



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on Monday, 6 September 2021 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Democratic Services Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor L Hooper (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor M Adams
Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor G Caple	Councillor J Edwards
Councillor H Fychan	Councillor S Rees
Councillor E Stephens	Councillor G Jones
Councillor S Powderhill	

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

10 WELCOME AND ATTENDANCE

The Chair welcomed all Members and officers to the first hybrid meeting of the Democratic Services Committee and for the benefit of all Members and Members of the public confirmed the attendance of the Committee Members in the Council Chamber and those attending virtually.

11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors W Jones and K Morgan.

12 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council Code of Conduct there were no declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.

13 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee on the 29th June 2021 were a true reflection of the meeting.

14 MATTERS ARISING

In respect of Minute 8 the Head of Democratic Services Committee advised Members that the report in relation to the 'Sufficiency of Resource's would be brought forward to a special meeting of the Committee later in the month and a

date for the meeting would be advised upon accordingly.

15 DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021

The Head of Democratic Services Committee presented the draft annual report to Members, which provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Committee over the 2020 – 2021 Municipal Year. The Head of Democratic Services commented on the work undertaken by the Committee over a short time period and the positive foundations already built upon with the webcasting provision that had been championed by the Committee.

The Vice Chair spoke on the draft report and on behalf of all Members, put on record the Committees thanks to the previous Chair, Councillor M Diamond for his work undertaken prior to retirement from office. The Vice Chair reflected on the work undertaken by the Committee and thanked the Head of Democratic Services and his team for the support provided to all Members.

The Chair advised Members that with Committee approval the Annual Report would be presented to a future meeting of the Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the annual report.

16 MEMBERS SURVEY RESULTS

The Head of Democratic Services provided Members with the feedback obtained from the Member Survey undertaken during April – May 2021 which captured information about the support provided to Members to assist them in undertaking their role.

Members were advised that 42 Members responded to the survey and the Head of Democratic Services thanked those Member for their responses to the survey, which helped identify any areas for improvement and recognised areas of good practice. Members were provided with an overview of the feedback which concentrated on hybrid and virtual meeting arrangements, support from the Council Business Unit, Members Portal developments, Member Training and Member facilities.

The Chair thanked the Head of Democratic Services for the report and spoke of the importance of gauging Members feedback to help the Council Business Unit to support Members in their role and reiterated his thanks to those Members that undertook the survey.

The Vice Chair spoke of the unprecedented 18months and the difficulties initially experienced by Members through the virtual working and the support provided by the Council Business Unit to support all Members in undertaking their commitments through attendance at meetings and supporting of residents. The Vice Chair highlighted the need for a directory to be provided to Members to assist them in their role, which had been identified by Members as a useful tool through the survey. The Vice Chair concluded her comments on the need for timely communication to Members to assist them in their role.

One Member commented on the importance of diversity within democracy and queried whether an exit survey would be undertaken with Members choosing not

to re-stand for election and with those that were unsuccessful in the next election, to establish if there were any barriers preventing Members from re-standing. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that an exit survey was required to be undertaken and that this could include both categories' as identified by the Member.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED** to

1. Note the feedback obtained from the Member survey 2020/2021.
2. Progress the actions deemed appropriate arising from the feedback – completion and distribution of an officer directory.

17 **HYBRID MEETINGS - REVIEW OF PROGRESS TO DATE**

The Head of Democratic Services referred Members to his report which provided Members with an overview of the discussions and observations made at the hybrid demonstration meetings that had been conducted with Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Planning and Development Committee and the recent hybrid demonstration of the Democratic Services Committee.

The Officer referenced the timeline presented within the report and commented that with exception of the Planning and Development Committee the timeline continues to progress as identified. The Head of Democratic Services commented that due to the nuances of the Planning and Development Committee and its public engagement further demonstrations and working practices needed to be established.

The Chair welcomed the report and agreed with a staggered approach to the role out of the webcasting system and hybrid meeting approach. The Chair commented on the excellent progress made to date with the new way of working and thanked all Members that had attended the demonstration meetings for their constructive comments to provide a robust approach to hybrid meetings.

The vice chair commented on the safety measures that would continue to be put in place, to ensure the safety of Members, Officers and the public in respect of attendance at the Chamber, which would always remain under review as the approach to hybrid meetings was rolled out.

One Member commented on the public engagement with hybrid meetings and attendance at the Council Chamber and whether familiarisation sessions would be provided to the public going forward. The Head of Democratic Services commented on the need to take forward a Public Participation Strategy which would establish how the Council would further engage the public with the democratic process and spoke of potential video footage of the arrangements in the Council Chamber to assist any public speakers or attendees.

Members spoke of the benefits of the virtual meeting approach and the flexibility provided through the hybrid meeting approach. The Chair of Planning commented on the positive engagement with the public through the virtual attendance facility and welcomed the incremental approach to the hybrid meeting.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the feedback obtained from the hybrid meetings and

- demonstrations outlined within the report
2. To progress any actions deemed appropriate as a result of the feedback and comments received as outlined within the report
 3. That the phased roll out of hybrid meetings as identified within the report be taken forward, subject to the delay of the planning and development committee for the reasons outlined within the report.

18 CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair commented on the momentous occasion for the Committee with its first hybrid meeting and spoke of the need to continue the momentum to date and to continue to develop good working practices for each of the Council's Committees.

This meeting closed at 5.40 pm

**CLLR L HOOPER
CHAIR.**