

Carmarthenshire County Council

Democratic Services Committee

Annual Report 2022-23



Annual Report

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Foreword by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

As the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee during 2022-23 it is my pleasure to present the Committee's Annual report for this period.

The Local Government Elections in May 2022 and review of the local government boundaries resulted in the number of Councillors elected in Carmarthenshire increasing from 74 to 75. Of the 75 Councillors elected, 28 were new members.

Following the election, a comprehensive member induction programme for both new and returning members was provided. The programme ensured that members had the training and support needed to undertake the role of County Councillor, the programme included :-

- Training for allocated IT equipment, the Modern.gov paperless working app, and remote platforms for joining multi-location meetings remotely;
- An outline of the main functions of the Council, the Council Constitution and the responsibilities of each service;
- An overview of the organisation and its key functions;
- An understanding of the principal strategies and the vision for service delivery for Carmarthenshire.

Whilst the Democratic Services Committee met only once, members of the Committee did meet informally to view and input into a revised and updated Member portal for Elected Member enquiries, with our feedback forming the final report being placed before the Committee in June 2023.

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 Committee in its work.

Cllr Lewis Davies

Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

The Committee's Remit

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires 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 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 the Committee's functions/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 2022-2023

The membership of the Democratic Services Committee for the period 25th May 2022 - 24th May 2023 comprised of 5 members on a politically balanced basis:-

Councillor Lewis Davies (Chair)



Councillor Tyssul Evans (Vice-Chair).



Councillor Hazel Evans



Cllr Fiona Walters



Cllr Philip Warlow



Democratic Services Committee Meetings held during 2022-23

8th September 2022

Attendance by the Members of the Democratic Services Committee

The attendance figures for the formal meeting of the Committee is set out below.

Councillor	Meetings attended
Lewis Davies	1
Hazel Evans	0
Tyssul Evans	1
Fiona Walters	1
Philip Warlow	1
Kim Broom	1 (substitute)

KEY ISSUES AND OUTCOMES 2022-23

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

Democratic Services Function and the Authority's Member Development Champion.

The Committee considered the role and function of the Committee and framework within which the Committee had been established under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

Outcome:-

The Committee reaffirmed the appointment of the Chair of the Committee as the Authority's Member Development Champion.

Update on the Member Induction Programme

The Committee received a report on the member induction programme which had been launched on the 18th May 2022 and contained a total of 40 development sessions for both returning and newly elected members. Members had the opportunity to attend the majority of sessions either remotely via Zoom and/or physically in County Hall, Carmarthen and where some sessions had been recorded these were available via the eLearning Platform following the session.

Outcome:-

The Committee considered the breakdown of the attendance to each development session and supported holding Focus Groups to obtain member feedback.

Multi location meeting policy

The Committee considered a Multi-location Meeting Policy which had been recommended by the Authority's Constitutional Review Working Group. It was noted that since the introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the Welsh Government had provided Councils with the power and freedom to convene multi-location meetings (hybrid – a mix of physical & remote) enabling greater accessibility and public participation in local government decision making. The multi-location meeting policy provided guidance to Councillors, Officers and the public as to how the Authority managed and conducted its multi-location meetings and was meant to be considered alongside the existing arrangements for meetings as detailed within the Council Constitution, but would not be included in the Constitution itself.

Outcome:-

The Chair on behalf of the Committee presented the Multi location meeting policy to Council on the 12th October 2022 and Council resolved to approve the policy. A copy of the [Multi location policy](#) is available on the website.

Timing of Meetings Survey

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Committee, following the local government election in May 2022 considered the results of a survey seeking Members preference in respect of the times and intervals at which meetings of a local authority were to be held. The Committee noted that 53 members out of 75 had responded to the survey and the majority of members had expressed a preference that meeting arrangements remained as per the arrangements in place in the previous Council.

Outcome:-

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, presented the findings of the survey to Council on the 12th October 2022 and recommended that there be no change to the current meeting arrangements. Council resolved to approve the recommendation. The Chief Executive being mindful that new members may not have been aware of the demands on their time and attendance at Council meetings agreed at the meeting that a further survey could be undertaken after 12 months.

Forward Work Programme

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

General Information

The Democratic Services Committee meetings are public meetings and with the exception of confidential items, all business is held in public. All 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, Cabinet, Scrutiny and Regulatory meetings. More information can be found in our [Public Participation Strategy](#).

Further information can be provided by contacting Democratic Services:

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