

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillor M.D. Cranham (Chair)

Councillors (Virtually):

W.T. Evans

P.T. Warlow

K.V. Broom (substitute)

Also Present (In Person):

G. Morgan, Head of Democratic Services

R. Morris, Members Support Officer

J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law

D. Newman, Lead Business Partner (Learning and Development)

S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator

M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 9.15 - 9.33 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Sparks and Councillor F. Walters.

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 7TH SEPTEMBER 2023

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 7th September, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

4. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The Committee received for consideration the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report setting out its proposals on the payment of remuneration and allowances for elected and co-opted Members of Welsh Local Authorities for the municipal year 2024/25.

The Committee was appraised of the main changes proposed for Principal Councils in 2024/25, together with the associated implications for the Authority. Accordingly, as part of the IRPW consultation process, members were invited to provide feedback on the draft report.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Attention was drawn to the proposals in respect of co-opted member payments whereby concerns were raised that the introduction of an hourly rate for meetings could result in inconsistencies across Welsh Local Authorities in determining daily, half day or hourly rates for payments.

It was commented that no changes had been proposed in respect of travel allowances in recent years, despite the significant increase in fuel costs during this time.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

4.1 the report be received and

4.2 as part of the consultation process, the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee submit a response to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales on behalf of the Committee.

5. MULTI-LOCATION MEETING POLICY

The Committee received a report which appended proposed amendments to the Authority's Multi-location Meeting Policy.

The Authority's Multi location meeting policy had been approved by Council on the 12th October 2022 (Minute 4.1 thereof refers) and took into account the interim statutory guidance issued by Welsh Government. Committee was advised that the Welsh Government published its final guidance on the 7th July 2023 and consequently it was considered opportune to review the policy based on the Authority's experience of multi-location meetings to-date.

The proposed amendments to the policy, based upon feedback from Committee Chairs, included greater guidance on the use of cameras for remote attendees in order to maintain the integrity of the Authority's decision-making process and to reduce the opportunity for legal challenge in this regard. Minor amendments in response to the easing of covid-related restrictions and voting methodology had also been proposed.

The Committee emphasised the importance of multi-location meetings from an accessibility perspective as a means of enhancing and supporting local democracy and enabling members to work more productive.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the amended Multi-location Meeting Policy be approved.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

6. UPDATE ON MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023/24

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the implementation of the Member Development Plan 2023/2024.

The Committee was advised that in response to the feedback provided during evaluation of the Member Induction Programme, access to recordings of the member training and development sessions would be available via the online Learning Management System from January 2024. Introduction of the system was welcomed by the Committee as a means of enhancing accessibility to training and development sessions within the context of the varied demands placed upon members.

Reference was made to the additional geo-discovery training sessions scheduled for members which would also form part of the catalogue of topics available via the Learning Management System in the future.

In an update to the Committee, the Lead Business Partner for Learning and Development confirmed that members would be provided with an opportunity to undertake a Personal Development Review with their respective Group Leaders. The Reviews were scheduled to be conducted by 31 December 2023, the results of which would inform the Member Development Plan going forward.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the update on the progress of the Member Development Plan 2023/24 be received.

CHAIR

DATE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.