

Agenda



Democratic Services Committee

Date: Tuesday, 21 February 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Committee Room 1- Civic Centre

To: Councillors D Fouweather (Chair), T Watkins, K Thomas, A Sterry, P Hourahine, T Harvey, A Pimm, M Spencer and E Stowell-Corten

| Item | Wards Affected |
|------|--|
| 1 | <u>Apologies</u> |
| 2 | <u>Declarations of Interest</u> |
| 3 | <u>Minutes of Meeting held on 27 January 2023 (Pages 3 - 8)</u> |
| 4 | <u>Voter ID</u> Presentation from the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager |
| 5 | <u>Member Training (Pages 9 - 14)</u> |
| 6 | <u>Update on Appointments to Regional Scrutiny Committee for the Gwent Public Services Board (Pages 15 - 16)</u> |
| 7 | <u>Date of next Meeting</u> 27 April 2023 at 10am |
| 8 | <u>Webcast of Committee</u> Democratic Services Committee, 21 February 2023 - YouTube |

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Date of Issue: Tuesday, 14 February 2023

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Draft Minutes

Democratic Services Committee

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Date: | 27 January 2023 |
| Time: | 10am |
| Venue: | Committee Room 7- Hybrid Meeting |
| Present: | Councillors D Fouweather (Chair), T Watkins, K Thomas, A Sterry, P Hourahine, T Harvey, A Pimm, and E Stowell-Corten |
| In Attendance: | Elizabeth Bryant (Head of Law and Standards), A Jenkins (Governance Team Leader), Leanne Rowland (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Pamela Tasker (Governance Support Officer) |
| Apologies: | Councillor Mark Spencer |

1 Declarations of Interest

None

2 Minutes of Meeting held on 13 December 2022 (Pages 3 - 8)

Agreed:

The Minutes of the meeting were held as a true record.

3 Participation Strategy: Ward Meetings (Pages 9 - 22)

The Chair noted that there had been a robust discussion on Ward Meetings at the last committee where officers had been asked to come back with amended proposals.

The Members of the Committee were asked to note an email from Councillor Al-Nuaimi received by the committee which were his thoughts on the proposals for Ward meetings which endorsed the conclusions from the last meeting.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager presented the report to the committee.

Main Points:

- This report proposal was considered in December 2022 and recognised the Council's adoption of a Participation Strategy earlier that year. This set out the Council's commitment to develop more ways of engaging with residents, which includes seeking their views as part of the decision-making process.
- The report recognised the value of meeting face to face with residents as another channel of interaction that sits alongside other methods of engagement.
- Ward meetings in the past were held with residents at the request of ward members, with a maximum 3 meetings a year that were supported by officers.
- The proposals sought to formalise support and to use that as a platform to acknowledge the consultation with residents regarding the Participation Strategy last year. The feedback indicated residents wanted the Council to be visible in the community, ask residents about what mattered to them and to explore alternative methods of engagement.
- Setting the budget is one of the most important decisions that the Council makes, so having this as a standard item on one of the ward meeting agendas would boost the feedback and involvement of residents as part of this process. Similarly, having performance updates as a standard agenda item on another ward meeting date in the year would support the Participation Strategy's objective of supporting the public to digest and explore information before they may be asked to give their opinion or recommendations.
- It was acknowledged that digital engagement was useful and there was a place for it but there was an aim to look to improve different ways of engagement using face to face as a platform as an addition.
- In the previous committee meeting, the feedback from members concluded that there was a concern with limiting ward member meetings to 2 a year and it was felt it was important for residents to set part of the agenda which reflected the issues pertinent in that community.
- Feedback also stated that members wanted support for engagement before meetings to make sure they were happening and to publicise meetings with advertisements through a number of channels, such as online, through Newport Matters and in local community spaces.
- It was proposed that a third meeting could be retained, and the team could provide administration support to secure venues and help to promote the meetings, but this third meeting would not be supported by senior officers. The other two meetings would be supported by senior officers and it was recognised that that this represented a significant investment of resource in supporting ward engagement activities.
- In relation to the agendas at ward meetings, it was important for residents to be engaged and so it would be useful to retain the ability for residents to set their own discussion points further to the standing items on budget and

performance, as setting their own agenda specific to the ward was an important part of the proceedings.

- **To summarise:**

3 meetings per year would be retained where 2 would be fully supported and administration support for publicity and booking meetings would be provided for the 3rd meeting.

The Chair stated that not all wards would want a meeting and with relation to the 2 meetings proposed if the wards did not want to have these meetings, then they didn't have to have them.

The Chair confirmed that the 2 meetings a year would be just for budget and corporate plan engagement but that this did not to be the whole agenda and the 3rd meeting could be about anything.

A Committee Member asked about attendance at ward meetings, and would they be cancelled if they were poorly attended. The Chair confirmed that this was up to the ward member as ward meeting attendance was varied.

A Committee Member stated that at one time all councillors in a ward had to agree on a ward meeting being held in order for it to take place as if it was a split ward, all the members had to agree and was this still the case.

The Chair stated that he was happy to have a ward meeting if the other councillors wanted one as all members had to work together.

A Committee Member stated that they were happy to go with what residents wanted.

A Committee Member stated that people may not realise they have the option of attending, but if ward meetings were advertised as requested it would be better. There had been a lot of interest in partners coming along to previous ward meetings as this was an opportunity for stakeholders to become involved and to be held accountable.

The Chair stated that a discussion was needed with Police about this to find out if they needed to be at ward meetings.

A Committee Member suggested that maybe there should be Police present at ward meetings even just for security. He also commented on the dates for the budget review and asked whether those dates were fixed by officers or would they be fixed by the consultation.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that the budget consultation opened in December 2022 and then ended in January 2023, so this did take some considerable planning. It was important to ensure that there was representation by senior officers at meetings and this was shared out.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed that meetings outside the budget setting would be able to have more leeway in terms of timescales.

A Committee Member asked whether other items could be requested to be discussed as well as the budget.

The Chair agreed and confirmed that it was what ward members wanted and members could also ask residents what they wanted.

The Chair reiterated that the third meeting was not going to be supported by senior officers, but the Democratic Services team would help to book meetings and a venue and the promotion of the meeting.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that it depended on the venue as some community venues did incur a cost depending on what they were.

A Committee Member asked about online engagement during ward meetings.

The Chair stated that it was not possible to put in place, whilst some community councils did have this facility, but it was better that residents were able to turn up in person to meetings as there were already lots of digital methods of engagement as part of consultation and engagement.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager stated that there had been a lot of digital engagement in different ways, which does take place via other methods in terms of Social media, Wi-Fi surveys but this proposal was to expand on this.

A Committee Member stated that it was up to members to ensure meetings happened at the most appropriate time and ward councillors had a responsibility to promote them also to get numbers there. The Committee Member stated that a meeting she had attended had 250 people there for a contentious issue and other times 4 people attended and it was a case of working with ward colleagues to time the meeting correctly.

A Committee Member confirmed that he was fully supportive of this and that if the two ward meetings were supported as discussed then it was not an issue.

A Committee Member confirmed that it seemed a reasonable compromise for 2 meetings to be supported by senior officers and the third meeting supported by administrative officers.

Agreed:

The Committee noted and endorsed the proposed framework to support ward meetings prior to consideration by full Council.

4 Date of next Meeting

21 February 2023 at 10am

- The Chair requested a Forward Work Plan to go on the agenda.
- The Chair also requested a proposal for the timing of Questions to the Leader at Council to be extended to half hour if the Committee were happy to discuss this at a future committee.
- A Committee Member stated that the constitution had been recently amended and the Chair stated that some anomalies have come up and the Standing Orders needed to be looked at.
- A Committee Member stated that this topic had been robustly debated previously and there was a strong feeling on it.
- The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that there would be an update on Member Training at the next meeting and the Chair commented that he wanted more items on the agenda.
- A Committee Member requested that the committee discussed Voter ID and could there be a presentation on this at a future committee.
- A Committee Member stated that maybe in future the role of the Standards Committee could be involved in future in relation to member training and this committee could give more feedback on this training.
- The Chair stated that he felt that the Standards Committee did not have the power to make members attend training.
- A Committee Member confirmed that the Standards Committee informed the leaders of all political groups of what members were not attending training.
- The Chair stated that the Code of Conduct was advisable but not mandatory.
- The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that there would be a third and final opportunity for Code of Conduct training at the end of February 2023.
- The Head of Law and Standards confirmed that the leaders of the political groups would be reporting to the Standards Committee in April 2023.

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Report



Democratic Services Committee

Information only

Date: 21st February 2023

Subject Update on Member Training

Purpose To inform the committee concerning the curriculum of training provided to Members, and levels of attendance at training since May 2022.
To note the development of the schedule of training for 2023/24.

Author Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Ward City wide

Summary Under the Council's Constitution, the Democratic Services Committee is required to ensure that members have access to a reasonable level of training and development.

The draft Induction Curriculum set by the WLGA to support Members following the May 2022 local elections was considered by the Committee in 2021: a final draft for members at Newport City Council was shared in February 2022.

Initial training and support was designed to support Councillors to meet the challenges of the role, particularly for those beginning their first term as an elected member. Following completion of the essential training, sessions were provided on legislation, services and duties, to increase knowledge and support members to fulfil their duties effectively.

The majority of the training agreed as part of the initial training programme has been delivered, and Committee Members are asked to consider the delivery and uptake of training to date.

Whilst there are a number of sessions planned for the final quarter of 2022/23, Committee Members are also asked to note training and development for elected members in 2023/24.

Proposal To note the report summarising training delivered in 2022/23 and consider the future schedule of Member training for 2023/24.

Action by Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Timetable First full year of training curriculum to be concluded by June 2023. Further schedule of training for Members to be developed and published by March 2023.

Background

Legislative requirements for members are set out in the Local Government (Wales) measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. These include legislative requirements for corporate governance and member support and development.

The WLGA outlined a suggested curriculum for the induction of members in Wales, and set this framework as a guide for what should be considered when developing local programmes.

This was considered as part of a draft curriculum for Newport, and plans were shared outlining the Members Induction Training for the review and comment of the Democratic Services Committee before a final version was produced.

The key principles that underpinned the schedule of training were;

- **Less is more** – Although there is a lot of information to convey, learning activities should focus on the minimum amount of information at each stage, so that members do not become overloaded.
- **Member centred** – All development activities should be designed with the member role in mind and concentrate on what members really need to know at that time. At induction level this includes the role of the member, what is important to the community and what information is required to take early decisions. Local and national policy and strategy can be introduced later, as and when necessary.
- **Engaging and interactive** – Any development sessions for members should be interactive, with plenty of opportunities for discussions and scenarios.
- **As and when** – Wherever possible members should be provided with learning opportunities at their convenience, at a time when it is needed and relevant and in a medium that is appropriate for the topic and activity.
- **Expertise** – Whenever possible, learning activities should be provided by service providers with relevant knowledge and expertise.

The agreed framework was also designed to be flexible, allowing for changes as and when required to meet changing requirements.

The Committee was advised of key dates particularly the challenge of managing a very tight timescale between the local election results and the Annual General Meeting taking place on 17 May; The main objective was to conduct core training and inductions with the IT? equipment so that new Members could be ready for the AGM, particularly as the Council sessions were hybrid meetings from that date onwards.

Training was provided in the most appropriate format for the subject, but the majority of the sessions were offered remotely to support attendance. Some sessions have been face to face workshops, and others have been offered as a hybrid option,

The curriculum then moved to focus on key legislation and preparing Members for their relevant committees as appropriate, with bespoke sessions for quasi-judicial committees such as Planning and Licensing.

In the Summer and Autumn, Councillors were introduced or refreshed on other key legislation and policy supporting their decision making, such as the Equalities Act and Safeguarding.

Councillors were also supported by Heads of Service, who introduced their services and key policies in areas such as Environment, Public Protection, and Housing.

In preparation for the budget setting process, a session on Finance and Treasury Management was arranged for December.

Sessions arranged and provided by Newport City Council were augmented by webinars provided by the Local Government Association on Supporting Councillors with Abuse and Intimidation, and Personal Safety. There were also short online cybersecurity courses were sent directly to email accounts covering password security and phishing activity.

Councillors also had access to e-learning modules on a wide variety of subjects through the Council's online portal.

Summary of Training by Quarter

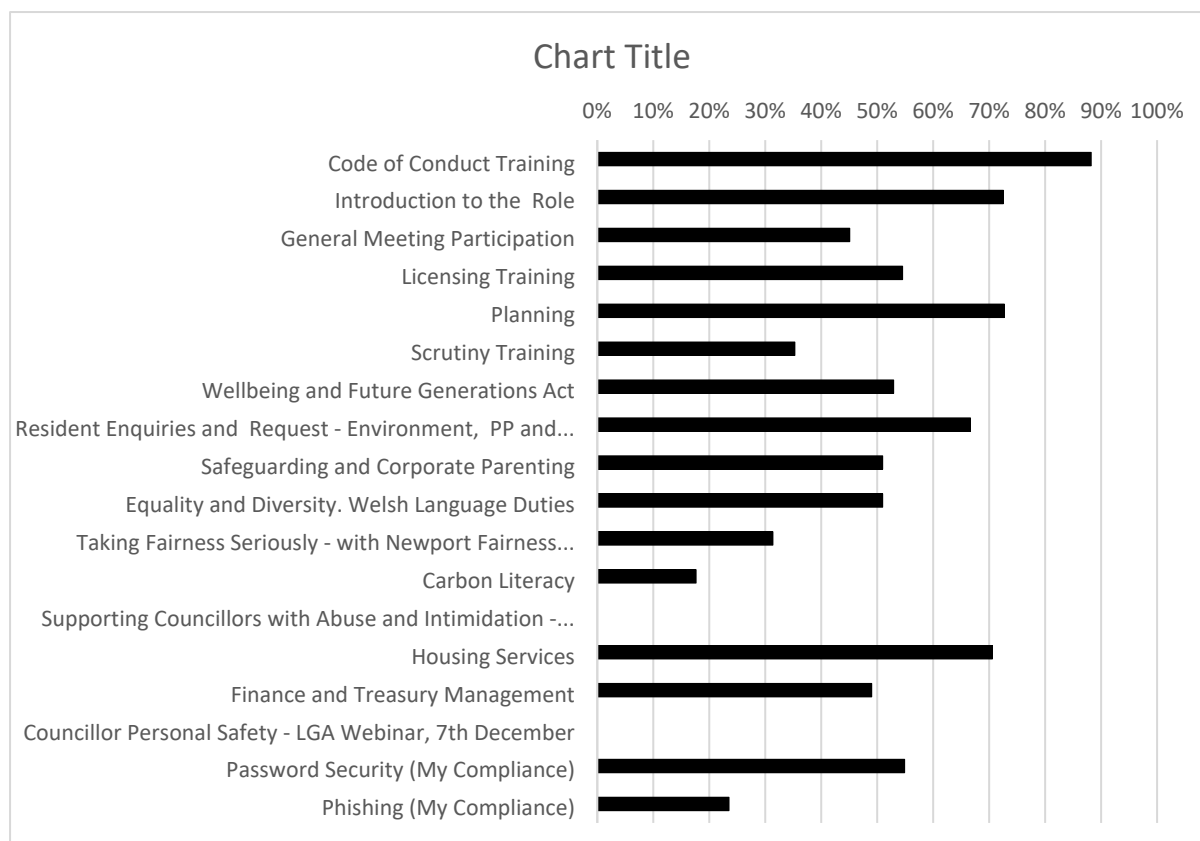
| Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Code of Conduct Training | Wellbeing of Future Generations Act | Taking Fairness Seriously - with Newport Fairness Commission |
| Introduction to the Role | Resident Enquiries and Requests - Environment, Public Protection and City Services | |
| General Meeting Participation | Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting | Carbon Literacy |
| Licensing Training | Equality and Diversity. Welsh Language Duties | Supporting Councillors with Abuse and Intimidation – LGA Webinar |
| Planning | Code of Conduct Training? | Housing Services |
| Scrutiny Training | | Finance and Treasury Management |
| | | Councillor Personal Safety – LGA Webinar |

The vast majority of sessions that were hosted and delivered by the Council were also recorded on Teams, and shared in a central Teams folder, so that Councillors could access the recordings and slides at their leisure.

Other useful resources, for example, guides for Councillors produced by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) have also been saved to the same central Teams folder.

Informal training was offered on a drop-in basis to support Members with any IT or communication and technology issues that they may have.

Attendance



Attendance at each session provided by the Council is recorded, and records of attendance are uploaded to central personal development records held for each Member.

The My Compliance courses were issued to Members directly via email addresses, and completion rates were monitored. Data is not available for externally provided courses.

Code of Conduct training is considered a mandatory module of training for all elected members. Almost 90% of Councillors have attended one of the two training sessions provided since May 2022, and it is hoped that a final session scheduled for early March 2023 will provide the opportunity for the remaining six Members to complete the training.

The Council's Climate Change plan places importance on considering positive action to tackle climate change impacts as part of every decision. In order to support this, a programme of training has been developed for elected members to consider their individual contribution to becoming carbon zero by 2030. The aim is for all elected members to have attended carbon literacy training within the first year following local elections. At the end of December 2022, 17.65% of members have attended carbon zero training with a further course scheduled for February 2023.

Take up of additional e-learning modules was low during this period, with four units of training completed independently by elected members.

Training planned for 2023/24

There are a number of sessions included in the original curriculum for the first year of training and support that are planned for delivery in the new year. Topics remaining are;

- Chairing skills

- Further Scrutiny Training
- Social Care and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Data Management and FOI including GDPR
- Using Social Media
- Overview of Services Areas

There are already some additional sessions scheduled into the diary for;

- Code of Conduct
- Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)
- Carbon Literacy
- WLGA Leadership Programme
- Further drop-in support sessions for IT, communication and support issues

The Code of Conduct session will be the third and final opportunity before reporting to Standards Committee on completion rates of this mandatory training in April.

Whilst there has been some ad-hoc feedback on individual training sessions, formal feedback has not been sought from members on training provided to date.

Feedback forms on each individual session would provide insight as to how each session has addressed learning needs. This would provide detailed feedback, but may result in 'feedback fatigue' and low response rates. This would also not offer any insight on training opportunities that have already been provided due to the time lapsed. A survey will be developed to engage all members and request feedback from as wide a group as possible. This could be done retrospectively and at regular intervals going forward. The survey route could also invite members to identify training opportunities and suggest further topics for future sessions.

The Committee is asked to note the report, and approve the development of an all-member survey that captures feedback on training provided, and opportunities for future learning topics.

Appendices

Appendix A



Member Induction
May 2022 onwards.p

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Report



Democratic Services Committee

Information only

Date: 21st February 2023

Subject **Update on Appointments to Regional Scrutiny Committee for the Gwent Public Services Board**

Purpose To inform the Committee concerning the arrangements for appointments to regional scrutiny committee that will scrutinise the work of the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) under Section 35 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Author Democratic and Electoral Services Manager and Head of Law and Standards

Ward City wide

Summary On 30th November 2022 Partnerships resolved to recommend the Terms of Reference for the new regional scrutiny and for two representatives to be agreed by full Council. This report provides further details of the arrangements for regional scrutiny and the procedural arrangements for appointing representatives.

Proposal **To note the contents of the report, and the procedural arrangements.**

Action by Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Timetable Appointments to be voted upon in full Council on 28th February

Background

This report provides further details of the arrangements for regional scrutiny.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 came into force in April 2016 and is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. It is designed to support and deliver a public service that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As one of the 44 bodies named in the Act, the council must consider the Act in everything it does.

Appended to this report is a report prepared by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and presented to the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) on the 29th of September 2022. It sets out the direction of travel towards a regional scrutiny committee to scrutinise the work of the Gwent PSB.

The Gwent PSB accepted all the recommendations in the report. The Scrutiny Officers in the five constituent local authorities are taking them forward with a view to the regional committee holding an inaugural meeting in March/April 2023.

Scrutiny Arrangements

On 30th November 2022, Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships resolved to recommend the Terms of Reference for the new regional scrutiny committee and for two representatives from Newport City Council to be agreed by full Council.

The Regional Scrutiny Committee will have an equal number of elected members from each appointing local authority, none of which will be executive or cabinet members; and each local authority and statutory partner organisation will determine and nominate its representative(s) in accordance with its own arrangements, reflecting the political majority where relevant. For Newport City Council, this means appointing two Labour representatives.

Under the Council's Constitution, Article 4.2 of Part 2 confirms that appointing representatives to outside bodies is a function of full Council, unless the appointment is an executive function or has been delegated by Council. Therefore, the appointment of the two representatives will be an item of business to be determined at the Council meeting on 28th February.

The Committee is therefore asked to receive and note the development of a new regional scrutiny committee to take forward the duties under Section 35 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the appointment of two representatives by full Council.

Constitutional arrangements will need to be amended to reflect the discharge of this scrutiny function through a regional joint-committee. This will be considered under the Terms of Reference of the Democratic Services Committee who will make recommendations, as necessary, to Cabinet and/or the Council concerning the Council's corporate governance and decision-making processes and the terms of the Council's Constitution.

Background Papers

<http://www.gwentpsb.org>

[06-Regional-Scrutiny-Committee-incl-App2-Gwent-PSB-29-Sept-22.pdf \(gwentpsb.org\)](#)

[Part 1 Report Template \(newport.gov.uk\)](#)

[Appendix 1 Report to Gwent Public Services Board 29th September 2022.pdf \(newport.gov.uk\)](#)