

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Decision Notice – Remote Meeting, 14th November, 2022.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson (Chair); Councillor S.J. Haines (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, E. Goodjohn, S.M. Hanks, K.P. Mahoney, J. Protheroe and N.C. Thomas.

Also present: Councillors A. Asbrey, I.J. Buckley and E. Williams.

AGENDA ITEM 1. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor S.D. Perkes.

AGENDA ITEM 2. MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 25th July, 2022 be approved as a correct record subject to the second sentence on the top of page 208 being deleted and replaced with the following:

“The Operational Manager referred to the timescales following the Elections post 5th May 2022, when the new cohort of elected members would need to be provided their ICT equipment as part of the induction programme. It had not been possible to transfer phone numbers from the existing devices to the new devices as the ICT team had just 2 days from being advised of new Member information on 7th May, to build and activate all the new devices which were to be issued at the induction sessions starting on 9th May. Due to these tight timescales it had not been feasible to activate SIM cards and set up the new user accounts in Microsoft Office O365 which had to be set up in advance of the elections, and this is why new mobile phone numbers had been issued to the new cohort of Members.”

AGENDA ITEM 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Following advice received from the Monitoring Officer the following Members declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4, Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report 2023/24 – Consultation, advising that this did not equate to a prejudicial interest in light of paragraph 19.3.3(b)(ii) of the Members’ Code of Conduct:

Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, E. Goodjohn, S.J. Haines, S.M. Hanks, Dr. I.J Johnson, K.P. Mahoney*, J. Protheroe and N.C. Thomas.

* Councillor Mahoney’s name has been added to the Decision Notice as it had been omitted when the Notice was placed on the website 7 days after the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 4. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES
DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 – CONSULTATION (HDS) –

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' (IRPW) draft Annual Report 2023/24 proposals be noted.
- (2) T H A T in light of the cost of living crisis affecting Wales and the wider UK, the IRPW be reminded that they can consider a freeze in remuneration for Elected Members of Principal Councils' salaries for the year 2023/24 (Determinations 1, 2 and 3).
- (3) T H A T the Committee's responses to the consultation questions set out below be forwarded to the IRPW on behalf of the Council:

Question 1

The Panel has continued to use the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) published by the Office for National Statistics as the benchmark for setting the basic salary of elected members of principal councils. There is a corresponding proportionate increase proposed for the members of National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Panel has continued to refer to the last published ASHE which was 2021. Do you agree that the basic salary element should be referenced to the ASHE 2021 data?

Council's Response

Yes. The Council supports the continued linking of remuneration to Elected Members' salaries to ASHE however, the IRPW consider a pay freeze for Principal Council Elected Members' salaries for 2023/24.

Question 2

The Panel has made changes to the payment of costs and expenses of members of community and town councils. Do you agree with the addition of the "consumables" element?

Council's Response

No opinion. Matter for Town / Community Councils.

Question 3

The Panel will gather evidence from principal councils to explore whether and how the workload of elected members has changed to inform future Determinations. Are you content that the Panel should build this review into its future work plan and build the evidence base to support decisions?

Council's Response

Yes. The Council supports this proposal. Any review to evidence base future determinations should ensure that the basic level of remuneration is justified, appropriate and reasonable.

Question 4

We have significantly reduced the size of the report this year to concentrate on key decisions made and intend to make more use of the website to provide easy to use guidance to users. This approach is also in line with our efforts to respect the challenges facing us in protecting our planet.

*How would you like to access information and guidance from the Panel?
(choose all that apply)*

<i>Summary report with links to detailed guidance</i>		<i>Social media</i>	
<i>Easy to use guidance notes</i>		<i>Information events</i>	
<i>Frequently asked questions</i>		<i>Other</i>	
<i>Website</i>		-	-

Council's Response:

The Council welcomes all of the above options however, the use of emails should also be included as an appropriate method of communication and that further consideration should be also given to the use of plain English to make future reports more accessible to the public / wider community.

Question 5

The Panel intend to undertake a series of engagements with all relevant stakeholders over the next year as part of the development of its forward planning and building of its evidence and research strategy.

Have you any comments that would help the Panel shape this engagement?

For example, a preference for online polls, the holding of engagement events, virtual or face to face, which groups should be involved, how do we engage with prospective candidates etc.

Council's Response:

The IRPW be requested to consider using a broad range of methods of engagement with all relevant stakeholders to include face to face and digital means, dependent on the level of engagement they are seeking at that point in time.

(4) T H A T the IRPW be also requested to reconsider amending the new format to include a list of all determinations within a single document, to ensure clarity and ease of reference.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2-4) To provide a response to the consultation by 1st December, 2022.

AGENDA ITEM 5. 2022 MEMBER INDUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME – UPDATE (HDS) –

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the progress in delivering the Member Induction Programme for 2022 be noted.
- (2) T H A T Group Leaders be requested to ensure that all Group Members have completed all Essential Member Development Topics before 31st December, 2022.
- (3) T H A T the draft Learning Needs Analysis Self-Assessment, attached at Appendix B to the report, be approved and emailed to all Members as well as uploaded to MemberNet in January 2023.
- (4) T H A T a further report be presented to the Committee on the results of the Learning Needs Analysis Self-Assessment exercise in April 2023.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) Having regard to the requirements of section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which places a duty upon Political Group Leaders to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of their group.
- (3) Elected Members are invited to undertake a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) in January 2023 to determine individual training needs and inform the development programme for the remainder of the political term.
- (4) In order that Committee is apprised on the findings of the LNA Self-Assessment exercise.

AGENDA ITEM 6. SECTION 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES)
MEASURE 2011 – TIMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS (HDS) –

RESOLVED – T H A T the suggested draft Survey attached to the report be approved subject to the inclusion of an additional question relating to the Council's Multi-Location Meetings Policy and Members' preferences for meetings held as Hybrid (combination of Remote and In Person), Remote only and In Person meetings.

Reason for decision

In order to comply with the requirements of Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.