

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
8 JANUARY 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 8 January 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Robin Guest (Chairman)

Councillors: Chris Bithell, David Cox, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, Dave Mackie, Tim Newhouse, Neville Phillips, Paul Shotton, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES: Councillors Derek Butler, Glenys Diskin, Joe Johnson, Ian Roberts, and Owen Thomas

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Jim Falshaw for Clive Carver

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Aaron Shotton

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 July 2013, were submitted.

Annual reports by Members

The Democracy and Governance Manager advised that he had written to all Members concerning publicising the availability of annual reports on the Council's website and had asked Members to notify him of such reports by the end of January 2014.

Corporate Parenting Training

Councillor Chris Bithell expressed disappointment at the low attendance for the Corporate Parenting seminar.

RESOLVED:

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

10. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TRAINING

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report to consider issues arising from the Overview and Scrutiny training provided by Julia Wright on the 31 October and 1 November 2013.

The Democracy and Governance Manager gave an overview of the key considerations which were detailed in the report. The Committee was asked to consider and comment on each of the issues in turn.

- On the suggestion that the Committee considered having periodic informal meetings of the Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny Committees, the Democracy and Governance Manager advised that the Constitution Committee had agreed to the creation of an Overview & Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Steering Group at the meeting of the Committee preceding this meeting.
- In relation to the need to seek to improve questioning of those who attend before Overview and Scrutiny Committees it was agreed that use should be made of the questioning plan which was appended to the report. It was acknowledged that that this was particularly helpful where outside bodies were attending before the committee and that it would also assist with committee team work and areas of questioning for individual Members to pursue.
- Concerning the size of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the use of substitutes, it was agreed that there was no need to change the current arrangements.
- Regarding the suggestion of whether more use should be made of less formal member groups, Members commented on the work currently undertaken by Task and Finish Groups and decided that no action was required.
- Members expressed a number of views in relation to the need for more focus on the topics that should be examined by Overview and Scrutiny, and it was agreed that the issue be given further consideration by the individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED:

That the issues arising from the Overview and Scrutiny training be noted.

11. MEMBER PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report on the arrangements in place for undertaking annual personal development review meetings for Members. He advised that the most appropriate time for Members to have their personal development review meetings was during February or March so that any training needs identified could be fed into the preparation of the Member development programme for the following Council year.

RESOLVED:

That the arrangements in place to enable all Members to have an annual personal development review meeting be noted.

12. FEEDBACK ON MEMBER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report to provide feedback on Member development events since last reported to the Committee. The report referred to the poor attendance at some events.

Councillor Chris Bithell commented on the poor attendance at the Corporate Parenting seminar and emphasised the importance of training in this area. He expressed the view that Corporate Parenting training should be made compulsory for Members. The Chairman commented on the need for further clarification around the role and responsibilities of Members as Corporate Parents concerning children's welfare and agreed to pursue this with appropriate members and officers.

Councillor Veronica Gay spoke in support of the importance of the various training provided and the information and knowledge gained.

Councillor Neville Phillips referred to the number of development events which had been held recently and asked if training sessions could be more evenly distributed across a twelve month period. The Democracy and Governance Manager acknowledged the point and explained that when an external provider was engaged to provide training, to keep costs to a minimum, the provider may be appointed for a day or two and Members would be expected to attend only one of a number of events offered at the time.

During discussion it was agreed that Group Leaders be asked to encourage their members to attend Member development events.

RESOLVED:

That Group Leaders be asked to encourage their Members to attend Member Development events.

13. PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

14. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 3.00 pm and finished at 4.15 pm.

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Chairman