



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Kirby - Vice-Chair - Presiding

Councillors:

C. Andrews, W. David, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, C.P. Mann C. Thomas, R. Whiting, W. Williams.

Together with:

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

A. Lippiett (Dewis Cymru Co-ordinator – Caerphilly)

1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

In the absence of Councillor D. Cushing, Councillor G. Kirby presided as Chair for the meeting.

Members referred to Councillor Cushing's recent bereavement and asked that a message of condolence be sent to her on behalf of the Committee.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, D. Cushing (Chair), D.T. Davies, K. Etheridge, Mrs C. Forehead and Mrs G. D. Oliver.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Clarification was sought on whether or not Members were required to declare an interest in respect of Agenda Item 5 (Independent Remuneration Panel Draft Annual Report 2020/21). The Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that it was a matter for Members; however their interest was personal only, as by virtue of paragraph 12(b)(iv) of the Code of Conduct, Members did not have a prejudicial interest when considering their own allowances. As the interest was personal only this would not preclude them from remaining in the meeting and participating in this item.

All Members present (Councillors C. Andrews, W. David, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, G. Kirby, C.P. Mann, C. Thomas, R. Whiting and W. Williams) declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5

on this basis. Details are recorded with the respective item.

4. MINUTES – 3RD JULY 2019

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd July 2019 be approved as a correct record. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

5. DEWIS CYMRU - PRESENTATION

The Committee welcomed Ayisha Lippiett (Dewis Cymru Co-ordinator - Caerphilly) to the meeting, who thanked Members for the invitation and gave a presentation on the Dewis Cymru website. This free to use service is an up-to-date directory of well-being services in Wales and can be viewed through the following link: [Dewis Cymru Website](#)

Members were advised that the Dewis Cymru website was created as part of the local government response to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and has been adopted by all 22 local authorities across Wales. The website is developed and hosted centrally (which reduces costs and avoids duplication), is free to use and is owned and funded by local authorities across Wales. It was noted that Caerphilly Council's share of the website is administered by the Council's Information, Advice and Assistance Team.

It was explained that Dewis Cymru is an on-line web directory for all resources that provide a well-being service and acts as the place to find information about well-being services in Wales. It gives citizens choice and control over the services they engage with, acts as a preventative measure to help combat the use of primary services and keep people as independent as possible, and helps people to find practical sources of help and support.

The website is intended to be simple to navigate and includes maps and direction tools to help locate each resource, with both local and national services being advertised on Dewis. The website has administrative tools in place to ensure that entries are accurate, relevant and appropriate. All information has a 'shelf life' of 6 months and system prompts are generated prior to expiry. The resource can then be re-advertised at the click of a button, and out of date information is hidden to the public. All entries are reviewed by an Editor prior to publication and after each edit, and information can be hidden where concerns are raised. Users provide feedback on listed resources which can be viewed by the Central Dewis Team and who can act where necessary. Gaps in the market are also captured and reported on via the Team.

The Committee were provided with an overview of the website functions, including a journalist/editor mode, a Basic and Advanced search mode and an A-Z function, in-built guidance for service providers to follow, national information pages, an all-Wales directory and a Browsealoud feature (which can translate the information on the website into over 40 languages). It was also noted that the website has an analytics and statistics function, which can help services understand how their entries are being viewed, allows authorities to understand the progress of their implementation and understand service coverage, and provides data that could contribute to future funding applications.

It was explained that the website currently lists a total of 1463 local and national resources, with 528 of these covering Caerphilly, and that views for Caerphilly-based resources have steadily increased since the system was launched in May 2018. Across Wales, there are around 65,000 page views and 6 million search results listed per month with over 4,200 registered users.

Members were also advised that information from the Dewis Cymru website feeds into the new Health and Wellbeing Wales App, which is a single offline application for frontline professionals and provides access to service details and contact information for over 10,500 local and national organisations, community groups and services. This application is fully bilingual and compatible with both Android and iOS operating systems. In addition, it was explained that the central Dewis team are in talks with Welsh Government to embed Dewis to all GP's systems in Wales and work is ongoing to the edit facility to simplify the adding of information to the website.

In closing, Ms Lippiett highlighted contact details for her Dewis colleagues and invited questions from the Committee. In response to a query on user feedback, Ms Lippiett explained that this has mainly been positive and that overall the website is seen as a very useful communication tool. Some users have commented on the size of the editorial content and stated that the system can be difficult to use, and therefore the Dewis team will look at making some changes to the search function and the number of categories available online.

The Committee requested that the presentation and further information on Dewis Cymru be sent to all Members so that they can make their constituents aware of the resources available online. It was confirmed that these items would be circulated following the meeting.

Members expressed their thanks to Ms Lippiett for her in-depth and informative presentation and for taking the time to attend the meeting, and were pleased to note the details of the valuable resource from Dewis Cymru.

6. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

All Members present (Councillors C. Andrews, W. David, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, G. Kirby, C.P. Mann, C. Thomas, R. Whiting and W. Williams) declared a personal interest only in accordance with the advice provided at the start of the meeting and noted in Minute Item 3 above.

The Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report, which sought the views of Members on the 12th Annual Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' (The Panel) draft report for 2020/21 and included updated draft determinations relating to Principal Councils. It was noted that the views of the Committee would be communicated to the Panel prior to the response deadline of 10th December 2019, and that the Panel's final determinations for 2020/21 will be published in February 2020, with Members being fully appraised of the final report following its publication.

Members were reminded that the Panel is a statutory body established by Welsh Government in January 2008 to determine the scope and salaries, allowances and expenses payable to Councillors and Co-opted Members. The report reflected the Panel's determinations for 2020/21 and a copy of the Panel's Draft Annual Report was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

It was explained that for 2020/21, the Panel has determined an increase of £350 a year for all member salaries, effective from 1st April 2020, which equates to 2.5% (a point midway between RPI and CPI). The proposed increase applies to the basic salary for members of principal councils in recognition of the duties expected of elected members. It was explained that the Panel has acknowledged concerns about the financial impact of this increase when local government in Wales continues to be financially stretched. However, the Panel is of the view that there is a need to balance the issue of affordability with fairness to members of local councils and recognises that the current level of payments means that many of them struggle financially, and consider that the determinations set out in this Report achieve this balance.

Arising from the determinations of the Panel, the proposed basic salary for elected members in 2020/21 shall be £14,218 and no additional increases will be paid to senior salary holders, who will received only the basic salary element increase of £350. The report also set out details of the salaries payable in respect of Civic Heads and Deputies and Presiding Members, and

provided clarification in respect of Determination 7, in that members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any National Park Authority or Fire and Rescue Authority to which they have been appointed, but remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses and reimbursement of costs of care.

The Committee were advised that levels of payments to which members are entitled cannot be varied by Council, but that Members may choose individually to decline all or part of the payment to which they are entitled if they so wish. Members also noted a number of other key points set out in the report, particularly in relation to Part 10 (Reimbursement of Costs of Care, Part 13 (Payments to members of Community and Town Councils) and Part 15 (Salaries of Heads of Paid Service).

It was explained that arising from the proposals of the Panel, there is a potential shortfall within existing budgets of circa £17,000, which is based on the assumption that all members accept the pay award and there is maximum attendance for co-opted members at the maximum number of meetings. This is a fluid situation which can change year on year. Should a shortfall occur for the year 2020/21 it will be funded from members' reserves.

Member discussed the report and were pleased to see that they have an option to decline part or all of the payment to which they are entitled if they so wish. However, they acknowledged that this is an individual matter and choice for each Member according to their own circumstances.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the report and noted its contents. It was agreed that a response be sent to the Panel to advise them that the Democratic Services Committee had considered and noted the report and draft determinations for 2020/21.

The meeting closed at 5.40 pm.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2020 they were signed by the Chair

CHAIR