

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
30 JANUARY 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 30 January, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor R.J.T. Guest (Chairman)

Councillors: R.C. Bithell, C.S. Carver, D.L. Cox, A.I. Dunbar, D. Evans, V. Gay, T. Newhouse, N. Phillips, W.P. Shotton, W.O. Thomas and A. Woolley

APOLOGIES: Councillors J.M. Johnson and G. Hardcastle

IN ATTENDANCE:

Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Democracy and Governance Manager, Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members present declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 5: Member Data Protection Notifications.

19. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 October 2013, were submitted.

Matters arising

Councillor A.I. Dunbar referred to the portability of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks to alternative roles. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services responded to the queries made by Members and gave an update on the current position. He advised that all but a small number of Members had been CRB checked and confirmed that any Councillor who had not been checked would not be eligible to hold specific positions or take part in designated activities.

RESOLVED:

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

20. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report to update the Member Development Strategy. He provided background information and advised that the Committee had responsibility to review the Council's Member Development Strategy. Attached as Appendix 1 to the report was a copy of the Member Development Strategy with tracked proposed changes showing updates for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee endorse the updated changes to the Member Development Strategy shown in Appendix 1.

21. MEMBER DATA PROTECTION NOTIFICATIONS

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report to consider a change in the Council's practice concerning the cost of individual Member notifications to the Information Commissioner's office (ICO).

The Democracy and Governance Manager provided background information and advised that the practice in Flintshire had been to provide advice and assistance to elected Members over their individual notifications but for the cost to be met by the Member themselves. Following liaison with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) concerning this issue it had been established that the majority of authorities pay the fee rather than expecting the individual Member to do so. The WLGA also sought clarification on this matter from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) who had indicated that the local authority should make the payment on behalf of their Members.

In view of the practice of other authorities and the advice from the IRPW the Committee were advised that the Council should in future meet the cost of the notifications by individual Members. In practice this would be by reimbursement to the Member.

RESOLVED:

That in future the Council meets the cost of individual notifications made by Members to the Information Commissioner's Office.

22. FEEDBACK ON MEMBER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report to provide feedback on Member development events held since the last meeting of the Committee. He advised that attached to the report were graphs showing the feedback received from the latest Member briefings and reported that overall the feedback from the events held had remained good.

Members were invited to make observations on their experience or suggestions for improvements for future development events. Councillor D. Evans expressed concern regarding the number of training events that had been cancelled due to lack of attendance. He expressed disappointment concerning the cancellation of evening sessions which presented the most convenient opportunity for some Members to attend and cited work and personal responsibilities as preventing daytime attendance.

Councillor A. Woolley suggested that Members who had put their names forward to attend training events which subsequently had to be cancelled should be shown as such on the records maintained for monitoring purposes. The Democracy and Governance Manager agreed to pursue this.

The Democracy and Governance Manager explained the rationale for cancelling development events and referred to the need for interactivity to take place at most training sessions. Following discussion it was agreed that Group Leaders be contacted with a view to securing improved Member attendance at training events.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the feedback on Member Development Events be noted; and
- (b) That Group Leaders be contacted to secure improved Member attendance at training events.

23. PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

24. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 3.55 pm and finished at 4.30 pm.

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Chairman