

Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting	24 March 2023
Head of Service	Lisa Jones, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Report author	Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager
Title	Forward Work Programme

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report is intended to facilitate discussion and feedback on the areas within the remit of the committee, and to confirm agenda items for future meetings.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. It is appropriate for the committee to review its forward work programme at each meeting. Items that may be appropriate include the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- Member training and development
- Support arrangements for members to fulfil their roles
- Support for the Scrutiny function of the Council
- Reviewing resources available to members (for example accommodation and technology)
- Welsh Government initiatives, legislation and consultations on local democracy issues including diversity, equality and participation
- Members' Remuneration

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. That the Committee considers the information within this report and confirms the forward work programme for future meetings.

4. Report details

Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

- 4.1 In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the appointment of the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee is made by full Council. In October 2022 Council appointed Councillor Martyn Hogg as Chair of the committee.
- 4.2 The result of the Rhyl Ty Newydd by-election changed the political balance of the Council, and though the effect was relatively slight, it did mean that the Green Party Group – Councillor Hogg’s Group – lost its seat on the committee. As a consequence, Council will be asked at its next meeting to appoint a new Chair from amongst the committee’s members. Under the Measure, the Chair cannot be a member of a group that has members serving on the Cabinet. With the Green Party Group losing its seat on the committee, at the time of writing this report, the new Chair will need to be from the Independent or Conservative Groups.
- 4.3 Councillor Brian Jones was elected to the Council at the by-election and has also joined the Democratic Services Committee.

Timing and Conduct of Meetings

- 4.4 Councillors gave their views on the timing of meetings in a survey that was reported to Council on the 31 January 2023. The survey questions had been confirmed by the Democratic Services Committee. 35 of the 47 members responded (the Council had a vacant seat at the time) and the main findings were as follows:
- The majority of members prefer morning meetings
 - The majority of members do not want to see the timing of meetings rotate
 - Members cited evenings as being the most difficult time for them to attend meetings
- 4.5 As a result of members’ views Council did not make changes to the existing timing of meetings.
- 4.6 The survey also enquired into members’ views and experiences of how meetings are conducted and the results are summarised below.

- When attending a meeting in-person, a slight majority of members had a preference for where the venue would be, with many citing more than 1 location. Members made 8 references to Ruthin; 7 to Rhyl; 6 to Denbigh and 3 to Prestatyn.
- The majority of members do not experience difficulties attending meetings remotely. Of those who did 'technical issues' were the most commonly cited difficulty.
- The majority of members do not experience problems attending meetings that are in-person only. Of those who do, being allowed sufficient time of work appeared to be the biggest problem.

4.7 The Council holds many of its meetings as hybrid meetings, where attendees can choose to attend virtually or in-person. Hybrid meetings developed from the virtual meetings introduced as a necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently made permanent for certain meetings under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

4.8 The Council's current policy for holding meetings was developed by a member working group and reviewed by the Democratic Services Committee prior to adoption by full Council in December 2021.

4.9 The Group Leaders have agreed for a member working group to be formed to review how member meetings are held. The working group will consider the legal framework and options available in order to present any recommendations to the Democratic Services Committee and full Council.

4.10 At the time of writing this report, nominations from the political groups to sit on the working group are awaited.

Personal Care and Safety for Members

4.11 The last meeting of the Committee considered matters relating to 'personal care and safety for members'. The Committee's report contained a number of links to personal safety resources for members and referred to the availability of support and advice on personal safety from within the Council.

4.12 The Committee recommended that a training session be held on personal care and safety. All councillors were subsequently sent details of how to access a webinar

organised by the Local Government Association on personal safety for councillors, held on the 21 February. The webinar was free to councillors using a promotional code that dispensed with the webinar fee for attendees.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. This report does not directly contribute to the Corporate Plan.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. There are no cost implications from consideration of the forward work programme and the updates included in the report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A well-being impact is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. N/A.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. A Chief Finance Officer Statement is not required for this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 No specific risks have been identified from consideration of this report. Reviewing the forward work programme and associated information is an important feature of the Democratic Services Committee's role.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011