

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 29th June 2026.

The meeting papers are available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available in [English](#) or [English and Welsh](#).

To view the presentation and subsequent discussion for any Part I agenda item, please click the hyperlink contained in its title below.

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

Also present: Councillor I.R. Buckley.

111 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Head of Democratic Services 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”.

112 [DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST](#) –

No declarations of interests were received.

113 [MINUTES](#) –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2026 be approved as a correct record.

114 [ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES 2025/26 \(HDS\)](#) –

The report provided the Committee with a summary of the wide range of duties undertaken within the service area throughout the year, alongside ongoing developments and plans and covered a range of areas within Democratic Services including:

- Team overview;
- Areas of responsibility;
- Multi-Location Meetings;
- Digital;

- Reshaping Scrutiny;
- Other Committees;
- Mayor's Office;
- Cabinet Office;
- Other Democratic areas;
- Collaboration with other areas;
- Financial position;
- Upcoming priorities for 2026/27;
- Overall Assessment of 2025/26.

The Head of Democratic Services provided assurances to Members that they felt there were sufficient resources to enable the effective discharge of their duties as required under Local Government Measure 2011.

Councillor Hanks queried if the overspend on postal services was managed by digital process efficiencies, and if new legislation surrounding automatic voter registration would lead to resource challenges, to which the Head of Democratic Services responded that work was underway with services to try and reduce postal costs, but there were uncontrollable variables to consider, and that the Electoral Registration team would be supporting the delivery of the new legislation. Councillor Hanks also reflected on the positive journey Members had undertaken surrounding ICT and Digital in recent years.

Councillor Carroll noted the observations included within the report about Reshaping Scrutiny and queried if it would be possible for each Member to be allocated a time slot to create a more exchange driven process. The Head of Democratic Services responded that this would be for individual Committees to consider currently, but development sessions were due to be held in the Autumn in response to the Audit Wales review, and this would be the appropriate place to raise with other Scrutiny Members.

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services (Appendix A to the report) be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee are satisfied there are adequate resources to undertake the Council's Democratic function.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To keep under review the provision by the Council of adequate resources to discharge Democratic Services functions as per the Committee's Terms of Reference.

115 [MEMBERS ANNUAL SURVEY RESULTS 2025/26 \(HDS\)](#) –

The report summarised key findings from the Annual Members Survey of Elected and Co-Opted Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council undertaken during Spring 2026, which replaced the previous Annual Scrutiny Impact Survey, and would also be undertaken on an annual basis.

The Survey sought feedback from all Elected and Co-opted Members on support, engagement and scrutiny arrangements over the 2024-25 Municipal year. The short Survey aimed to help Democratic Services understand how effective changes made during the year had been, identify what was working well, and highlighted any areas where further improvement or training may be needed.

Due to the nature of the Survey, the results were anonymised to allow for responders to be as honest as possible in their reflections. A full breakdown of the results was available in Appendix A to the report. Co-opted Members were to be contacted separately to understand their experiences as Members to help inform future improvement activities.

Findings from the Survey would be used to inform improvement actions for Democratic Services, as included within Appendix B to the report, alongside learning used as intelligence to inform the development of the Member Induction and Development Programme for the 2027 cohort of Members.

Councillors Dr. Johnson, Thomas and Hanks all expressed dissatisfaction that only 26 out of 54 Councillors responded to the Survey and felt that the lack of participation from most Members was disheartening despite repeated attempts to encourage participation, noting that the Survey was intended to drive continuous improvement for the Council. Councillor Hanks also raised that engagement with Expos was also a challenge from Members, and felt the events provided an opportunity for engagement with a range of officers from across the Council.

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the analysis of the findings as identified within the report, including the detailed findings within Appendix A to the report, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the proposed action plan identifying areas for improvement (Appendix B to the report) to be undertaken by Democratic Services be endorsed.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To agree improvement actions because of the Survey responses provided.

116 UPDATED MULTI-LOCATION MEETINGS (MLM) POLICY (HDS) –

Cabinet received an update on 20th December 2021 which provided a progress update on the legislative requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and implementation of a hybrid solution for use at Council meetings. The report advised that as at 1st May 2021, Section 47 of the Act required that all Local Authorities MUST make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that meetings were able to be held by means of any equipment or other facility which enabled persons who were not in the same place to attend the meeting.

On 25th April 2022, Cabinet approved the initial Multi-Location Meetings (MLM) Policy, which had been subsequently updated in March 2023, December 2023 and July 2024.

The report was intended to provide Cabinet with a revised MLM Policy having regard to the Act and Statutory Guidance on Multi-Location Meetings and Cabinet would be requested to consider and approve the revised draft MLM Policy attached as Appendix A to the report.

The Head of Democratic Services summarised the key updates as below:

- Design changes to reflect Vale 2030 and revised Council corporate branding;
- Insertion of a table of how individual meetings would be undertaken alongside details of the additional Welsh language streaming provision;
- Further supporting guidance information to support Members' individual health, safety and well-being.

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Draft Multi-Location Meetings Policy, attached at Appendix A to the report, together with any feedback points, be referred to Cabinet for further consideration and approval.

(2) T H A T a review of the Policy be undertaken upon receipt of any further statutory guidance from Welsh Government, any accessibility requirements and the Council's Public Participation obligations.

Reasons for decisions

(1) For Democratic Services Committee Members to input into the development of the policy ahead of consideration by Cabinet.

(2) Having regard to statutory guidance received, accessibility requirements and the Council's Public Participation obligations.

117 [DRAFT MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2027-32 \(HDS\)](#) –

The Strategy had been in place for a number of years and was last reviewed in 2021. The Strategy set out the approach that the Council took regarding the development and support of its Elected Members.

The refreshed Strategy, attached at Appendix A to the report, had been updated to reflect the principles of Vale 2030 alongside updates to the wider structure, but its ethos remained largely unchanged from 2021 as it was still fit for purpose with the following main themes continuing to be relevant:

- a commitment to support the development needs of all Elected Members to assist them in carrying out the roles which they undertook during their term of office;
- a process for identifying the local and national, collective and individual development needs of all Members;
- the provision of a personal review process which was available to all Members, and which would enable them to review and identify their personal development needs.

They noted that development would be undertaken in five key areas including:

- Phase 1 – Core Knowledge and Skills;
- Phase 2 – Committees;
- Phase 3 – Corporate Development;
- Phase 4 – Service Specific Knowledge;
- Phase 5 – Refresher and Ongoing Development.

A comprehensive Induction and Development Programme was undertaken following the 2022 Local Government Election which had informed the structure for the 2027 proposed schedule, alongside other intelligence such as Welsh Local Government Association Member Induction Survey.

If agreed, this Strategy would inform the development of the Member Induction Programme to commence in May 2027, which would be shared at the next meeting of Democratic Services Committee.

Councillor Thomas indicated that updates for quasi-judicial training such as Planning and Licensing should also be mandatory to encourage uptake from Members, and not just upon appointment.

Councillor Goodjohn noted that introduction sessions were previously underused and sought to understand if there was consideration as to how these could be done differently, advocating for an approach including mock debates and further exploration of Committee functions, and also queried the support for potential new Cabinet Members. The Head of Democratic Services responded that the detail of introduction would follow in a future update but there was a hope that there would be multiple modes of training, and that parallel work was happening with Directors surrounding supporting potential new Cabinet Members.

Councillor Mahoney expressed frustration with the idea of mandating non-technical training and indicated that Councillors should use their own judgement to understand what they needed to attend, whilst also using the support of Democratic Services as needed.

Councillor Protheroe highlighted the importance of experienced Councillors attending training sessions to support and share knowledge with newly elected Members, regardless of their own prior experience and to ensure they were up to date with the latest policy developments.

Councillor Carroll objected to the inclusion of mandatory equalities training, arguing that such training was contentious and that mandatory modules should be strictly limited to technical or legal necessities. The Head of Democratic Services clarified that whilst it was not a legal requirement to provide training, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) required Councillors to show “Due Regard” in decision making, and training was a key part in enabling them to do so.

Councillor Bruce also noted that Members brought individual skills and trainings as part of their role, and there were occasions where mandatory training may not be necessary for these Members,

A Recorded Vote about “Equality Training being Essential for all Councillors” was held as follows:

Member	For	Against	Abstain
G. Bruce		√	
G.D.D. Carroll		√	
E. Goodjohn	√		
S.M. Hanks	√		
I.J. Johnson	√		
K.P. Mahoney		√	
S.D. Perkes	√		
J. Protheroe	√		
N.C. Thomas	√		
TOTAL	6	3	0

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the topics contained within the table attached at Appendix B to the report be endorsed, including the learning areas which were considered essential (mandatory) or recommended (non-essential) and that this be included as part of the refresh of the Member Development Strategy.

(2) T H A T the refreshed Member Development Strategy, attached at Appendix A to the report, be endorsed to inform the development of the future Member Induction Programme and referred to Cabinet for consideration and approval..

Reasons for decisions

- (1) In acknowledgement of essential and recommended learning subject areas to be included in the Council's Strategy.
- (2) To seek Cabinet's approval of the refreshed Strategy.

118 [DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME \(HDS\)](#) –

In order for the Committee to have a clear direction a travel, a provisional draft Forward Work Programme had been designed for the 2026-2027 Municipal year (Appendix A to the report).

The draft Forward Work Programme represented current known items, and would likely be updated on an ongoing basis, with agreement between the Chair and Head of Democratic Services, based on wider Council or National developments, alongside suggestions from Councillors and members of the public (if appropriate).

RESOLVED – T H A T the provisional Forward Work Programme for the 2026/27 Municipal year be agreed.

Reason for decision

To allow for the Committee to have a clearly structured programme of work to support their ongoing work.