

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2024

- PRESENT:** Councillor Keith Roberts (Chair)
Councillors Non Dafydd, Carwyn E Jones, Gwilym O Jones
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Head of Democracy
Committee Officer (SC)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Scrutiny Officer (EA) (Observer)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Jeff Evans, Aled Morris Jones, Llio A Owen,
Dylan Rees, Alwen P Watkin
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The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. In the absence of the Vice-Chair, he nominated Councillor Gwilym Jones as Vice-Chair for today's meeting, which was accepted by the Committee.

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2. MINUTES

The draft minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 29 November 2023 were presented and confirmed as correct.

3. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024/25

Submitted – a report by the Head of Democracy on the IRPW's Annual Report detailing the Panel's final determinations for 2024/25.

The Head of Democracy reported that the draft annual report was presented and accepted by this Committee on 29 November 2023. The final version of the report was published on 28 February 2024 and will be effective from April 2024.

The Head of Democracy reported that the maximum number of senior and civic salaries payable remains capped at 17 for 2024/25. The Panel's report will need to be confirmed at the next full Council meeting on 21 May 2024.

It was noted that the Panel has determined that the 'relevant officer' should apply local flexibility to the rate of pay for co-opted members, due to the changing nature of meetings e.g. hybrid meetings. The IRPW will be preparing further guidance on how this arrangement will work.

The Head of Democracy reported that he has submitted the following questions to the IRPW, as requested by the Standards Committee: -

1. What is the IRPW's definition of 'relevant officer' with regard to payments to co-opted members?
2. When does the Panel envisage the further guidance to be published?

The Head of Democracy reported that when he receives a response from the IRPW, he will share this information with the Standards Committee and this Committee.

RESOLVED to note the determinations within the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report for 2024 to 2025 (February 2024).

4. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES UPDATE

Submitted – a report by the Head of Democracy on the work undertaken by Democratic Services in relation to member support and governance.

The Head of Democracy reported that a draft Protocol for Hybrid Meetings was discussed in the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee in June 2023 and was published on 26 October 2023. He stated that the Protocol is now well established in the Council's committee arrangements and is currently being reviewed. The Head of Democracy welcomed any further comments on the Protocol from members of the Committee.

The Head of Democracy reported that elected members have been encouraged to present annual reports on their work, which is considered good practice in terms of accountability. He stated that the percentage of annual reports submitted for 2022/23 had increased significantly on the previous year. In relation to annual reports for 2023/24, a report template and information on the arrangements will be shared with members next week, with a request that reports be submitted by mid-May, for publication in June.

It was noted that the members' register of interests are published in the Council website and the process has been reviewed by the Standards Committee recently. It was further noted that Finance staff will be contacting members in due course regarding declaring financial matters in the register of interests for audit purposes.

With reference to member training and development, 33 training sessions have been offered to members over the past year. Concerns were expressed that some members have not attended the mandatory training courses available to them. A member training plan for 2024/25 will be developed shortly and discussed at the next committee meeting.

It was highlighted that the process of submitting annual reports electronically does not generate a receipt email. A suggestion was put forward for the service

to provide confirmation of acceptance emails when annual reports are submitted. The Head of Democracy responded that he would act upon the Committee's request.

A member questioned whether Scrutiny Panels could be convened on a face-to-face basis? The Head of Democracy responded that it is timely to review arrangements on how meetings within the Council are conducted. A review of Scrutiny processes will take place during the summer, and a further review of committee meetings will be conducted later in the year.

RESOLVED: -

- **To note the content of the report.**
- **That the Head of Democracy follows up on the Committee's proposal for email receipts to be generated automatically when annual reports are submitted.**

The meeting concluded at 2:30 pm

**COUNCILLOR KEITH ROBERTS
CHAIR**