

Report



Democratic Services Committee

Part 1

Date: 23rd June 2022

Subject Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Purpose To consider and agree the Forward Work Programme for Democratic Services Committee for 2022/23.

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

Ward City wide

Summary The purpose of a work programme is to enable the Committee to plan, organise and prioritise its workload.

Previously, reports have been brought to the Committee on an ad hoc basis, as and when work was referred. By adopting the suggested work programme in this report, the Committee will be able to plan out its projects and meetings, be clear on its aims and objectives, and properly assess at the end of the year the extent to which its aims have been achieved.

The Committee is also asked to consider the frequency and timing of the scheduled meetings.

Proposal To agree the Committee's Work Programme.

Action by Head of Law & Standards and Democratic & Electoral Services Manager

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Chief Executive
- Strategic Directors
- Head of Finance
- Head of People, Policy & Transformation

Background

1. Terms of reference

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (“the Measure”) requires each council to establish a Democratic Services Committee. The Measure prescribes the functions of the committee and requires the committee to make a report at least annually to the Council.

2. The terms of reference for the Committee are set out in the Constitution, and meet the requirements of the prescribed functions within the Measure.

The Committee’s terms of reference are:

- (a) To designate the Head of Democratic Services
- (b) To consider reports by the Head of Democratic Services in accordance with Section 9(1)(h) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (adequacy of resources to discharge democratic services functions) within 3 months and make recommendations to Council, as appropriate
- (c) To ensure that all reports of Democratic Services Committee under Section 11 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (recommendations regarding the adequacy of resources to discharge democratic services functions) are circulated to all Members and considered within 3 months
- (d) To require the attendance of any Members or officers of the Council to answer questions and invite other persons to attend meetings, as required
- (e) To require any Member or officer attending meetings to answer any questions (unless they are to refuse on legal grounds)
- (f) To appoint one or more sub-committees and to arrange for the discharge of any of its functions by such a sub-committee
- (g) To review and monitor the effectiveness of the Council’s democratic services functions, including:
 - the provision of support and advice to meetings of the Council, committees, sub-committees and joint-committees
 - promoting the role of Overview and Scrutiny
 - the provision of support and advice to Overview and Scrutiny
 - the provision of support and advice to individual Councillors in carrying out their roles as Members
 - such other democratic services functions as may be prescribed from time to time by Regulations made by the Welsh Ministers
 - make recommendation to Cabinet and Council, as appropriate.
- (h) To review the adequacy of the Council’s democratic services resources and to make recommendations, where necessary
- (i) To review and monitor the effectiveness of the Council’s corporate governance and decision-making processes and the terms of the

Council's Constitution and make recommendations, as necessary, to Cabinet and/or the Council.

3. The Democratic Services Committee is comprised on 10 elected members. In accordance with political balance rules, there are 7 Labour members, 1 Conservative member, 1 Newport Independent Party member and 1 member from the Lliswerry independent group. The Chair of the Committee is a member of the largest Opposition group, as required by the Measure, and is appointed by Council at the AGM.

4. **Forward work programme**

The purpose of a work programme is to enable the Committee to plan, organise and prioritise its workload. Previously, reports have been brought to the Committee on an ad hoc basis, as and when work was referred. By adopting the suggested priorities in this report, the Committee will be able to plan out its projects and meetings, be clear on its aims and objectives, and properly assess at the end of the year the extent to which its aims have been achieved.

5. The Democratic Services Committee annual report, presented to Council in November 2021 included the following priorities for the current year:

- (a) **Constitution Review**

The Committee has continued with the work of systematically reviewing the various parts of the Council's Constitution, with a view to changing to the new modular style of document previous agreed by the Committee.

- (b) **Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021**

The Committee has continued to review the current governance arrangements regarding the conduct of remote meetings and future governance arrangements, to meet the requirements of legislative changes in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act, for example in relation to hybrid meetings, remote access and live broadcasting and public participation and engagement.

- (c) **Covid-19 Recovery Aims and Objectives**

The Committee will also consider any corporate governance issues arising from the Council's Covid-19 response and the recovery aims and objectives.

- (d) **Annual Reports**

In addition, the committee will continue to provide consultation responses to the IRP draft report and keep under review the adequacy of the Council's democratic services resources and make recommendations, where necessary.

- (e) **Democratic Services Annual Report**

Both the Committee and the Head of Democratic Services are required to produce an annual report to Council each year, and this is built into the forward work programme.

6. The draft work programme in [Appendix 1](#) has been populated with the provisional dates for future meetings and those work items that recur on an annual basis, such as the IRP annual report and the Democratic Services Annual report to Council in November.

7. However, there are a number of items of work that follow-on from the priorities set out in the last Annual Report and the various governance reports that were presented to, and adopted by, Council at the AGM on 17th May 2022. This work relates specifically to the on-going review of the Constitution and corporate governance arrangements to meet the requirements of legislative changes in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and in particular:-
- the need to monitor and keep under review the policies and procedures in relation to hybrid meetings, remote access and live broadcasting;
 - the requirement to monitor and review the implementation of the Public Participation and Engagement Strategy and to monitor compliance with the actions and measures set out in the plan to improve participation and engagement;
 - the need to monitor and review the effectiveness of the Council's petitions scheme;
 - the draft Competency Framework and Induction Curriculum for Members following the elections, and ongoing member training and development needs
8. The Committee are asked to consider when they wish to consider these matters and the priorities for undertaking these reviews as part of the forward work programme. The Governance Team will then ensure that the Forward Work programme is updated accordingly and that the relevant items are include on the agendas for future meetings.
9. In accordance with the requirements of the Measure, each Committee is required to review annually the timing and frequency of their meetings, to ensure that they are sufficient and convenient in order to effectively conduct business. The timing of the meetings can be varied according to the availability and preferences of the majority of the Committee members, although the use of hybrid technology and multi-location meetings should provide greater flexibility in terms of attendance.

Financial Summary

10. There are no financial implications

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
No action taken	M	L	Work programming arrangements are in place to ensure they are timely, meaningful, informative, and transparent, balanced, monitored, and joined up.	Head of Law & regulation and Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
The process is not embraced by	M	M	If there is proliferation of unplanned or late items, the opportunity to ensure work programming is timely,	Head of Law & Regulation and Democratic and Electoral

report authors and members			meaningful, informative, and transparent, balanced, monitored, and joined up will diminish	Services Manager
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*Taking account of proposed mitigation measures.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

These proposals will help the Council provide the best possible service to members and will provide information to the public and elected members.

Proposal

To consider and agree the Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2022/23.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial implications in adopting a programme of work.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications in adopting a programme of work

Comments of Head of People Policy & Transformation

There are no specific staffing or policy implications in adopting a programme of work.

Background Papers

None

Dated: 10th June 2022

Appendix 1

Work Programme: June 2022 to May 2023

Meeting	Agenda Items	Lead Officer
23 rd June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forward work programme• Amended officer scheme of delegation	Head of Law & Standards
21 st July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of ward meetings• Guide to the Constitution	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager Head of Law & Standards
20 th October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IRP Annual Report• D&ES Manager Annual Report• DSC Annual Report	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager and Head of Law & Standards
23 rd February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IRP Annual Report	Head of Law & Standards
27 th April 2023		