

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 JULY 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 17 July 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Robin Guest (Chairman)

Councillors: Derek Butler, David Cox, Veronica Gay, Patrick Heesom, Tim Newhouse, Neville Phillips, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, Owen Thomas and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES: Councillors Chris Bithell, Clive Carver, Ian Dunbar, George Hardcastle, Joe Johnson, and Paul Shotton

IN ATTENDANCE:

Democracy and Governance Manager, Member Engagement Manager, and Committee Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

The Chairman sought nominations for a Vice-Chairman for the Committee.

Councillor W.O. Thomas proposed that Councillor N.R. Steele-Mortimer be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee. Councillor T. Newhouse seconded the proposal and when put to the vote Councillor Steele-Mortimer was appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor N.R. Steele-Mortimer be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. MINUTES

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

RESOLVED:

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

4. ANNUAL REPORTS BY MEMBERS

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report to agree the Council's arrangements for annual reports by Members. He explained that at its meeting on 24 October 2012 the Committee had considered consultation on

the draft guidance and advised that the final version of the guidance had been issued in May 2013 and was appended to the report.

The Democracy and Governance Manager advised that the Council was legally required to make the arrangements detailed in Section 5 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. Once the arrangements had been made it was for individual Members to choose whether or not they made an annual report to be published in accordance with the arrangements.

The Democracy and Governance Manager referred to the new arrangements under the Measure. He advised that it was for individual Councils to determine the conditions that should be imposed on such annual reports by Members and the arrangements it wished to make for them. In response to the draft guidance the Committee had made the point that the final guidance should make it clear that if an individual Member's annual report did not comply with the guidance the Authority should not publish it. Although the final guidance had not incorporated this point the Authority could impose a condition to this effect and also that it complied with the standard template recommended in paragraph 1.6 of the guidance to ensure a uniform format for such reports.

The Democracy and Governance Manager also recommended that a condition be imposed to ensure the contents of the annual report were not defamatory as determined by the Monitoring Officer.

Concerning the arrangements for publishing the annual reports and publicising their availability, he advised that it would be sufficient to publish the annual reports and their availability on the Authority's website

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the following conditions be imposed as part of the arrangements under Section 5 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011:
 - (i). That annual reports by Members must comply with the statutory guidance including the standard template referred to in paragraph 1.6 of that guidance.
 - (ii) That the contents of the annual report are not defamatory in the opinion of the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- (b) That there are sufficient arrangements for publishing the annual reports and publicising their availability if they are published on the appropriate part of the Council's website and their availability publicised on it.

5. MEMBER TRAINING – CORPORATE PARENTING

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report to consider the recommendations of the Joint Social & Health Care and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 June 2013, in relation to corporate parenting training. He advised that during the meeting it had been

suggested that corporate parenting training should be made compulsory for all Members and that this was supported by Members of both Committees. The joint Committee had recommended that County Council be asked to consider making corporate parenting training compulsory for all Members and that the training be provided during a future meeting of the County Council.

The Member Engagement Manager advised that the Authority did not have the power to make Member training compulsory. Group Leaders could however be asked to encourage their members to attend. He referred to the suggestions that a Corporate Training session be held either before, during, or after County Council meetings, and explained the reasons why those options would not be conducive to providing meaningful training sessions.

Councillor P.G. Heesom suggested that other methods of enhancing awareness of topics should be explored and cited the use of literature as an example.

Councillor V. Gay referred to the role of school Governing Bodies and asked if training or guidance could be provided to raise awareness of their responsibilities for Looked After Children in school.

During discussion it was proposed and seconded that relevant Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs together with the appropriate officers be requested to facilitate a seminar on the subject of Corporate Parenting and that Group Leaders be asked to request that Members attend such a seminar when arranged.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the appropriate Members and officers be requested to facilitate a seminar on the subject of Corporate Parenting; and
- (b) That Group Leaders be asked to request that Members attend such a seminar when arranged

6. PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

7. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 3.35 pm and finished at 4.00 pm.

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Chairman