

Carmarthenshire County Council Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2017-18



Annual Report

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

Foreword by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

As the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee during 2017 – 18 it is my pleasure to present the Committee's Annual report for this period.

I would firstly like to congratulate all Councillors who were elected or re-elected in the Local Government Elections in May 2017. Carmarthenshire elected 30 new Councillors (40.5%) therefore the Committee focussed its work on ensuring that the needs and requirement of Members were addressed, at the same time, being mindful of the financial challenged facing the Council.

The Member Induction Programme (for both new and returning members) previously agreed by the Committee and launched on the 11th May 2017 not only provided an introduction to the Council's main functions and services, but provided knowledge and understanding and led in to a comprehensive programme of training which was delivered over a period of 6 months

During the year the Committee reviewed the programme and considered what additional skills and training was required by members in order that these could be incorporated within the Member Development Programme for the forthcoming year.

The Committee also considered in detail the findings of the timing of meetings survey, which is a requirement of the LG Wales Measure, and analysed the findings in detail deferring the report in order to receive further analysis before making a final recommendation to the Council which was to retain the existing arrangements.

The Committee also considered the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales on Councillors' allowances for the period 2018 and made recommendations to Council.

Cllr Suzy Curry, was appointed as Chair of the Committee for 2018-19 and one of the Committee's priorities for the year will be to examine how the authority can make greater use of digital technology with an aim of assisting Councillors in their roles.

I wish Cllr Curry every success in her new role.

Cllr Rob James

Chair of the Democratic Services Committee 2017-18

Cllr Suzy Curry

Chair of the Democratic Services Committee 2018-19

The Committee's Remit

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 required each County and County Borough Council to establish a Democratic Services Committee and the remit of the Committee is set out in Section 11 of of this measure namely to

- exercise the function of the local authority under section 8(1)(a) (designation of head of democratic services),
- review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions, and
- make reports and recommendations to the authority in relation to such provision.
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The Council at its meeting held on the 17TH April 2013 agreed to a recommendation of the Democratic Services Committee to include the following additional responsibilities within Committee's functions/e terms of reference:-

- To secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Councillors and prepare reports and recommendations to Council in relation to such provision;
- To appoint the Council's Member Development Champion;
- To be consulted on the implementation of reports issued by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in respect of members allowances etc.
- To promote and support good governance by the Council

The Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013 added section 11A which provides that the Democratic Services Committee may, at the request of the authority, review any matter relevant to :

- (a) the support and advice available to members of that authority, and
- (b) the terms and conditions of office of those members.

Membership of the Democratic Services Committee 17-18

The membership of the Democratic Services Committee for the period 24th May 2017 – 15th May 2018 comprised of 5 members on a politically balanced basis:-

Councillor Rob James – Chair



Councillor Tyssul Evans (Vice-Chair).



Councillor Jim Jones



Councillor Shahana Najmi



Cllr Dai Thomas



Democratic Services Committee Meetings

The Democratic Services Committee met 3 times during 2017-18:-

8th September 2017

29th November 2017

9th March 2018

Attendance by the Members of the Democratic Services Committee

The attendance figures for each member of the Democratic Services Committee are set out below.

Councillor	Number of Meetings held	Meetings attended
Rob James	3	3
Tyssul Evans	3	3
Jim Jones	3	1
Shahana Najmi	3	2
Dai Thomas	3	2

Rob Evans (substitute)	1	1
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Key issues considered during 2017/18

During the year the Democratic Services Committee discussed the following reports, and a brief synopsis is included for each topic:-

Democratic Services Committee – Functions Overview

Due to the Local Government Elections in May 2017 and the influx of new Councillors on the Committee, the Head of Democratic Services provided a report outlining the statutory framework within which the Democratic Services Committee functioned together with its remit and powers as detailed in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and additional responsibilities approved by Council on the 17th April 2013.

The Committee reviewed its terms of reference in order to ensure that all Members understood the role and function of the Committee

Appointment of Member Development Champion

Due to the Local Government Elections in May 2017 the Committee considered a report detailing the requirement to appoint a new Member Development Champion for the new Council.

The Member Development Champion would work closely with the Member Development lead for the Executive Board and officers of the Learning and Development Team on identifying and promoting member development issues and would confirm the Authority's commitment to the importance of Member Development.

The Council following a recommendation by the Democratic Services Committee, agreed that the Chair of the Committee should undertake this role.

Review of Member Induction Programme 2017.

The Committee reviewed the Members' Induction Programme 2017, which had been organised to inform both newly elected and returning Councillors of their roles and the services provided by the Council. It suggested that future programmes should include an element of training focussing on skills as well as improving understanding of the council's procedures and statutory functions. The Committee was concerned regarding the low attendance at some sessions particularly in view of the amount of preparation work by officers but it accepted that there was no legal requirement to attend these sessions.

Evaluation Of Member Induction Programme 2017/18 and approval of the 2018/19 Programme

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of feedback from the Focus groups held to evaluate the Member Induction Programme and in particular what had worked well with the 2017 Member Induction programme and what could have been done better.

The Committee considered the draft Member Development Plan 2018/19 which outlined the proposed development opportunities to be made available to members during the period March 2018 – April 2019 and beyond where appropriate. It was noted that the Plan would not be static and it could be amended at any time.

Timing of Council Meetings - Survey

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of the Councillors Survey on Timings of Council Meetings which had been undertaken following the Local Government Elections in May 2017. Having considered the survey and requested further data analysis, the Committee made a recommendation to Council that the meeting arrangement be unchanged and this was accepted by the Council on the 10th January 2018.

Independent Remuneration Panel (IRPW) for Wales Annual Report - February 2018

The Committee considered both the draft and final version of the IRPW Annual Report (February 2018) which detailed the Panel's determinations and recommendations in respect of remuneration and member support.

The Committee made recommendations to Council for inclusion within the Councillors' and Co-opted Members' Salaries and Allowances Scheme for 2018/19. The Council chose to accept all recommendations except the decision in respect of the reimbursement of care costs where it resolved to adopt option 2 which was to publish the total amount reimbursed by the authority during the year not attributable to any member.

Councillors And Co-Opted Members' Salaries And Allowances Scheme 2018/19 - Approved Duties

The Committee considered the Councillors and Co-opted Members' Salaries and Allowances scheme 2018/19 which included a list of approved duties. The Committee recommended to the Constitutional Review Working Group an amendment to the current list of approved duties with a view to including attendance by the Chair of Council, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the relevant Scrutiny Committee Chair at meetings of the Executive Board.

Council at its annual meeting on the 16th May 2018 accepted this amendment and included the DSC recommendation within the list of approved duties for 2018/19 onwards.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny Function – Annual Report 2016/17

The Chair of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum presented Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny Function Annual Report 2016/17 to the Committee.

Forward Work Programme

The Committee agree its Forward Work Programme for the forthcoming 12 months at its first meeting following election of the new Council.

General Information

The Democratic Services Committee is a public meeting and with the exception of confidential items, all business is held in public. All of the public papers are published online at <http://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=152>

The Council is keen to see members of the public attend Democratic Services Committee meetings and all other Council meetings, including Council, Executive Board, Scrutiny and Regulatory meetings.

Further information can be provided by Democratic Services:

DemocraticServices@carmarthenshire.gov.uk or on 01267 224028.