

Minutes



Democratic Services Committee

Date: 14 February 2019

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors C Ferris (Chair), C Evans, M Evans, R Hayat, T Watkins and H Thomas

In Attendance: G Price (Head of Law & Regulation), R Cornwall (Head of People & Business Change), E Mulligan (Democracy & Communication Manager), M Bleazard (Digital Services Manager), D Gibbons (EDMS Manager) and A Jenkins (Governance Team Leader)

Apologies: Councillors Y Forsey, L Lacey and K Thomas

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None received.

2 **Minutes of Meeting held on 8 November 2018**

The Minutes were submitted.

Agreed:

Accepted as a true record.

3 **Members IT Update - Presentation**

The Head of People & Business Change gave an update on IT.

- Modernised Council – changes on how we work, do business, engage with communities, equipping staff and access to work. Ensuring appropriate wifi access within the building and having the right laptop as well as new tablet which will be demonstrated.
- The Digital Services Manager gave a brief overview to members on the new Windows Office 365 to be rolled out to all computers within the Council and the benefits to the upgrade. Extra software Included Skype for business, voice and video chat and group meetings. The Windows Office suite could also be used on personal devices. This was part of the package and not an additional cost and free to use on up to five personal devices. Skype meetings would link to the Outlook calendar to show availability. Emails were no longer being archived, there was positive feedback on this from members.
- Secure access to email using Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), allowed access to any device such as the former BYOD software, with secure access. There would be an App on the user's phone with a secure log in system. Drop in sessions would soon be available for staff including a special drop in session for members on 26 February 2019.

- Still seven members outstanding to have the WO365 upgrade, this was an achievement and to date.
- The members were shown a 4G tablet which provided access to their emails, and would have Windows Office 365 by April, the table could be used at meetings, the Modern.gov App would also be a feature, once downloaded by members. Provision of a magnetic keyboard was part of the package. This would negate the use of a smart phone, however a basic mobile phone would be made available.
- The Head of People & Business Change invited members to have a look at the tablet.
- The Cabinet Member for Communities & Resources was considering the options and a consultation report would be circulated to members in due course. It was hoped that the use of modern equipment would reduce cost and waste including cut down on the use of paper, making potential savings of £40-50K per annum.

Questions from members:

- Chair asked what was the cash investment. There were already laptops in place, therefore there was no cash investment to Newport City Council for 4G tablets, because of tech fund. There would be an ongoing cost of £7K.
- Committee Members referred to the recent Windows update and how it might affect contact, such as the predictive contacts used on email. The predictive contacts on the Outlook might be lost but the search had changed to surname first which was causing some issues.
- Archived files would be accessible and stored using a cloud system. The retention policy covered access for up to ten years.
- The IVE token would be replaced by Multi-Factor Authentication on 26 February which was a much better and cheaper facility to use than IVE.
- Committee Members were concerned that there might be problems with the new system that might only be discovered once the council had already committed. The council was testing the systems and it was possible that there might be glitches, however it was hoped that any issues would be resolved.
- Committee Members considered whether members needed so many devices, such as laptop, 4G and phone. It was explained that the devices did different things, although phones were very functional they did not have the power of a laptop and the 4G tablet made a compromise.
- The EDMS Project Manager referred to the Modern.gov App which was very functional and worked well with 4G tablets. Looking at a document digitally would reduce the bulk of an agenda, because links would be more accessible and an annotation facility would be available. The Skype App was also a valuable tool to make phone calls.
- Committee Members asked could members contact their constituency using Skype. It was early days but it could be a possibility.
- Committee Members referred to the modernisation of the Council Chambers in line with the changes being made. Funding was available with a view to looking at technical kit to change the committee rooms and council chambers. A revamp of the public area and use of committee rooms as Skype suites was a consideration.

- Security issues were raised around the new kit and access to personal information on Member's personal mobiles. Members were assured that once a councillor stood down, the kit would be returned to the council and no personal devices would be affected. Any security would be closed down by SRS.
- Finally, Committee Members asked would members without IT experience be left behind. This would be addressed by the council about how to engage those who are not IT literate. The Governance Team also provide support for those members who had basic issues and acted as a conduit with SRS and members.

4 **Boundary Commission Review**

The Democracy and Communication Manager went through the background of the report for Committee Members.

It was up to the council to wait for the Boundary Commission to come back with a proposal or a group could be nominated to put forward options/proposals, if this was the case, it was better to engage with the process well in advance. The deadline for a cross party group to be convened was short and any recommendation would be brought to a special meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 10 April as the statutory timescale was by the end of April. Fortunately, however, there were no drastic changes in numbers. There were only a few wards where the ratio did not change.

Committee Members asked how up to date were the figures. They were up to date with the electoral role, which was the mechanism on which the Boundary Commission research was based. There would also be a significant housing growth but the Boundary Commission needed evidence of this growth and would therefore not speculate.

Discussion ensued regarding the two new developments within Newport; Glan Lyn and Llanwern which should be taken into consideration as by the time the next review took place the information would be out of date. The Head of Law & Regulation advised that the Boundary Commission would not take into consideration planning consent as it was only speculation, if there was a development underway this would be considered. Hopefully there would be more frequent reviews because of the changes however information was needed to be up and running by 2022 in time for the next election.

Committee Members were concerned about the methodology from the Welsh Government and that some wards would have their boundaries changed, such as one ward disappearing and merging with another. The Head of Law & Regulation agreed that it might be the case and boundaries would need to be adjusted and that was why the Boundary Commission was keen for Councillors to get involved. Community Councillors were also consulted as it would also impact upon them, they would be looking at community boundaries within the ward. The changes would not be too radical as most wards in Newport did not need to be touched.

Chair recommended forming a politically balanced group, ie one labour, one conservative, would need to be set up as soon as possible with the first meeting booked for the following week.

The Committee asked whether the council had the boundary information in place. The Committee was informed that Newport ward profiles were already in place.

Agreed:

To set up a cross party group to feedback at a special meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 10 April 2019.

5 **Councillor Support -Online Toolkit**

The Scrutiny & Governance Team had mapped out how to put together a new Members Page on the Intranet and wanted to share with the Committee and welcomed comments.

Discussion ensued and the Committee Members asked what IT support updates from Customer Centre meant, this was related to the CRM. Members also suggested that declaration forms did not need to be on the intranet as they were easily accessible from the Governance Team. Other information such as code of practice was accessible but this did not remove the staff element however it was about making it easier for councillors that were not able to pop in to the Civic Centre.

Committee members also suggested that forms could be formatted to be filled out electronically.

The Scrutiny & Governance Team were making changes to enable councillors to access information easily.

6 **Date of next Meeting**

A special meeting to be held on Wednesday 10 April in Committee Room 1 at 10am.