

No.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 30th June, 2025.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson (Chair); Councillor N.C. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.M. Ball, G. Bruce, G.D.D. Carroll, S.M. Hanks, K.P. Mahoney, S.D Perkes and J. Protheroe.

Also present: Councillor E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

123 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

124 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

125 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING FOR COUNCILLORS (HDS)

The Head of Democratic Services presented an overview of the summary of tools and resources to support Members in their own health, safety and well-being, which signposts to a range of internal and external resources. They indicated that the report was not an exhaustive list, but an aid to support Members in undertaking their role which had not been updated in a several years, and considered elements such as personal safety, social media, desk top equipment, eyes tests and elements of individual well-being such as physical and mental health.

Councillor Carroll stated that they felt it was important for Council to get the balance right, and what some Members characterised as scrutiny, others may feel was abuse. He felt that constituents were generally reasonable and representative, and it was right for people to be able to scrutinise performance. He shared the example of Cosmeston Aqua Park, and how he felt that legitimate scrutiny was being presented by Members as abuse, and that elected Members should be able to withstand this scrutiny. He reflected that threats of violence and intimidation should be dealt with accordingly.

Councillor Thomas indicated that they felt that Members were not characterising robust debate as abuse, but that this debate could often consist of elements of intimidation, threats and purposefully misrepresented facts, such as accusations of

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corruption, which were clearly untrue and an attack on an individual's integrity, which needed to be protected against. He stated that the Council had procedures in place to review any Councillors who may feel they were being abused.

Councillor Protheroe welcomed the paper, and stated that was important, as the role of Councillors was often supporting people in difficult situations, which could have a personal impact upon Members.

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the Guidance be endorsed and placed on the Authority's website and emailed to all Councillors
- (2) T H A T the Guidance be shared with Town and Community Councillors to signpost to available tools and resources
- (3) T H A T Councillors reflect upon the provisions identified within the report and consider any other areas which they felt would be of benefit in supporting individual health, safety and well-being.

Reason for decisions

(1-3) To ensure that Members and Town and Community Councillors were aware of support available in undertaking their role.

126 MEMBERS ANNUAL REPORTS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
REVIEWS (HDS) –

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report, the purpose of which was to raise awareness of the Member's Annual Report and Personal Development Reviews (PDR), as they indicated a communication had been sent to Members surrounding Annual Reports, with only a handful returned to date. They shared that the PDR template had a new additional section to incorporate recently updated research from University of Birmingham surrounding the 21st Century Councillor, and that the PDR process was mandatory for all those in receipt of a senior salary, but optional for all other Elected Members.

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the templates for these processes, attached within Appendices A and B to the report, be agreed by Democratic Services as tools to allow Members to undertake these duties.
- (2) T H A T all Members be communicated to surrounding the importance of these processes and consider participating accordingly

Reason for decisions

(1&2) To confirm the Council's approach to the Member's Annual Report and Personal Development Review Process and ensure that this was communicated to all Members.

127 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (HDS) –

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report, outlining that it was a statutory requirement of function, which provided an overview of the service, including its workforce, key activities and achievements and future. They indicated that the report had tried to represent full year, but they had been in post since November, and that the Service area had undergone a significant amount of change in this time.

Councillor Dr. Johnson sought assurance that there were sufficient resources for team to discharge their duties and was advised that there were currently sufficient resources. They were advised that work was being done to improve the Service's current resourcing, such as a recruitment exercise being undertaken following an internal promotion. The Head of Democratic Services also indicated that the service area was reviewing processes and activities to see where there were opportunities for efficiencies in the future.

Councillor Hanks asked for further information surrounding the relief chauffeur position and was advised this was to support the Mayor in undertaking their civic role, and they were being encouraged to use more environmentally friendly forms of transport, and that this had been put forward as a savings proposal in the last budget. She further asked about satisfaction with the Council's Multi-Location Meeting Policy and video conferencing arrangements, to which the Head of Democratic Services reflected that there had been a considerable journey in the Council following the change of providers to a new system, that Members and Officers had developed their knowledge and skills considerably since implementation, and that the supplier had shared a development pipeline around future capabilities. However, they indicated that this would be reviewed in the future to ensure that they were still utilising a leading approach and meeting the needs of Members.

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

128 DEMOCRATIC SERVICES FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (HDS) –

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report providing a provisional Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the Committee for the next Municipal year, considering "Standard", "Cyclical" and "Other" items. They shared the change of body for

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renumeration, changing from the Independent Review Panel Wales (IRPW) to Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC).

Councillor Dr. Johnson sought further information surrounding “21st Century Democratic Services”, an item at a future meeting, to which they were advised that this item related to the digital roadmap to support both Members and officers in becoming increasingly digitally effective and modernising to utilise available technologies.

RESOLVED – T H A T the provisional Democratic Services Committee Forward Work Programme for the 2025/2026 Municipal year be agreed.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report to allow for the Committee to have a clearly structured programme of work to support their ongoing work.

129 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIR HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT -

RESOLVED – T H A T the following matter which the Chair had decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading be considered.

130 MINUTES –

(Matter which the Chair had decided was urgent by reason of the Chair wanting to sign the minutes of the proceedings at the next suitable meeting)

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 21st March, 2025 be approved as a correct record.