



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER 2021 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor M.P. James - Chair
Councillor G. Kirby - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

Councillors: C. Andrews, W. David, D.T. Davies, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, Mrs M.E. Sargent, C. Mann and W. Williams.

Together with:

L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), M. Afzal (Committee Services Officer) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs G. Oliver, C. Thomas, C. Forehead, A. Farina-Childs and P. J. Bevan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A Personal interest was declared by all Members in relation to **Agenda Item No. 4 – The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Report for 2022/23**, in that it related to Members own remuneration. As the interest was personal only this would not preclude members from remaining in the meeting and participating in this item.

3. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th of November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

4. DRAFT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES 2022/23

A Personal interest was declared by all Members in relation to this item, in that it related to Members own remuneration. As the interest was personal only this would not preclude Members from remaining in the meeting and participating in this item.

Consideration was given to the report which sought the Committee's views on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales draft Annual report for 2022/23. The comments will be presented to the Panel prior to the response deadline of 26th November 2021.

Members were referred to the summary of the new and updated determinations which were set out in Annex 5 of the draft report and attention was drawn to the proposal to increase the Basic Salary for Members of Principal Councils from £14,368 to £16,800 together with an increase in senior salary payments as set out in paragraph 5.6.2 of the report. The draft report recognised that for several years payments to elected members of the 22 principal councils has not kept pace with the original comparator that was used to set the basic salary, or any other public sector comparison and as such the Panel decided it was an opportune time to rectify this situation and to reinstate the link to the average Welsh earnings as detailed in the draft report. It was noted that the Panel's final determinations for 2022/23 will be published in February 2022 and that Members will be fully appraised of the final report following its publication.

A Member queried the provision of support to Members as set out in the draft report which states that elected members are to be given as much support as was necessary to fulfil their duties effectively. In particular the Member felt that that the provision of a Council mobile phone would be beneficial and would allow Members to carry out their roles in a more effective way. A discussion ensued with a Member supporting the installation of software on their personal phones which allowed access to emails rather than the provision of a separate council phone. Whilst the availability of the software was noted, some Members may not want to mix personal and Council business on their phones. Following the discussion, the Committee accepted a proposal that the Head of Democratic Services would conduct a poll of Members to gauge opinion on the provision of a Council mobile phone and report back to the Committee.

Clarification on the percentage increase to the basic salary was sought. The Officer explained that the increase in salaries for this year when compared to last year was substantial in that the increase for 2020/21 was £150 on the basic salary whilst this year the increase proposed is over £2000. It was explained that the reason for this increase was to promote diversity in democracy and encourage representation from across the community. The Panel felt that the forthcoming Local Government Elections in May was the right time to press the reset button.

Members welcomed the proposal to increase the salary for Members noting that it would encourage more people to become councillors

The Officer sought clarification on the response which would be communicated to the Independent Remuneration Panel and members confirmed that they would support the draft report.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

The Democratic Services Committee support the Panel's draft Annual Report for 2022/23 attached at Appendix 1 and this response be submitted by the Head of Democratic Services to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales by 26th November 2021.

5. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY ACTION PLAN

Consideration was given to the report which asked the Committee to consider and agree the Diversity in Democracy Action Plan. The Officer presented the report and outlined the key commitments together with the associated timelines. Members' attention was drawn to the appointment of Diversity Ambassadors which were welcomed.

A Member sought clarification on training for Members and whether more individuals would be assigned to provide training. The Committee was advised that an induction programme was

currently being finalised which would offer a range of training both in person and remotely. The Officer confirmed that a report on the induction programme would be brought back to Committee and Council and that Democratic Services staff would be on hand to support existing and new Members. Members noted the response and thanked the Democratic Services Team for their outstanding work.

The Officer highlighted that the induction programme was based on feedback received following the last induction. The programme would be tailored to meet changing needs of Elected Members and would include Mandatory session, such as Code of Conduct and Recommended Session such as Smart and Safe Working Practices but would also provide information sessions focused on the various Directorates and the services they provide. These sessions have developed because of feedback from the last induction, which highlighted a desire for more practical/service focused information. This year's Induction would also include an electronic directory which would be available to Members in hard copy upon request. The electronic directory would contain focal points of contacts from across the various directorates. The Officer also directed Members to the feast of information that was accessible through the intranet, Members Portal, Democracy Webpages, and the Mod.Gov app.

It was felt that newly elected Members could benefit from buddies/mentors and that it would be useful for them to be paired up with existing or established Councillors. The Officer confirmed that Members' views would be sought via a forthcoming questionnaire which would be circulated.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

The Draft Action Plan as presented to the Committee be taken forward in the period leading up to the 2022 elections and beyond.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 17th March 2022.

The meeting closed at 17:50

CHAIR