



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH (RHYMNEY ROOM) ON WEDNESDAY 27TH MARCH 2013 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor C.P. Mann - Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs G. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, D.G. Carter, D.T. Davies, R.T. Davies, Mrs C. Forehead,
Ms J.G. Jones, G. Kirby, D. Price, Mrs E. Stenner and J. Taylor

Observing:

Councillor G. Jones (Cabinet Member Housing)

Together with:

J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), D. Perkins (Head of Legal and Democratic
Services) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from H.W. David, W. David, Mrs P. Griffiths,
Mrs J.G. Jones and Mrs M.E. Sargent.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Daniel Perkins, Head of Legal and Democratic Services declared an interest in Agenda
Item 4(4) details are minuted with the respective item.

3. MINUTES - 8TH NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 8th
November 2012, be approved and signed as a correct record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

4. CONSULTATION - INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES REPORT 2013/2014

The report outlined the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales determinations for
2013/2014 and requested Members comments as part of the consultation process.

The Panel's responsibilities in determining the scope and maximum levels of salaries, allowances and expenses for Councillors and Co-opted Members were outlined and Officers confirmed that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 gave them additional powers to prescribe Members remuneration.

Officers welcomed the consistency of the prescribed scheme for 2013/14, as this would eliminate confusion for Members, the public and the press in relation to Councillors expenses.

Members' views were sought with regard to the changes to Co-opted Members payments. Officers confirmed that until now payments had been limited to 10 days per annum or the equivalent of 20 meetings. The Panel had introduced greater flexibility for these payments and from 2013/14 the Council could determine the maximum number of meetings for which co-opted members could be paid.

Members' fully considered the changes to the Co-opted Members payments and recommended to Council that 10 days per annum be set as the limit for this Authority.

The proposed addition of an allowance for Joint Scrutiny Chairs was noted and agreed as a sensible option in order to provide stronger governance around joint scrutiny arrangements. Members' noted the increased opportunities for joint scrutiny panels going forward.

Members' views were sought with regard to travel and subsistence allowances and the reimbursement of travel claims for Members undertaking constituency business and noted that last year the Council made the decision not to allow such travel claims.

Clarification was sought in relation to the definition of 'official business' and Officers confirmed this. Members were concerned that in some wards quite substantial mileage could be accrued while undertaking constituency work, for instance Argoed and St James, which were more spread out.

Members' fully considered the allowance of travel claims for official business undertaken by Councillors within their own wards and recommended that journeys exceeding 4 miles be claimed back under this allowance.

The Democratic Services Committee having fully considered its content noted the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' determinations for 2013/14.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 - ANNUAL REPORT FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

The report updated Members on the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 in relation to the publication of Annual Reports and outlined the support that would be provided by the Democratic Services team.

Members were advised that the main purpose of the Annual Reports was to inform members of the public of the activities of their local Councillors over the last 12 months. Although final guidance had not yet been received it was expected that reports would contain information about Members committee and outside body membership, attendance, training and development and an overview of Members activities and achievements. Members noted that care should be taken not to include information that was incorrect, could be interpreted as opinion or was critical of a third party.

In order to assist with the completion of the reports, information already held and published about Members would be captured and presented in a standard report format, leaving a single free text box for Members to describe their main activities and achievements. Attention was drawn to the draft template as attached in Appendix 1 of the report. Completed examples

were circulated in order to give an understanding of the layout of the report and suitable items for inclusion. The Officer thanked Councillor Colin Mann and Councillor Christine Forehead for taking the time to complete the examples provided.

Officers confirmed that a series of Member workshops would be arranged to explain the background and process of completing Annual Reports and a selection of exemplar reports would be produced to assist the process. All reports would be checked and approved before being published on the Caerphilly website.

The positive aspects of producing an Annual Report were emphasised, as they provided an ideal opportunity for Members to raise awareness of all the work they do on behalf of their constituents on a daily basis.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and full discussion ensued.

A Member expressed concern with regard to the accuracy of attendance data and Officers acknowledged the concerns raised particularly if the figures quoted were under-representing attendance levels and confirmed that the calculation process would be looked at and Members updated accordingly. The Member also felt that attendance at meetings of Outside Bodies should also be reflected and that poor attendance should be noted and addressed. Officers confirmed that the '6 month rule' applied to all Members and there were processes in place to ensure that issues around attendance were appropriately addressed.

Members agreed that the template for the Annual Report was straightforward but shared the concerns raised with regard to the accuracy of the data to be included. Assurances were given that all the information contained in the Annual Report would be verified and approved by the individual Member prior to publication.

The Democratic Services Committee having fully considered the report noted the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2011 in relation to Annual Reports and approved the adoption of the report template as attached in Appendix 1 of the report.

6. MEMBERS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2012-2014

The report detailed the outcome of the Members Training Needs Analysis and proposed a prioritised programme of training and development.

As part of the Wales Charter for Members Support, a training needs analysis was developed and distributed to all Councillors and Co-opted Members in May 2012. Member's responses to that exercise determined the training priorities for the next two years and the programme presented to Members had been specifically developed as a result. Officers confirmed that the programme would be monitored in order to ensure satisfaction rates and the importance of ensuring that the training provided met the identified need and was of good quality was emphasised. It was noted that some dates would be subject to change and any additional training requirements identified during the course of the year would be implemented as needed.

Members noted that the Development Programme would be uploaded onto the Members Portal and all training information, such as presentations and handouts would also be posted.

In relation to training on the Councils Constitution, Officers confirmed that the WLGA was working with and providing funding to local authorities to enable them to refresh their constitutions. As Members were aware the authorities current constitution was a very large and ungainly document to work through and update. The WLGA had seen an opportunity to look at the way in which Councils worked with their constitutions and provide a single template that was more user friendly and would work well for all 22 authorities.

Having fully considered its content, the Democratic Services Committee noted the report and fully endorsed the programme of training for Members for 2012-2014 as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report.

7. WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT LOCAL AUTHORITIES (STANDING ORDERS) (WALES) REGULATIONS 2006 (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2013

Mr D. Perkins declared an interest, as he would be one of the Officers affected by the amendment and left the room for the remainder of the meeting.

The report outlined the Welsh Government consultation on the draft regulations and sought Members responses to the questions detailed under section 3.2 of the report. Officers confirmed that they would be happy to take collective responses on behalf of the Democratic Services Committee or should they wish to respond individually to Welsh Government they would be welcome to do so.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and Members considered the summary and consultation questions.

Members considered question (a) and agreed that the Head of Democratic Services should be subject to the same disciplinary procedures as the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.

Members considered question (b) and agreed that their preference would see the 'independent person' retained as an advisor to, rather than a voting part of any disciplinary process.

Members considered question (c) and agreed that all vacancies at Chief Officer level should be subject to public advertisement using the appropriate media.

Members considered question (d) and agreed that there were no other issues that they would like to raise in relation to the proposals.

Officers confirmed that they would forward Members responses on to Welsh Government.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2013 there were signed by the Chairman

The meeting closed at 18:24pm

CHAIRMAN