March and June 2015 and advised that the feedback received for each of the events was appended to the report. He reported that feedback had been generally positive although attendance at one of the events had been disappointingly low. Members were invited to comment on their experience of any events attended or make suggestions for the improvement of future events.

Councillor Davie Mackie expressed his dissatisfaction with the training which had been provided by an external trainer at one specific event and he said he had forwarded his comments to the Democracy and Governance Manager for information. He also commented on the "embarrassment" caused when external trainers were engaged to provide training events but only a small number of Councillors were in attendance at the session.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and that it be noted that Councillor Dave Mackie had

made representations to the Democracy & Governance Manager about an external trainer's performance.

8. PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.07 pm)

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Chairman

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 27 January 2016
Report Subject	Schedule of Meetings for 2016/17
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management
Report Author	Member Engagement Manager
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's schedule of meetings is set at the annual meeting and has meetings held in the morning and in the afternoon in a ten week cycle. Recent suggestions from members have prompted a more detailed consideration of when we hold meetings. It is recognised that the established approach of morning and afternoon meetings may make attendance difficult for those members who work and or have caring responsibilities.

Therefore, we need to consider whether we should meetings in the evenings as well as during the day.

To establish Members' views on when we hold meetings, it is suggested that a short survey could be carried out to enable preferences to be expressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the committee considers whether we should hold evening meetings as well as during the day.
2	That the officers be tasked with carrying out a survey amongst members, to express their preferences for changing when we hold meetings.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	Explaining the issues
1.01	Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 empowers the Welsh Ministers to issue guidance about the timing of meetings with a view to introducing more flexible arrangements to accommodate councillors from more diverse backgrounds.
1.02	Whilst the Ministers have not yet issued such guidance, it is recognised as being good practice within the Welsh Local Government Association Member Development charter (which Flintshire has been awarded) that Authorities should consult members on when meetings are held.
1.03	It has been Flintshire practice to produce a schedule of meetings for the ensuing municipal year for consideration by Council at the Annual Meeting. The draft schedule, which is based on a 10 week committee cycle, is consulted on extensively, with the Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Chairs, the Chief Officer Team and other key officers. However, we have not previously afforded the wider membership of the Council the opportunity to comment until the schedule is considered by Council.
1.04	Recently, some members have asked that the Council consider scheduling all of its meetings on a mixture of morning, afternoon and evening slots, to make it easier for those with work or caring responsibility to come to meetings. Following initial soundings, it became apparent that for such consultation to be on a meaningful basis, we should also include the possibility of our holding late afternoon 'twilight' meetings, starting at 5pm. This should assist those members who are in employment and be more family friendly for those with caring responsibilities (afternoon meetings clash with picking up children from school, collecting family members from day centres, etc).
1.05	Currently, we use a number of different meeting slots. Some bodies meet on a monthly basis whilst the majority of the Overview & Scrutiny committees (O&SC) meet twice in a ten weeks cycle. Audit meets on a quarterly basis.
1.06	Meetings have tended to be in fixed slots, with morning meetings generally starting at 9.30/10am and those in the afternoon at 2pm. Following previous request, we try not to hold meetings during school holidays, August or the week at Christmas. The current pattern of meetings is shown in Appendix 1
1.07	In the first instance, the committee should consider whether there is merit in having a broader span of meeting slots, by including late afternoon and/or evening slot. Recent experience with the 'Your Moment' Budget consultation meetings, which were all held in the evening has shown the potential for citizen engagement if we were to hold evening meetings.
1.08	A survey of members could then be conducted, using software such survey monkey for the 66 out of the 70 members who use Ipads. The other four members would receive a paper copy. This would enable members to express their preferences. The results of the survey would be reported to

1.09	<p>the next meeting of the Democratic Services committee. If there is agreement to making changes, this could be reflected in the report which is submitted to the annual meeting which is to be held on 10th May 2016.</p> <p>Work on the schedule of meetings has already commenced. A specific change from previous years is that the budget meeting slots have already been allocated to particular committees. This is intended to assist Members and officers in managing their diaries. Any new schedule of meetings would start after the August recess.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
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2.01	The Authority has already adopted a flexible working policy for its staff. If a decision was made to hold more evening meetings, this may require more flexibility for those staff involved and may also necessitate revision of day time office cover levels.
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3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
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3.01	This report is being produced as the initial stage in a consultation process.
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4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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4.01	Flexibility of meetings should remove barriers for those members who work full time /shifts or have caring responsibilities and ultimately may encourage a more diverse range of candidates to stand for election.
4.02	Any change may lead to an impact on employees who are expected to attend Council meetings in the evenings etc and who have their own caring responsibilities

5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	Appendix 1 Slots used within the schedule for particular meetings
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	<p>None, other than published material referred to in the text.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Robert Robins, Member Engagement Manager Telephone: (01352) 702320 E-mail: Robert.robins@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) body which represents the interest of the 22 local authorities in Wales, together with the three National Park Authorities and the three Fire & Rescue Authorities. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011</p> <p>WLGA Member Development Charter: accreditation for good practice.</p> <p>Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (LG(W)M 2011) A Measure is a piece of law made by the Welsh Assembly. It has similar effect to an Act of Parliament. The Assembly is able to pass Measures on any 'matter' listed in Schedule 5 to the 2006 Act. After 2011, the Assembly has produced 'Acts' rather than 'Measures', with each having the same legislative weight.</p> <p>Slots: spaces in the schedule of meetings used for holding meetings.</p>

Appendix 1

Slots used within the schedule for particular meetings

Audit Committee: Wednesday mornings, four times a year
Cabinet: Tuesday mornings, 9.30
Community & Enterprise O&SC Wednesdays, mixing morning and afternoons
Council: predominantly Tuesday afternoons, four times a year.
Constitution committee: Wednesday afternoons (alternating before or after Democratic Services Committee)
Corporate Resources O&SC; Thursday mornings
Democratic services Committee; Wednesday afternoons (alternating before or after constitution Committee)
Education & Youth O&SC; Thursday afternoons
Environment O&SC: Wednesdays, mixing morning and afternoons
Licensing committee: Thursday mornings
Licensing sub-committee: as and when required
Organisational Change O&SC: Monday mornings
Planning & Development committee: Wednesday afternoons, 1pm
Social & Healthcare O&SC: mostly Thursdays, alternating morning and afternoon, at committee members request
Standards: first Monday in the month at 6pm.