

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 17TH MARCH, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor T. Davies [Chair]

Councillors:

W.T. Evans, P. Hughes-Griffiths (In place of D. Price), J.D. James and H.I. Jones (In place of H.B. Shepardson)

Also present:

Councillor L.M. Stephens, Executive Board Member for Human Resources, Efficiencies and Collaboration

The following officers were in attendance:

Ms L. Rees-Jones	-	Head of Administration & Law
Ms G. Morgan	-	Head of Democratic Services
Ms M. Edwards	-	Corporate Learning & Development Advisor
Mrs M. Evans Thomas	-	Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen : 2.00 p.m. - 2.40 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Price and H.B. Shepardson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 15TH NOVEMBER 2015

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on the 27th November, 2015 be signed as a correct record.

4. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015/16 - UPDATE

The Committee considered a report providing an update on progress on the agreed Member Development Plan 2015/16 including additional programmes added recently, following requests by members. A further updated copy which included the topics of Corporate Manslaughter and Media Skills was circulated at the meeting.

Group Leaders and Deputy Leaders have been reminded of their role in identifying the development needs of their party members. Any additional needs arising from this would form the basis of next year's plan or, if deemed urgent, would be added to the current plan.

The Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment report published in January 2016 included the following suggested areas for improvement in terms of member development:-

- Develop and deliver training to help Members understand their roles and responsibilities and refresh this training delivery as members move between roles

The Committee was informed that requests had been received for Welsh language training and as people's needs would be so different it was suggested that members be contacted to ascertain their requirements and training could then be tailored to their needs.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. 2017 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS - PROPOSALS FOR MEMBER INDUCTION

The Committee was advised that the All Wales Member Services Officer (MSO) Network, which is supported by the WLGA, discussed at its last meeting a generic approach to Member Induction Programmes across Wales. It was noted that Local Authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association had traditionally worked together to plan and support induction activities for new members in Wales following local elections and it was agreed that the WLGA would produce an induction curriculum which could be co-ordinated across authorities to save time and money.

The WLGA had produced an Induction consultation document and the Committee's views were sought on the Member Induction programmes for both new and returning elected members following the Local Government elections in 2017.

The Committee's views would be used primarily to identify induction resources and activities and to secure materials and providers where these do not already exist. Consultation responses would also be used to inform the MSO Network's discussions with relevant divisions in the Welsh Government (WG) and other potential providers of member support and development and the WG's considerations regarding mandatory training for councillors.

It was felt that the possibility should be explored of including the voluntary sector/outside bodies in any training programmes/provision.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL to proceed with the co-ordinated member induction programme as outlined in the report and to pursue the possibility of including the voluntary sector/outside bodies.

6. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) ANNUAL REPORT (FEBRUARY, 2016)

The IRPW published its Annual Report in February 2016 and the Committee was required to consider its determinations and recommendations and make recommendations to Council for inclusion with the Councillors' and Co-opted Members' Salaries and Allowances Scheme for 2016/17.

The Local Government (Wales) Act 2016 extended the Panel's remit to include changes to the salaries of Chief Officers of Authorities or Principal Councils. This

part of the Act became effective from the end of January 2016.

In setting the level of salaries and allowances for 2016/17 the IRPW has decided that there will be no increase in remuneration given the continuing constraints on local government spending. It has, however, introduced two salary levels for Executive Members (except Leaders and Deputy Leaders) and for Chairs of Committees so that each Local Authority can take account of the differences in responsibilities that may be attached to specific posts. It is at the discretion of each Council which salary level is paid according to local circumstances. However, the Panel considers that in many instances there are differences in the responsibilities attached to portfolios of Executive Members and Committee Chairs and this should be reflected in the level of salary paid. The Panel will examine the extent that this flexible approach has been used when they monitor the schedule of remuneration in the autumn.

The Committee's views were sought on the issue of payments to Executive Members, Chairs of Committees, Civic Heads and Deputies, Subsistence and Accommodation Allowances, Remuneration of Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs and payment of Co-opted Members' Fees for the 2016/17 municipal year.

The need for two Deputy Leaders was queried particularly in view of the fact that the Authority is trying to save money. The Head of Administration & Law agreed to relay the Committee's comments to the Leader, however, she reminded the Committee that the responsibility for appointing Executive Board Members and Deputy Leaders and for drawing up their portfolios was delegated to the Leader, in accordance with the Council's constitution. The Head of Democratic Services explained that there was very little difference in the amount paid as the allowance was shared between the two Deputy Leaders.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- 6.1 to note that the IRPW has determined that the basic salary for elected member of principal local authorities shall remain at £13,300 for 2016/17;**
- 6.2 that the status quo remain with regard to the level of senior salary paid to Executive Members for 2016/17;**
- 6.3 that the status quo remain with regard to the level of senior salary paid to Committee Chairs for 2016/17;**
- 6.4 that the status quo remain with regard to the salary paid to the Chair and Vice-Chair of Council for 2016/17;**
- 6.5 that the status quo remain in relation to the rates of reimbursement for subsistence costs for 2016/17 and the current practice of all overnight accommodation for members being arranged through the Democratic Services Unit be continued;**
- 6.6 to continued with the current practice of noting arrangements for Joint Overview Scrutiny Committees with other Authorities and including these Committees within the Council's scheme in the event the**

Council decides to establish Joint Committees during the 2016/17 municipal year and to pay a salary;

6.7 that payment of Co-opted Members' Fees remain capped for 2016/17 at the current level of 10 full day (of 20 half day) meetings;

6.8 to accept the remaining IRPW recommendations and determinations for 2016 and incorporate them within the Council's existing Councillors' and Co-opted Members' Allowances Scheme for 2016/17.

7. COUNCILLORS' ANNUAL REPORTS

The Committee was reminded that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 states that Local Authorities must make arrangements for:-

- (a) each person who is a member of the Authority to make an annual report about the person's activities as a member of the Authority during the year to which the report relates;
- (b) each person who is a member of the Authority's Executive to make an annual report about the person's activities as member of the Executive during the year to which the report relates; and
- (c) the Authority to publish all annual reports produced by its members and by the members of its executive.

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the number of annual reports completed for 2014/15 and the Committee's approval was sought for the draft guidance and annual report template for 2015/16 annual reports onwards.

Disappointment was expressed at the low number of members producing annual reports. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Committee that regular reminders are sent to members in this regard. She added that the report template had been revised and it was hoped that better guidance and a simpler form would lead to a higher return.

It was pointed out that there is no guidance available for new members on how to produce an annual report and it was not included in the training sessions for new members either. The Head of Democratic Services agreed to include this information in the Members' Handbook.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

7.1 that the report be noted;

7.2 that the revised annual report template and guidance for 2015/16 onwards, as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

8. WALES AUDIT OFFICE - CORPORATE ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015

The Committee was advised that the Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook the Corporate Assessment fieldwork in Carmarthenshire County Council during October 2015. The purpose of the Corporate Assessment is to provide a position statement of an Authority's capacity and capability to deliver continuous improvement.

The Authority was highly praised by the WAO for having a well established vision that is driven forward by a strong collective leadership from both Executive and Corporate Management Teams. A clear framework of well-aligned plans and strategies that translate high level outcomes the Council has agreed with partners into priorities for action was also recognised, ensuring a strong ethos of continuous improvement runs through everything the Council does.

The Democratic Services Committee is responsible for securing the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Councillors and the preparation of reports and recommendations to Council in relation to such provision and it is also tasked with the promotion and support of good governance by the Council.

The Corporate Assessment report included the following suggested areas for improvement, in terms of governance:-

- Develop forward work programmes to ensure that all appropriate committees have a published, up-to-date programme owned by committee members;
- Publish a register of delegated decisions;
- Develop and deliver training to help members understand their roles and responsibilities and refresh this training delivery as members move between roles;
- Review the remit of the Audit Committee to make sure it is delivering what is expected of it.

Further to the above suggestions, the Committee received for consideration a draft Forward Work Programme for 2016/17.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

8.1 that the Corporate Assessment Report 2015 be noted;

8.2 that the Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2016/17 be approved.

CHAIR

DATE