



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH (SIRHOWY ROOM) ON WEDNESDAY, 5TH MARCH 2014 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor C.P. Mann - Chairman
Councillor D.T. Davies Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs G. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, D.G. Carter, H.W. David, W. David, Mrs C. Forehead,
Ms J.G. Jones, G. Kirby, Mrs D. Price and Mrs E. Stenner

Together with:

J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and E Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.T. Davies, Mrs P. Griffiths,
Mrs. M.E. Sargent and J. Taylor

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D.G. Carter sought advice as to whether he and other Councillors would need to declare an interest with regard to the Independent Remuneration Panel Report as they were all in receipt of a either a basic or senior salary. The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that as no decisions were being taken at this time there was no requirement for Members to declare. However should discussions turn to the setting of the civic office salary then Councillor Carter as the present Deputy Mayor and prospective Mayor should declare an interest and leave the meeting room at this point.

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES - 13TH FEBRUARY 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 13th February 2014 minute nos. 1-8 on page nos. 1-6 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Clarification was sought in relation minute no. 7 on page 5 and the current position of Members training attendance levels.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the 3 outstanding Members for the Chaining Skills training attended on the 27th February 2014 achieving the 100% target for Members participation.

With regard to the Effective Pre-meetings training, 9 Members attended on the 27th February 2014 with a further 4 Members booked onto session scheduled for the 14th March 2013, leaving 16 Members outstanding. If the 4 Members attend as planned then a 72% participation level would have been achieved against the target of 100% attendance.

In terms of the Questioning and Listening Skills training, 6 Members had booked onto the session scheduled for the 14th March leaving 17 Members outstanding. If the 6 Members attend as planned then a 70% participation level would have been achieved against the target of 100% attendance.

Members were advised that the updated information had been shared with Group Leaders including the Leader of the Independent Group.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

5. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15.

The report informed Members of the final determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRP).

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the majority of the IRP's draft proposals had been dropped giving greater consistency for 2014/15. The Officer confirmed that this was the first increase to Member remuneration since 2011 and provided a 0.99% uplift in the basic salary together with a proportionate increase in other payments.

The increases to the basic and civic salaries were confirmed and the different levels for the civic salaries highlighted. It was noted that there were 3 potential levels of remuneration for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor roles which would require determination locally by full Council. Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs would now be remunerated and would receive a senior salary of £8,700 plus the basic salary. The cost of this salary could be shared between the partner authorities by local arrangement. The Officer confirmed that there were currently two such panels in operation the Prosiect Gwyrd, which had concluded its business with the contract award and the EAS Joint Scrutiny Panel and advised that no payment was expected to be made against these committees.

It was recommended that scrutiny committee Co-opted Members payments would remain unchanged at a maximum of 10 days per annum. However, the report proposed that given the increased roles and responsibilities associated with that of the Standards Committee this maximum limit not be applied this committee's lay (Co-opted) Members. Travel and Subsistence allowances would also remain unchanged.

In relation to foregoing payments, the Officer confirmed that any Member or Co-opted Member may forego any part of their remuneration entitlement by independently and voluntarily giving notice in writing to the Chief Executive.

Members were referred to section 18 of the report which outlined the financial implications of the increase and were advised that should the proposals as detailed be implemented an additional cost of £11,435 plus associated on costs would be accommodated through the Members salaries and expenses budgeted provision for 2014/15.

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

Members queried whether informal care provision could be claimed under the care expense allowance. The Officer confirmed that as long as the expenditure was receipted then payments for informal as well as formal care provision would be reimbursed subject to the appropriate checks.

Clarification was sought with regard to foregoing payments and whether a third party such as a charitable organisation could be nominated to receive the proposed increase. The Officer confirmed that although there was a provision to forego payments he had been unable to find an enabling power that would allow Council to give this over to a third party. Should a Member wish to do this, they would need to accept the increase and then give this over to the third party. A statement confirming the action could then be included within the Member's annual report. The Officer agreed to seek further clarification on the matter and update Members accordingly.

Having fully considered the content of the Officer's report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained therein be approved and by a show of hands this was agreed.

In accordance with Rule of Procedure 15.5 Councillors D.G. Carter and Mrs J. Jones wished it recorded that they had abstained from voting.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) recommendation 20.1(a) the appropriate level of Civic Salaries for 2014/15 be determined by full Council;
- (ii) Council be informed of the endorsement of the Democratic Services Committee regarding recommendations 20.1(b), 20.1(c), 20.1(d) and 20.1(e) of the Officer's Report.

6. MEMBER TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The report outlined improvements to the current Members' training and support arrangements through the implementation of a new scheme of Mandatory, Recommended and Requested training and a suite of training courses under these headings.

The training and development framework was outlined in relation to the core skills, knowledge and competencies required by the different Councillor roles. It was noted that Mandatory training was associated with Member's statutory responsibilities, Audit Committee and regulatory committee membership and committees with personnel functions. Members serving on these committees would receive their mandatory training at least twice per Council term and should a Member fail to undertake any mandatory training their membership of said committee would automatically cease. It was noted that Member's induction training would include both mandatory and recommended elements. Induction training would be delivered within the first month of a new Council and would be offered to Members in the daytime and repeated in the evening in order to maximise Members opportunity to attend.

Recommended training would support Councillors in their various committee roles with attendance dependent on the individual Members specific committee roles. The Officer confirmed that sanction did not apply to recommended training.

Requested training would continue to follow the already well-established process for identifying Members individual training needs, based on the training questionnaire and resulting training needs analysis conducted every two years. This process would run concurrently with the training and development framework as outlined.

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

Clarification was sought with regard to recommendation 9.1 (e) and the referral to the Standards Committee for Members that failed to attend mandatory training. Although Members agreed with enforcing a sanction for non-attendance concerns were expressed that Members with a legitimate reason for their absence, such as illness, should be taken into consideration before the matter was referred to the Standards Committee.

The Democratic Services Manager acknowledged the issue raised and agreed to work with the Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Governance/Business Manager on rewording the recommendation 9.1 (e) so that it reflected the Democratic Services Committee's view that only Members without good reason who do not attend Mandatory Training be reported to the Standards Committee.

Members were mindful that some Councillors also worked full time and this would limit their ability to attend training sessions. The Officer confirmed that mandatory training would be provided at evenings and weekends as well as during the day in order to give Members as many opportunities as possible to attend.

The role of Senior Officer and Executive Members in scrutiny was discussed at length and Members felt that scrutiny training should be provided for Senior Officers and Executive Members. The Democratic Services Manager agreed that Officer training could be beneficial and proposed that with the support of the Committee he take this forward to the Interim Chief Executive for consideration with a view to his attendance at the next meeting. Members were happy for the officer to raise the issue with the Interim Chief Executive but also agreed to make a formal recommendation to full Council.

It was moved and seconded that an additional recommendation 9.1(f) that a programme of training to support scrutiny be implemented for Senior Officers and Executive Members be recommended to Council for approval and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

It was moved and seconded that for the reasons given in the Officer's report recommendations 9.1(a), 9.1(b), 9.1(c), 9.1(d) amended recommendation 9.1(e), wording to be agreed between the Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Governance/Business Manager and the Democratic Services Manager and additional recommendation 9.1(f) be approved and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Council be informed of the endorsement of the Democratic Services Committee for recommendations 9.1(a), 9.1(b), 9.1(c), 9.1(d) amended recommendation 9.1(e) and additional recommendation 9.1(f).

7. MODERN.GOV SOFTWARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PRESENTATION)

The presentation allowed Members to view the Modern.Gov Software Management System web pages and document search facilities.

The format and content of the different web pages containing Members information was demonstrated. Officers outlined the different functionality of the system and the ease with which the web pages would be navigated once operational. Officers acknowledged that the present website was not very user friendly and the advantages that the new system would bring were illustrated.

The improved document search function was demonstrated and the different methods of data retrieval shown. Officers confirmed that visually there would be very little difference between the already established site and the new software system, however the functionality of the site would be radically improved for both elected Members and the public.

The composition, publication and distribution of Committee documentation through the new system was outlined and the ability of the new system to distribute information electronically was detailed, allowing documentation to be easily accessed by laptop or tablet.

The Chair thanked the Officer for demonstrating the new system and Members questions were welcomed.

Members queried if this software would be the first step to introducing a paperless system. The Officer confirmed that the software would be able to facilitate a fully electronic distribution system, however, this option was not under consideration at this time. Members had previously stated their preference for paper copies particularly when dealing with large documents, so the intention would be to supply paper copies just to those Members sitting on the individual committee with electronic links emailed to all other Members allowing them full access to the agenda and reports.

The Democratic Services Committee noted the presentation.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 28th May 2014 there were signed by the Chairman

The meeting closed at 18.00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN