

Carmarthenshire County Council Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2018-19



Annual Report

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Foreword by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

As the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee during 2018 – 19 it is my pleasure to present the Committee's Annual report for this period.

The Committee has focussed its work on ensuring that the needs and requirements of Members are addressed and that appropriate arrangements are made to support Members in their duties. As members we must also accept our responsibility in contributing towards efficiency savings and working in a mobile and efficient by way using the most appropriate digital technology. To this end, the Committee has been instrumental in recommending to Council that we move to a system of paperless communication with Councillors, which will not only achieve efficiency savings but will also ensure members play their part in moving forward the Authority's digital priorities and aspirations. I am pleased to report that our first paperless meeting is due to be held in September 2019 and a comprehensive programme of training has been made available to members.

As a Committee we have continued to secure and monitor the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Councillors and made recommendations to Council on the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Committee members for their invaluable contributions and their support during the past year, and also to the officers who support the work in its work.

Next year the Committee will continue to focus on member development and we will look at what ICT facilities are needed to assist and support members in their roles, and how we as members can contribute to the Authority's vision for a digital Carmarthenshire.

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.

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 18-19

The membership of the Democratic Services Committee for the period 16th May 2018 to 14th May 2019 comprised of 5 members on a politically balanced basis:-

Councillor Suzy Curry (Chair)



Councillor Tyssul Evans (Vice-Chair).



Councillor Jim Jones



Councillor Fozia Akhtar* (16th May 2018 – 5th March 2019)



CLlr Dai Thomas



Cllr Dot Jones* (from 6th March 2019)



Democratic Services Committee Meetings held during 2018-19:-

11th June 2018

15th October 2018

29th January 2019

12th March 2019

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	Meetings attended
Fozia Akhtar*	0
Suzy Curry	3
Tyssul Evans	4
Dot Jones	1
Jim Jones	2
Dai Thomas	3

*Cllr Fozia Akhtar - Cttee member from 16th May 2018 – 5th March 2019 / Cllr Dot Jones Committee Member from 6th March 2019

Kim Broome (substitute)	1
John Prosser (substitute)	1
Irfon Jones (substitute)	1

Key issues considered during 2018/19

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

Member Development – Personal Development Reviews [PDR]

The Committee considered a process for conducting Member Personal Development Reviews and agreed that the approach adopted by the previous Council should be continued, namely that reviews should be undertaken by the leaders of the political groups with support from Learning and Development. It was agreed that this approach would allow groups to identify those areas where there was a demand for training so that it was member-led, and support requests would feed into the Member Development Programme and be tailored in accordance with training needs. The Committee agreed template letters, forms and outcome sheets which could be used by Group Leaders, if required.

Member Mentoring

The Committee considered a proposal for the introduction of a Member Mentoring process, together with a job description for a Member Mentor role.

The Committee in supporting the proposal, noted that Mentoring was a voluntary role and it was an important tool in enabling new members to “grow” in terms of skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour. The Committee agreed that a Member Mentoring process be put in place and all members were offered the opportunity of attending a WLGA delivered session for those who wished to become a mentor. This session was held on Thursday 8th November 2018 and was based on WLGA Guidance for Member Mentors

Councillors’ Annual Reports

The Committee is mindful that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Authority to make arrangements for each person who is a member of the authority to make an annual report, and must also make arrangements to publish all annual reports made by members.

Whilst the production of an annual report is not mandatory, the Committee agreed an Annual reports template and guidance note so that members could produce and publish a report if they so wished. The process would be supported by Democratic Services and a reminder to produce a report sent to members each year.

Published reports can be viewed on the authority’s website via the following link:-

<http://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/mgMemberIndex.aspx>

Paperless Working

The Chair of behalf of the Committee presented a report to Council in September 2018 recommending that the Council should move to a paperless system of communication with all councillors with effect from 2nd September 2019. Council resolved to approve the recommendation and agreed that appropriate training be arranged for members prior to this date.

Following this decision and in order to ensure that the training programme was tailored to meet the needs of members, the Committee agreed an I.C.T. questionnaire which would help ascertain members' individual IT requirements and the current provision of broadband within their homes. The survey was undertaken during February/March 2019 and the results fed into the ongoing IT and Mod.gov training programme for members and officers.

The Committee also agreed a guidance document on making paperless working a success and supported proposals for installing additional device charging points within the Chamber, County Hall. Members will be aware that the electrical works were completed in April 2019.

Member Expenses - Self Service

The Committee considered a proposal to move to a system of Self Service for member expenses, using a separate element of the Authority's integrated HR, and payroll system which was used by the Authority's staff. The Committee was advised that Councillor self-service would allow Councillors to :-

- Submit their Mileage and Expenses Claims on line
- Change their personal details i.e. address, bank details etc
- View Payslips on line (with paper payslips to cease)

The Committee agreed that once the member system had been tested that a pilot exercise be undertaken with a group of members , prior to a further report being submitted to the Committee. Group Leaders had been asked to put forward nominations and the Chair of the Committee had also agreed to participate.

Update on Member Development Plan 2018/19

The Committee considered an update on the Member Development Plan for 2018/19 together with additional development session which had been included within the plan.

The Committee noted that as part of a move to paperless meetings, the Authority had held a series of training opportunities between December 2018 and July 2019 and offered 1:1 support, in order to ensure members were familiar and comfortable with the paperless working app.

As part of the Authority's approach to supporting and strengthening its Scrutiny Function a member development session was also arranged on Scrutiny Essentials and Questioning skills which was delivered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny in **March** 2019, this provided members with a clear understanding of their role in scrutinizing the council executive and relevant partner organisations and how to develop confidence in developing effective questioning techniques. Scrutiny Support Officers received a separate session tailored specifically for them.

Councillor Data Sim Provision

The Committee, as part of its recommendation to move to paperless working agreed to look at the existing provision of providing members with Data SIM cards in order to allow members to use their devices remotely via 3G/4G when wi-fi was not available. Having reviewed the usage data, the Committee agreed that the current provisions should be retained and the situation reviewed in 12 months.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny Function - Annual Report 2017/18

The Chair of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum presented Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny Function Annual Report 2017/18 to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that some of the main areas which had / were being addressed included the need for the presentation of timely budget monitoring reports, member and officer development to ensure effective scrutiny, together with scrutiny of the Swansea Bay City Deal Programme and the Council's arms-length companies. Additionally, all scrutiny committees were being encouraged to establish a task and finish group to critically examine any area of concern which may arise within their portfolios.

Democratic Services Function Annual Review

The Committee considered the Democratic Services Function Annual Review which provided an outline on the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions.

The Committee noted that whilst the Democratic Service had carried several vacancies during 2017/18 whilst the service participated in the Authority's Transform, Innovate & Change (TIC) Programme, these posts had now been released and new staff members were in place.

Independent Remuneration Panel (IRPW) for Wales Annual Report - February 2019

The Committee considered both the draft and final version of the IRPW Annual Report (February 2019) 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 2019/20. The Council chose to accept all recommendations except the decision in respect of publication of the reimbursement of the costs of care where it resolved to adopt option 1 namely, to publish details of the amounts reimbursed to named members.

Forward Work Programme

The Committee agree its Forward Work Programme for the forthcoming 12 month period.

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.