

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 18 September, 2024

- PRESENT:** Councillor Keith Roberts (Chair)
Councillor Llio A Owen (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Non Dafydd, Gwilym O Jones, Dylan Rees, Ken Taylor
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Head of Democracy,
Training and Development Manager (EP),
Committee Officer (MEH)
- ALSO PRESENT:** None
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Jeff Evans, Carwyn Jones, Aled Morris Jones
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1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2. MINUTES

The draft minutes of the previous meetings of this Committees were presented and confirmed as correct as follows:-

- The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March, 2024;
- The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May, 2024.

3. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The report of the Training and Development Manager on the Training and Development Programme for Elected Members for 2024/2025 was presented for consideration.

The Training and Development Manager reported on the Training Plan for 2024/2025 included as Appendix 1 within the report. She said that the Plan continues to be shared in categories i.e. Mandatory Training; Supplemental; Health and Wellbeing; On demand and E-Learning Modules that are available on the E-Learning Platform Learning Pool. She stated that since April 2023, 37 training and development sessions have been offered to elected members to date. To mitigate and prioritise what is offered to elected members this is 22 less than afforded during the same period last year.

Reference was made to Appendix 2 of the report, which highlights the number of members who have accepted invitations to attend training and how many attended the sessions. She noted that there is an emphasis on the requirement

to attend mandatory training and that attendance at these sessions is lower than is desirable. That being despite offering several events varying in their form and timing i.e. face to face, virtual and evening sessions. A particular concern arises from this that those members who have not attended have not received information which is key to fulfilling their role. It is also be recognised that the situation affects the efforts to move the wider program forward due to the continuous need to organize further sessions of these titles.

The Training and Development Manager further reported that at the request of the Standards Committee, discussions are ongoing with the Democratic Services on drawing up a dedicated Plan for Group Leaders which was highlighted within the report. The Learning and Development Team continues to work closely with the Democratic Services and relevant Officers within the authority to ensure that the plan addresses the needs of the Elected Members and continues to evolve according to demand.

Following the presentation of the report, the following points of discussion were raised by the Committee and the Officers responded to the questions raised.

- As was highlighted within the report, it is disappointing that the attendance of Elected Members in mandatory training session is lower than is desirable. Reference has been made that Members of this Committee could approach the members that have not attended these sessions. Questions were raised whether details of the names of the Members who have not attended these mandatory courses could be afforded. The Head of Democracy responded that there are informal and formal methods to promote mandatory training to Elected Members. A quarterly update is afforded to Group Leaders with information on every member of the Group who have attended/not attended mandatory training. He noted that a message could be shared with the Group Leaders expressing this Committee's concerns. Members of the Committee expressed that there is a need to highlight what training sessions are a priority/optional.
- Questions were raised as to whether attendance at training sessions are recorded on the Council's website. The Head of Democracy responded that details of attendance on training courses is under the profile of each Elected Member on the website.
- Further comments were made that training sessions are afforded by the Planning Department to Members of the Planning and Orders Committee on a regular basis, but these sessions are only attended by half of the membership of the Committee. It was considered that these sessions are essential for Elected Members to be able to understand the complex decision-making of the planning process. The Training and Development Manager responded that she would be willing to support the Planning Department in promoting the requirement to attend these sessions afforded.
- Reference was made to the Welsh Language courses afforded by the Council for basic to advance courses available to staff and Elected Members. The Training and Development Manager said that 133 staff members have shown an interest in developing their Welsh language skills on different levels.

It was RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

**4. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) –
SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT : REVIEW OF REMUNERATION FOR LAY
MEMBERS OF CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES**

Submitted – a report by the Head of Democracy in relation to the above.

The Head of Democracy reported that the report highlights the remuneration for lay members of the Corporate Joint Committees established under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) and the Local Government (Wales) Bill 2011 was amended to include CJC's as relevant authorities within the Panel's remit. The North Wales Corporate Joint Committee consists of principal councils of Gwynedd, Denbighshire, Anglesey, Wrexham, Conwy, Flintshire and Eryri National Park Authority. He further said that the IRPW determined that Lay Members of the Corporate Joint Committee will be paid on the same basis as co-opted (lay) members with voting rights. Payment for these lay members will be similar to payment to other co-opted (lay) members of local government committees and a table was highlighted of the suggested payments were included within the report.

It was RESOLED to note the Panel's supplementary determination in relation to payments to lay members of Corporate Joint Committees.

**5. CONSULTATION ON THE EXTENSION OF JOB SHARE PROVISIONS FOR
ELECTED MEMBERS IN NON-EXECUTIVE ROLES**

The report of the Head of Democracy on the Consultation of the Extension of Job Share Provisions for Elected Members in Non-Executive Roles was presented for consideration.

The Head of Democracy reported that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 contained a provision to facilitate job-sharing arrangements in roles that form part of the Executive of County Councils. This was implemented in March 2023 when the County Council agreed to change the constitution to allow one or more Members to share the position of Leader, Deputy Leader or as Portfolio Members of the Executive. Subsequently job-sharing arrangements have been put in place with two members sharing the position of Deputy Leader. Welsh Government has decided to consult further on plans to expand the job-sharing provision to other senior roles, including Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Welsh Government considers that offering members options to share roles can promote diversity, career progression pathways and can help with work-life balance.

Following the presentation of the report, the following points of discussion were raised by the Committee.

- Whilst accepting the job-sharing roles agreed by the full Council in March 2023, questions were raised as to the role of Vice-Chairs if this provision of job sharing was to be implemented. The Head of Democracy responded that

the roles could become complex to administer and therefore the guidance of Welsh Government to the job-sharing role is paramount to provide clarification. If these arrangements come into force, the Council's Constitution will need to be amended to ensure consistency and appropriate guidance at a local level.

- Comments were made that the misunderstanding of the remuneration on both Deputy Leaders on social media is unacceptable. The Head of Democracy said that the remuneration of the provision of two Deputy Leaders on the Authority is cost neutral as they share the allowance of Deputy Leader.

The Committee considered that the current provision of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committee has been working well within this Authority and this should be included in the response to consultation.

It was RESOLVED to agree to the contents of the draft response to Welsh Government whilst including that the Committee consider that the provision on Anglesey is working well and is concerned about the impact on the role of Vice-Chairs as noted above.

The meeting concluded at 2:45 pm

**COUNCILLOR KEITH ROBERTS
CHAIR**