

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 9 July 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Neville Phillips (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors: Glyn Banks, Haydn Bateman, Clive Carver, David Cox, Ian Dunbar, Veronica Gay, George Hardcastle, Dave Mackie, Tim Newhouse, Paul Shotton, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, David Williams, David Wisinger, and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES: Councillors Glenys Diskin, Robin Guest, Ian Smith and Owen Thomas

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillors Christine Jones for Chris Bithell and Vicky Perfect for Alex Aldridge

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Democracy and Governance Manager sought nominations for a Vice-Chairman for the Committee.

Councillor Clive Carver nominated Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer as Vice-Chair of the Committee and this was seconded.

Councillor Ian Dunbar nominated Councillor Neville Phillips as Vice-Chair of the Committee and this was seconded.

Members were asked to vote on the nominations and when put to the vote Councillor Neville Phillips was appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chair took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Neville Phillips be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome the new Member for Flint Trelawny, Councillor Vicky Perfect to the meeting.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 March 2014, were submitted.

Trial of Remote Attendance and Webcasting

Councillor George Hardcastle referred to his comments on page 2 around the cost of the trial and the financial implications for future provision for remote attendance and webcasting of meetings. In his response the Democracy and Governance Manager advised that a communication had recently been received from the WLGA which referred to the experiences of other authorities who had used alternative providers. Following a suggestion subsequently made to the Group Leaders it had been decided that the Democracy and Governance Manager would pursue further information from the WLGA before submitting a report to the next meeting of the Constitution Committee scheduled to be held in October 2014. The Democracy and Governance Manager agreed to send to the Committee details of the cost of the trial and other associated costs to implement it.

RESOLVED:

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

4. ATTENDANCE AT MEMBER TRAINING

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report to provide feedback on the results of the Member questionnaire on attendance at Member development events. He advised that following the concerns expressed at the previous meeting of the Committee on the low attendance level at some Member development events, a questionnaire had been sent to all Members to seek the reasons for this. A copy of the questionnaire and the responses to it were appended to the report. He explained that the responses had been mixed, however, the points detailed in paragraph 3.03 of the report were put forward for consideration to improve Member attendance at development events.

During discussion the Democracy and Governance Manager responded to the comments and queries raised by Members around whether more training should be made mandatory. He explained that Members who served on the Planning Committee, Licensing Committee, Audit Committee or Pensions Committee were required to attend training relating to the work of such committees. In answer to the further questions raised concerning failure to attend the training the Democracy and Governance Manager advised that it was only through Group Leaders removing a Member from a committee that any mandatory training could be enforced.

The Democracy and Governance Manager advised that at a meeting of the Group Leaders held on 3 July 2014, a further two suggestions had been

made which were to provide shorter training sessions immediately before a scheduled meeting, and to explore the provision of training by electronic means.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer proposed that the 3 suggestions outlined in paragraph 3.03 of the report together with the 2 further suggestions made at the meeting of the Group Leaders on 3 July 2014, be implemented. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Ian Dunbar.

RESOLVED:

That the 3 suggestions detailed in paragraph 3.03 of the report together with the 2 further suggestions made at the meeting of the Group Leaders on 3 July 2014, be implemented.

5. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report to seek agreement on the Member Development Programme for 2014/15. He advised that Group Leaders and all Members had been consulted to give the opportunity of raising possible topics for inclusion in this year's programme. Appended to the report was a draft Member development programme for 2014/15 for consideration.

Members agreed that the item on Planning topics as determined by the Planning Strategy Group, and the item on Equalities and Welsh Language remain on the programme for 2014/15.

Councillor Ian Dunbar suggested that the item on Planning Training for Non Committee Members be referred to the Planning Strategy Group for consideration. Councillor Clive Carver suggested that training on the role of the Planning Officer and information on the planning file would enhance knowledge and understanding of Planning procedures. The Democracy and Governance Manager agreed this would also be referred to Planning Strategy Group for its consideration.

Referring to the item on Finance the Democracy and Governance Manager asked Members what aspects of Finance they wished training to be provided on. Councillor Nigel Steele Mortimer requested that training be provided on budget preparation.

Concerning the topic on Contact Officers/Management Structures it was agreed that this was best provided to Members by email.

Regarding the item on Value for Money, the Member Engagement Manager explained that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered regular reports on the Value For Money projects and suggested that it would be helpful if a workshop was held for Members on this item.

Councillor Veronica Gay suggested that the topic on the Use of Facebook, Twitter and other forms of electronic communication be expanded to include training for Members around newsletters.

RESOLVED:

That the Member Development Programme for 2014/15 be agreed subject to the above amendments.

6. 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. Appended to the report was analysis of the feedback on the development events held during March, April, and May 2014. The Democracy and Governance Manager reported that the feedback had been positive and he invited Members to comment on their experience of events they had attended or make suggestions for improvements for future training.

Councillor Paul Shotton said he had attended training on the Local Development Plan and the Introduction to Unconventional Gas Extraction which which had been helpful and informative.

Councillor Christine Jones commended the in-house training which was provided by the Authority's Officers. She said the level of knowledge and detailed information provided was excellent.

RESOLVED:

That the feedback on member development events since last reported to the Committee be noted.

7. PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

8. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 3.30 pm and finished at 4.20 pm.

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Chairman