

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY, 2022

PRESENT: Councillor R. James [Chair]

Councillors:

W.T. Evans, H.I. Jones, E.M.J.G. Schiavone and D. Thomas

Also in Attendance in Respect of Agenda Item No. 4:

Councillor J.S. Edmunds

The following Officers were in attendance:

G. Morgan – Head of Democratic Services

H. Daniels – Learning & Development Advisor

M. Evans Thomas – Principal Democratic Services Officer

A. Owen – Principal Translator

Virtual Meeting : 1.30 pm - 1.48 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 26TH NOVEMBER 2021

The Head of Democratic Services referred to minute 6 (Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report) and informed the Committee that, since the last meeting the IRPW have confirmed salary levels as proposed initially.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

4. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE TASK & FINISH GROUP FINAL REPORT DEMOCRATIC PROCESS - NEW WAYS OF WORKING

At its meeting held on 23rd March, 2021 (minute 3 refers), the Democratic Services Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to review elected and co-opted members' requirements and consider new ways of working for the democratic services function moving forward.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Councillor Jeff Edmunds, Chair of the Task & Finish Group, who had been invited to present the final report, findings and recommendations of the Task & Finish Group.

The Group met on four occasions between May 2021 and February 2022. In addition, the Chair and Vice-Chair invited each political group to meet with them to discuss initial thoughts and obtain the views of elected members.

Councillor Edmunds paid tribute to the late Councillor Mair Stephens, who was a dedicated and invaluable member of the Task & Finish Group. She contributed greatly towards the work of the Group and was passionate about the New Ways of Working initiative.

Councillor Edmunds also paid thanks to all members of the Task & Finish Group for their contribution, to all members for their feedback and to officers for their assistance.

It was noted that the work of the Task and Finish Group was partly superseded by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which introduced a legal requirement for Local Authorities to make and publish arrangements for the purpose of ensuring that meetings could be held by means of any equipment or other facility which meant that multi-location meetings (a mix of physical and remote attendance) must be held and this was reflected in the report.

The Task and Finish Group's review culminated in a report containing a total of five recommendations which had been formulated by the Group following the consideration of a wide range of evidence. The report was presented to the Democratic Services Committee for its consideration and recommendation to Council.

UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the final report and recommendations of the Task & Finish Group established to review the democratic process and new ways of working be endorsed.

5. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY ACTION PLAN

Council, at its meeting held on the 14th July, 2021 (minute 5 refers) resolved to commit to being a 'Diverse Council' and endorsed the WLGA Council Diversity in Democracy declaration. In addition, Council agreed to task the Democratic Services Committee with developing an Action Plan in advance of the 2022 local government elections.

The Local Government and Elections Wales (Act) 2021 includes a number of provisions promoting diversity in local government including:-

- an entitlement to Job sharing for executive members and committee chairs.
- a duty on principal councils to produce a Public Participation Strategy encouraging people to participate in decision making and promoting awareness of how to become a member of the council.
- a duty on political group leaders to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group.
- Electronic broadcasting of full Council meetings.
- The ability to have multi-location attendance at council meetings including physical, hybrid and remote attendance.

- Provisions enabling the maximum period of absence for each type of family absence for members of local authorities to be specified within regulations and for adoptive leave to reflect that which is available to employees.

The Committee considered the draft Diversity in Democracy Action Plan. The objectives within the Action Plan were based on those suggested by the Welsh Government, however, others could be added if so desired.

Reference was made to the use of the acronym “BAME” in the Action Plan and it was suggested that the term be used in full rather than the acronym. The Head of Democratic Services agreed to follow this up and amend the Action Plan as appropriate.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the Diversity in Democracy Action Plan be approved.

CHAIR

DATE