



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2016 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

P. J. Bevan, D. Carter, W. David, Mrs C. Forehead, Ms L. Jones, G. Kirby, Mrs M.E. Sargent, and J. Taylor.

Together with:

C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), E. Sullivan (Interim Scrutiny Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs P. A. Griffiths, Ms J. G. Jones, S. Morgan, Mrs G. D. Oliver, Mrs D. Price and Mrs E. Stenner.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 21ST SEPTEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 21st September 2016 be approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

4. DRAFT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

The Interim Head of Democratic Services introduced the report which sought the views of the Democratic Services Committee on the draft Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' (the Panel) annual report as part of the consultation process.

Mrs Forbes-Thompson outlined the draft determinations relating to Councillors and Co-opted Members salaries, allowances and expenses. The Panel's determinations for 2017/18 included a 0.75% increase in basic salary which represents a £100 increase in the basic salary for Councillors to £13,400. Senior salaries remain the same, subject to the £100 increase in the basic salary.

The Committee were referred to section 4.7 of the report and the table contained therein which outlined the proposed Senior Salaries for 2018, the Panel once again had determined that there will be a choice of two levels of salary for Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs. It was noted that Full Council would be required to decide which salary level to apply. The Officer confirmed that Members or Co-opted Members may forego any part of their remuneration entitlement by giving notice in writing to the Chief Executive. Determinations would take effect from the date of the Council's Annual General Meeting in 2017.

In relation to Civic salaries the Committee were referred to section 4.9 of the report which detailed the three possible levels of payments for Mayor and Deputy Mayor posts, it was noted that these were not included as part of the Council's 18 Senior Salary posts and Council would have to confirm which level is appropriate once the final determinations are received.

There are no changes proposed in relation to claims for travel and subsistence rates. Claims for journeys made within Members wards is again a matter for local determination, the Officer confirmed that to date this Council has made the decision not to allow such travel claims.

The Panel also wishes to promote the care allowance and proposed that for 2017/18 the maximum care expenses payable remain £403 per month. Being mindful of the sensitivity concerning the publication of this legitimate expense two options were set out for consideration. Council can choose to publish the details of the amounts reimbursed to name Members or can publish the total amount reimbursed by the authority during the year but not attributed to any named Member. It should be noted that care expenses can only be paid against actual and receipted costs.

Payments to Co-opted Members remain unchanged as outlined in section 4.15 of the report and again it is for the individual Council to determine the maximum number of meetings Co-opted Members can be paid. To date the Council has determined that Co-opted Members can be paid for a maximum of 10 days per annum.

The Committee were advised that the Panel had also considered concerns about long term sickness of senior salary holders and the perceived unfairness when compared with arrangements for family absence. It therefore proposes a framework with specific arrangements for long term sickness. The Officer confirmed that long term sickness is defined as certified absences in excess of 4 weeks, with a maximum length of 6 weeks. Within these parameters the Council can appoint a substitute Member who will be eligible to receive a senior salary. Should the submission mean that the maximum number of senior salary holders is exceeded, the addition would be permitted subject to the Panel being informed within 14 days of the decision and amending the published Schedule of Remuneration accordingly.

The financial implications for each of the different salary level options were outlined and the Committee advised that the additional cost of the £100 uplift in basic salary would be £7,300 per annum. Should Council determine that the lowest senior salary level as agreed by Council for 2016/17 be applied again for 2017/18 there would be no other additional costs.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and the view of the Democratic Services Committee were welcomed.

Members noted the proposed uplift but expressed concern that this would not be enough to encourage younger working people to sacrifice paid employment in order to take on the elected Member role.

In terms of two options in respect of publishing care allowance payments, Member felt that the option of publishing total amounts without attributing to any named Member might lead to increased freedom of information requests and as this is public money there should be openness and transparency in respect of the payments made.

The Committee agreed that the guidance in respect of long term sickness for senior salary holders was helpful, and a flexible framework would allow them to consider individual cases and determine if a substitute appointment would be appropriate.

Concerns were expressed with regard to the determinations for Town and Community Councillors and the possible impact on the precept. The Officer confirmed that the report had been circulated to Town and Community Councils and consultation had taken place with One Voice Wales.

Having fully considered the draft IRP report it was moved and seconded that the above comments be sent to the Panel as part of the consultation process and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the above comments be forwarded on to the Panel as part of the consultation process.

6. MEMBERS INDUCTION 2017

The Interim Scrutiny Officer introduced the report which outlined the proposals for an induction programme for newly elected and returning Councillors following the local government elections in May 2017 for the consideration and approval of the Democratic Services Committee.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report which presented a draft Induction Programme for the Committee's consideration and were advised that further support would be provided by way of an induction information pack.

The programme would consist of three elements, firstly the formal presentation and market place exhibition, mandatory induction seminars and finally recommended induction sessions. The market place exhibition made up of individual 'stalls' would give Members an opportunity to find out more about the Councils' services and include contributions from Democratic Services, IT Services, Planning, Licensing, Trading Standards and Social Services and would be available from 4.00pm to 8.00pm. A formal presentation by the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors would also form part of this evening and would be held in the Chamber at Penallta House at 5.00pm.

Mandatory Induction will cover Member's statutory responsibilities and regulatory committee membership. These seminars will include Code of Conduct, Constitution, Information Governance, Data Protection, Licensing and Planning. It was noted that mandatory training for the Appeals, Appointments and Pensions Compensation Committee would be arranged as soon as future meeting dates became available. Mrs Sullivan advised that a training needs analysis would be carried out in late 2017 with a view to compiling the 2018-2010 Members Training and Support Programme. Members' individual training request would continue to be supported subject to budgetary constraints.

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

Members referred to the All Day event scheduled for the signing of the register and sought clarification as to whether this meant that Councillors needed to be available for the full day. The Officer confirmed that this related to the staff presence which would be available all day to support Members with the various forms, photographs and other requirements but Councillors could attend at any time throughout the day in order to complete the process

which would take between 20-30 minutes. The Member requested that the wording on the programme be changed in order to more accurately reflect the process and this was agreed.

Having fully considered the report and the Induction programme it was moved and seconded that subject to the amendment discussed the programme be approved and by show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the 2017 Induction Programme be approved.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 1st March 2017 they were signed by the Chair

The meeting closed at 17:35pm.

CHAIR