



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held Virtually on Monday, 11 September 2023 at 5.00 pm.

**County Borough Councillors**

Councillor W Jones (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor A J Ellis
Councillor P Evans	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor B Stephens	Councillor J Turner

**Officers in attendance**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mrs E Wilkins, Council Business Manager

**9 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors L Addiscott, Councillor S Hickman, Councillor S Powderhill, Councillor S Trask And Councillor K Webb.

**10 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

**11 MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

**12 MATTERS ARISING**

The Head of Democratic Services and Council Business Manager provided Members with updates in respect of the matters arising from the minutes of the July Committee meeting:

**Minute 5(2)** – Notification of the Member Development Programme had been circulated to all Members and going forward monthly breakdowns of forthcoming training was also being provided.

**Minute 6(1)** – Before the Head of Democratic Services provided an update in respect of the Office accommodation move, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Members for their attendance at the site visit carried out to Llys Cadwyn, and for the feedback provided.

- I. **Sufficient Toilet Provision** – The Head of Democratic Services advised that due to large structural changes needed, additional toilets on the Members floor would not be possible, however, Members would be able to have access to toilet provision on other floors within the building if necessary.
- II. **Sufficient Political Rooms** – The Head of Democratic Services advised that Members comments in respect political rooms had been taken forward by Corporate Estates.
- III. **Sufficient Parkin Provision** – Members were advised that the Head of Democratic Services had met with colleagues within Highways who had advised that in addition to the parking provision within Llys Cadwyn itself, and the public parking arrangements available in the town car parks, Officers were confident that Members attending the standard 5pm Committee meetings would find sufficient parking provision available.

In addition to the above, the Head of Democratic Services advised of the work going forward with the Office Accommodation move which would be further reported on at the next meeting of the Committee and advised of the timeline in place, with the decommissioning of the Council Chamber, where the hybrid meeting equipment would be moved from The Pavilions and taken to Llys Cadwyn towards the end of November. Members were advised that this work would therefore mean that Committee meetings would return to virtual meetings only, until the works had been completed in the New Year.

## **13 COUNCILLOR SUPPORT SELF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK - REVIEW OF THE MEMBERS CHARTER**

The Head of Democratic Services referred Members to the report, which provided Members with the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft self-evaluation framework of the WLGA in respect to Councillor Support and development.

Members were reminded of the purpose of the Charter and its original creation, which was aimed to provide a broad framework for local planning, self-assessment, action and review together with networking and comparison amongst Councils and the sharing of good and innovative practice. The Head of Democratic Services advised of the previous good practice of the Council and its receipt of the Charter and that the Council was the first Council to receive the Advanced Charter due to its support to Members.

It was advised that the Charter criteria was being reviewed to take into account the different ways of working following the covid pandemic and to take in to account the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the associated Welsh Government guidance as it becomes available.

The Committee were referred to the proposed framework that was currently out to consultation, which provided a voluntary self-assessment framework that focusses on the support provided for Councillors to deliver the outcomes needed by their communities. The framework aims to cover all aspects of good practice in Councillor support. However, as priorities and resources differ between councils, it would be for councils to decide locally how much of the framework to use and which sections should be prioritised.

Members commented on the framework before them and agreed with the voluntary self assessment framework and that the Framework should incorporate all aspects of good practice in work of member development, committee support and policy support for members.

It was positively acknowledged that the framework allows Councils to decide locally upon those areas in line with the principles listed and that the revised approach enables the Council to develop an approach which would reflect the priorities of members.

The Committee **RESOLVED:**

- (i) To acknowledge the high standard of support provided to Members through its previous receipt of the Charter and Advanced Charter;
- (ii) To agree that the original Charter requirements required a review to align with new working practices and emerging legislation.
- (iii) To provide comment and feedback in respect of the draft Councillor Support Self Evaluation framework outlined in section 5 (iii) of the report.

#### **14 PROPOSED UPDATES TO THE ELECTED MEMBER ICT, INTERNET & EMAIL ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY**

The Council Business Manager referred Members to the Joint Report, which provided proposed revisions to the Elected Members ICT, Internet and email policy, and sought the Committees agreements to the proposed revisions.

Members were advised that the original policy was endorsed by the Democratic Services Committee in 2018 and the policy defines what the Council considers as acceptable use of its ICT equipment, internet and email facilities and sets out rules and guidelines for its access and use.

The increased usage of ICT by Members due to the new ways of working following the covid pandemic and general evolution in digital advancements was acknowledged and the Officer advised that due to these changes it was felt appropriate that a review of the policy was undertaken to ensure that it was still fit for purpose. It was added that reviewing the policy also allows the Council to strengthen the cyber security arrangements in place for the protection of the Council and its Elected Members and to bring the policy in line with current working practices.

Members queried the process that would be undertaken in respect of Members signing the revised Policy and it was confirmed that Members would be able to take forward either a manual signing or through electronic means, to the preference of the Members. The Head of Democratic Services advised that work would also be undertaken in respect of the potential of providing Members with electronic signatures.

The Committee **RESOLVED:**

- i. To review the proposed Elected Member ICT, Internet & Email Policy (Version 3) as contained in Appendix A of the report.
- ii. To Approve the revised Elected Member ICT, Internet & Email Acceptable Use Policy (Version 3).
- iii. To agree the process for Elected Members to consent to the policy, as per the 'Policy Acceptance Form' contained within Appendix IV of the policy.

## **15 MEMBER'S SUPPORT**

The Chair referenced Members to the information report before them and advised that a Member Briefing session in respect of Member Support Arrangements was being held on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, which was open to all Members and that this session would provide Members with further insight into the support available to them.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the information report.

**This meeting closed at 5.27 pm**

**Councillor W Jones  
Chair.**