

**Committee:** Democratic Services Committee  
**Date of meeting:** 11<sup>th</sup> April 2019  
**Report Subject:** Annual Report of Head of Democratic Services

**Portfolio Holder:** Executive Member Corporate / Leader of the Council  
**Report Submitted by:** Bernadette Elias, Head of Governance and Partnerships (Statutory Head of Democratic Services)  
**Report Written by:** Bernadette Elias, Head of Governance and Partnerships (Statutory Head of Democratic Services)

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	26/3/19			11/4/19			23/5/19	

**1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To present to Democratic Services Committee the annual report of the Head of Democratic Services 2018/19.

**2. Scope and Background**

2.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to designate an officer to the statutory post of Head of Democratic Services (HDS).

2.2 The Head of Governance and Partnerships is the appointed HDS. The scope of the role is set out in the Council's Constitution and includes assessing arrangements that support Elected Members.

2.3 The HDS has chosen to undertake a review of the arrangements provided to members and report these annually to Democratic Services Committee and Council.

**3. Options for Recommendation**

**3.1 Option One**

For Democratic Services Committee to consider the report for recommendation to Council for approval on the basis that it is satisfied there is a sufficient level of support for Elected Members.

**3.2 Option Two**

The Democratic Services Committee provides comment and amendments to the report of the HDS prior to recommending it to Council for approval.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to designate an officer to the statutory post of Head of Democratic Services (HDS).

4.2 The role of the HDS is:

- To carry out the Local Authority's function of designated the Head of Democratic Services;
- To keep under review the adequacy of provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to discharge the democratic services functions of the Authority; and
- To make reports, at least annually, to the full Council in relation to these matters.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**  
***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1 The Council must provide the HDS with resources that, in its opinion, are sufficient to allow the functions of the role set out in the Measure to be discharged.

5.1.2 A number of budgets are identified to support Members in their role:

- Members Allowances and Expenses £848,030;
- Democratic Services £4,000 (excluding staff) used for translation;
- Member Development £5,880; and
- 'Civic' Hospitality £260.

***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2 There are potential risks associated with option two if the levels of support arrangements for Members are deemed by Council not to be sufficient. In order to mitigate the impact of this, the Democratic Services Committee is able to recommend to Council if resources and or support should be reviewed.

***Legal***

5.3 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to designate an officer to the statutory post of Head of Democratic Services (HDS). The role is set out in the Council's Constitution as a statutory function.

***Human Resources***

5.4 The HDS is able to make recommendations including with regard to the appointment, organisation and management of staff discharging democratic functions.

- 5.4.1 The HDS may arrange for the discharge of democratic functions by staff and can delegate functions to staff as they feel appropriate.
- 5.4.2 The Council is committed to provide the appropriate level of support to Elected Members to enable them to fulfil their roles.
- 5.4.3 At this point in time, the HDS is content that the support provided to Elected Members is sufficient.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

- 6.1 ***Summary of current service and support for Elected Members is provided below.*** Additional information and data is provided in the Democratic and Scrutiny Arrangements Action Plan Report.
- 6.2 The Council has been successful in achieving **level 1 of the Welsh Local Government (WLGA) Charter award for Member development and support**, following resubmission and assessment. The WLGA presented the award at full Council in November 2018. The feedback on the submission was very positive, and the Council was encouraged to work towards applying for the advanced level charter in future.
- 6.3 A revised **Personal Development Review (PDR)/Competency Framework** has been agreed by Council. The PDR's have been undertaken with all senior responsibility allowance holders. The sessions were held with an external facilitator and the HDS, and there has been very positive feedback from the Members involved. Following the facilitated sessions, personal action plans have been drafted and agreed with each Member. The HDS undertook a one to one session with each Member to discuss their personal action plan and any other support that would be of value to them.
- 6.4 Following the initial period of implementation of the revised process there will be minor revision to the flow of template following feedback from Members. Non SRA holders are to be offered the opportunity for a PDR (facilitated via Group) during 2019/20.
- 6.5 **A Member training and development programme** is in place. The programme reflects key areas for support, including those identified by Members (e.g. through the PDR process) and topics that identified from the forward work programmes of the Scrutiny committees.
- 6.6 The Constitution includes role descriptions for Members. A Member **Constitutional Working Group** has been established supported by relevant officers.
- 6.7 **A Mentoring Scheme for Members** has been established and agreed via Democratic Services Committee and Council. Expressions of interest for Members who wished to be mentors were received and the HDS then delivered a training session on the scheme and principles of mentoring. Members self-select and participate in the scheme, and a number of Members have taken the opportunity to be involved. On-going advice and

guidance from the HDS has been provided to support the Mentoring scheme.

- 6.8 **Support arrangements for Members appointed who sit on outside bodies** have been established and implemented. This area of support had been identified by Members previously. Reports from Members who sit on outside bodies now form part of the Council agenda on a periodic basis.
- 6.9 The Council has undertaken a review of its **Member Champion** roles. Lead support Officers have been identified to support each of the Champions and arrangements are in place to provide support when working within these roles.
- 6.9.1 The Member Champions are identified at each AGM and for 2018/19 they were:
- Community Safety
  - Children
  - Older Persons
  - Equalities and Diversity
  - Vulnerable Groups
  - Transforming Blaenau Gwent
  - Armed Forces
  - Bio Diversity
  - ICT Champion
- 6.10 The HDS role includes responsibility for the scrutiny function. Development and support arrangements for the scrutiny function include:
- Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny meetings;
  - Procedures to support the function including forward work programme development, agenda setting meetings and ongoing evaluation; and
  - An action plan monitored via Democratic Services Committee. The action plan includes the most recent Wales Audit Office review proposals for improvement in relation to the scrutiny function.
- 6.10.1 In June 2018 the Council received, from the WAO, the **'Overview and Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?'** report. This report contained one proposal for improvement:
- provide further training on the Well-being of Future Generations Act for scrutiny members to improve their understanding and consideration of the Act when undertaking scrutiny activity;
  - understand the individual development needs of members and deliver relevant scrutiny skill training; and
  - develop member questioning skills to improve member questioning and constructive challenge.
- 6.11 In February 2019, the Council held a training session with Members to address the bullet points above. Feedback from the training was very positive.

- 6.12 Following discussions within political groups and to provide additional support for Members, an '**Essential Skills**' **ICT Session** was developed which focussed on the use of Microsoft Outlook and provided a basic understanding of Word. Three sessions were delivered in-house in February 2019 by the Council's Digital Inclusion Officer and Democratic Services. The sessions were targeted initially to Members who had requested additional support. In total, 14 Members attended and the sessions were well received. A second tranche of sessions will be arranged for Members later in year.
- 6.13 The arrangements to support **the agenda management of the Executive Committee and Council** and are in place, aligned to the Forward Work Programmes of Scrutiny.
- 6.14 In accordance with requirements under the Local Government Measure, each committee has considered the **timings of meetings** to establish Members preference, and this has informed the timings of the current cycle of meetings.
- 6.15 Work to support the production of the **Annual Reports of Members** continues to be provided. In 2018, 24 reports were produced by Members and published on the Council Website.
- 6.16 Following feedback from Members and officers the corporate report template was revised and endorsed at Democratic Services Committee in May 2018 and subsequently agreed at Council.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

By providing a democratic function that has been identified as having sufficient support and resources means that Elected Members are provided with the support that they need to operate effectively, which in turn should support them in their role with the community.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Opportunities to maximise engagement in the range of training and support arrangements by Members will assist them in meeting future demands of their roles. PDR's are to be offered to all Members.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Member support arrangements look to the longer term and in recognition of the increasing complexity of the roles Members undertake.

***Preventative focus***

- 6.5 The content of the member development programme is aimed to give Members a solid grounding and prepare them to meet their roles and responsibilities for the future.

6.5.1 The role of HDS is to undertake a review of the support provided to members and identify if further support is required in order to prevent ineffective delivery of the democratic function.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The training and development programme for Members includes elements of both internal and external support. Training is offered on a regional basis in some instances e.g. Education Achievement Service, Joint Scrutiny Committee of the CCRCD.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

All Council services are involved with the democratic functions of the Council. Forward Work Programmes and agendas are developed jointly with Members and Officers.

***EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

6.8 The Member development programme has been subject to an Equality impact assessment screening with no adverse impact on the protected characteristics identified.

6.8.1 Language preference for Members has been established.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The HDS provides continuous review of the democratic arrangements of the Council and support provided to members.

7.2 Any amendments to the process are then reported to Democratic Services and Council for approval.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- None