

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 27 November 2024

- PRESENT:** Councillor Keith Roberts (Chair)
Councillor Llio A Owen (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors Non Dafydd, Jeff Evans, Aled M Jones,
Gwilym O Jones, Dylan Rees, Ken Taylor
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Head of Democracy
Training and Development Manager (EP)
Committee Officer (SC)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor Carwyn O Jones
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1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

2 MINUTES

The draft minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 18 September 2024 were presented and confirmed as correct.

3 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Submitted – a report by the Human Resources Training and Development Manager (HRTDM) on the elected Members Training and Development Program for 2024/25.

The HRTDM reported that the HR Training Team have been working in collaboration with Democratic Services on the Training and Development Program, which is divided into the following headings: Mandatory training; General; Health and Wellbeing; On demand and E-Learning modules.

The HRTDM reported that since April 2023, 39 training opportunities have been offered to elected members, 24 less than the previous year. She stated that greater emphasis has been placed on mandatory training, resulting in a positive outcome. It was noted that the take up on Health and Safety training has increased to 34 out of 35 this year compared to 26 last year. Further training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is scheduled for 3 December 2024.

The HRTM reported that ICT continues to be a further priority area, with 1:1 training sessions proving very effective. A questionnaire was shared with members following the training, but the number of responses received was disappointing. Discussion is ongoing with Digital Communities Wales to provide further training options in this area. The HRTDM stated that requests have been received from

elected members for tailored training sessions, which will be given due consideration. In the meantime, members will be afforded the opportunity to attend training courses on corporate matters, which are offered to staff.

It was noted that quarterly updates on attendances at training sessions are shared with Democratic Services and Group Leaders in due course. Recently, virtual training sessions have been introduced, together with a bilingual video on Health and Safety, which has proved to be very successful. The HRTDM urged members of the Committee to contact her on any matters of concern or provide feedback to the HR Training Team following training sessions.

A member of the Committee expressed concern that training provision is only available through the medium of Welsh. The member stated that as a bilingual Council, training should be provided equally in English, as not doing so breaches Human Rights. It was noted that currently training is provided bilingually through the medium of Welsh, with an English translation service for English listeners.

Discussion focused on the nature of the bilingual training provision. The HRTDM responded that the option of convening English training sessions is being considered, but it is difficult in the current economic climate, as additional costs would be incurred. Regarding ICT and more complex terms, she stated that she would pass on the member's request to the training provider to ask for greater flexibility in translation and easier to understand wording.

The Head of Democracy highlighted that 1:1 ICT training sessions for members are convened in the member's language of choice. He stated that no complaints have been received to date in relation to the lack of training sessions conducted through the medium of English.

It was suggested that this matter be discussed further in a Group Leaders meeting, and clarification be sought on the Human Rights issue.

RESOLVED that the Head of Democracy and the HR Training and Development Manager discuss this issue further, and report back to the next meeting of this Committee.

4. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) – DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025/26

Submitted – a report by the Head of Democracy on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW)'s draft proposals for 2025/26.

The Head of Democracy reported that the IRPW will be consulting on the draft proposals, which will include two additional questions, until 29 November 2024. Following the consultation process, the final version of the IRPW's Annual Report will be published in February 2025 and presented to full Council for adoption.

The Head of Democracy referred to the schedule of proposed changes to the current remuneration levels for the members' basic salary together with senior and civic salaries for 2025/26. He stated that the draft proposals would increase the

Council budget for 2025/26 by £71k (7.8%).

It was noted that this year's annual report will be the final report presented to this Committee by the IRP. Its functions will be transferred to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) from 1 April 2025.

The Head of Democracy referred to the Panel's first consultation question, requesting the Committee's views on whether the Panel has struck the right balance between affordability and adequate remuneration for members? He explained that the Panel bases its recommendations on a survey conducted on the average salary of a constituent in Wales and that this seemed a reasonable and transparent way of determining the remuneration.

The second question relates to local flexibility for payments to co-opted members. It was noted that local authorities were given the choice to pay lay members per hour last year. Anglesey County Council has not adopted this method of payment and continues to pay its lay members a daily or half day rate.

The Head of Democracy reported that the Standards Committee has written to the Chair of this Committee expressing disappointment that co-opted members' salaries have not increased for five years. He stated that members of the Standards Committee feel that they are not appreciated for their hard work. They believe that there is a risk of not keeping current members and attracting new members. It was noted that the Standards Committee would welcome the reasoning behind the decision not to increase lay member salaries.

Members of the Committee expressed concern that lay members' salaries have not increased in line with members' salaries. The Head of Democracy reminded the Committee that this issue was discussed in a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee last year in response to the Panel's proposals, when the Committee supported an increase in lay members' salaries. The Committee continue to feel that an increase in salary would be appropriate for lay members on Committees.

RESOLVED: -

- **To consider the Panel's draft determinations for 2025/26 and the additional two consultation questions.**
- **To authorise officers to respond to the consultation in accordance with the Committee's deliberations.**

5. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES UPDATE

Submitted – an update report by the Head of Democracy on member support and governance issues.

The Head of Democracy reported that the Protocol for Hybrid Meetings was updated last year. He stated that some members need to be reminded of the expectations placed on them when joining meetings virtually. The Protocol will again be shared with members to remind them of the guidance and requirements by the end of the calendar year.

It was noted that recorded Committee meetings are available on the Council website for 12 months following each meeting. The Council monitors Committee broadcasts and has access to data on the numbers of views per meeting and any tendencies arising.

With reference to Elected Members' Annual Reports, 26 reports have been received for 2023/24. Members will be reminded of the process in the New Year and will receive a copy of the report template for 2024/25.

The Head of Democracy reminded members that they have a duty to register and declare any interests or change in circumstance within 28 days. He stated that updated training records are available on the Council website.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

The meeting concluded at 10:45 am

**COUNCILLOR KEITH ROBERTS
CHAIR**